Love’s Reward
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University is a land-grant university that develops and preserves intellectual capital through interdisciplinary learning, discovery, engagement, and operational excellence.

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Nano School Facility Opens with Big Expectations

Gov. Bev Perdue and other distinguished guests from across the state and as far away as France participated in the much anticipated grand opening Dec. 7, 2011, Ed Kitchens, chairman of Gateway’s board of directors presided over the event.

The point that was made repeatedly is that the collaboration behind the JSNN is much larger than the building it calls home. The partnerships between A&T, UNCG and Gateway with educational institutions, business and industry around the world will increase the universities’ collective credibility or the Triad as a research community and enhance the regional, national and international reputation. It also will serve as a pipeline for job creation at the highest level.

According to research conducted by the National Science Foundation, there is a projected need for more than two million nanotechnology savvy workers by the year 2014. Of those employees, 20 percent are expected to be scientists, and the remaining 80 percent will encompass a range from highly skilled engineers to skilled workers. Perdue said that because North Carolina is the epicenter for research and advancement in nanoscience and nanoengineering, it is anticipated that a lot of that job creation will start at the JSNN and will impact other related industries as well.

The $64 million Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering (JSNN) at the Gateway University Research Park, South Campus, on East Lee Street was worth the wait.

JSNN is an academic and technical institution created by North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, with the support of the North Carolina General Assembly and technology leaders in the community. One of the few degree-granting schools in the world focused exclusively on nanoscience and nanoengineering, JSNN’s objective is to become a world class educational and research institution, serving as an engine for economic growth in the Greensboro/Triad area. (Degrees in nanoscience are being offered by UNCG and nanoengineering by N.C. A&T.)

A&T Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr. said, “The JSNN provides a great academic and commercial model and will help universities assume a greater role in partnership with business leaders throughout the Triad—in making our region more appealing. By combining our respective strengths, we can ensure the continued success of preparing outstanding graduates to be competitive in the professional workforce and also maintain our standing as a region of economic competitiveness in the areas of research and development.”

The nanoeengineering research program already has generated almost $4 million in external research funding in its first year and a half of existence. The work involves a broad range of areas, including nanotechnology tools for disease diagnostics and regenerative medicine, components of photonic nanosystems for sensor/detection systems, and other security applications, and the performance characteristics of materials such as nanoengineered concrete.

To date, the Army Research Office is a major funder of this research, which will have both defense and civilian applications. JSNN also has received a letter of intent from Horiba Scientific of Chilly-Mazarin, France, one of the world’s largest manufacturers of analytical and spectroscopic systems and components dedicated to scientific research.

When it opened three years ago, the National Science Foundation designated JSNN as one of the world’s leading colleges of nanotechnology. He served as principal or co-principal investigator for contracts totaling more than $1.7 billion while at CNSE.

It was five years in the making and one year since the first classes began, but the new facility that houses the Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering (JSNN) at the Gateway University Research Park, South Campus, officially opened in December.

JSNN is led by Dr. James G. Ryan, who has served as the founding dean, Ryan was an associate vice president of UNCG and nanoengineering by N.C. A&T.)

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North Carolina A&T State University has received a $200,000 grant to design and test an innovative device for spinal fusion operations. The university’s Engineering Research Center (ERC) received the two-year Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant from the National Science Foundation. The ERC will identify the appropriate magnesium alloy and create the device, and testing will be conducted by OrthoKinetic Technologies of Southport, N.C. Throughout the process, a third partner, Southeast TechnVentures Inc. of Research Triangle Park, will assist in translating the new technology to commercial applications.

Spinal fusion is a surgical procedure in which back pain caused by disc degeneration, trauma, deformity, or other problems is relieved by permanently connecting vertebrae to each other by means of a bone graft. The ERC will develop a magnesium-alloy cage to hold the bone graft in place while the vertebrae heal. After the healing is complete, the cage will degrade and be replaced by the patient’s own bone.

“This testing will be a major step forward in our development of biocompatible, biodegradable medical implants,” said Dr. Jagannathan Sankar, distinguished university professor of mechanical engineering and director of the ERC. “Although the testing and approval process is quite long for this type of device, ultimately it will result in a safer and more effective way to make spinal fusion more effective and less difficult for the patient.”

OrthoKinetic Technologies is a specialized research firm that provides consulting and testing for the manufacturers of medical devices. Sankar said the selection of OrthoKinetic Technologies also supports the ERC’s economic development objectives.

“A&T is the lead institution on the ERC team that includes the University of Pittsburgh, University of Cincinnati and Hannover Medical School in Germany. The ERC is funded by the National Science Foundation, originally for five years and $18.5 million. Funding received to date totals more than $15 million.”

The ERC’s mission is to produce revolutionary metallic materials and implantable medical devices for reconstruction and regeneration of bones and other body parts. As part of this effort, it is developing screws, plates, wires and other devices made of biocompatible, biodegradable magnesium alloys. Such devices could be used in orthopedic, cranio-facial and cardiovascular applications. When they have served their purpose, they could be signaled to degrade and pass out of the body at a controlled rate, alleviating the need for additional surgery to remove them.

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The award recognizes individuals who have endeavored to correct social injustice and have significantly contributed to the betterment of the world. Among numerous awards and honors, the Johnsons’ work at Beloved Community Center has been recognized by the Ford Foundation as one of the most significant grassroots organizations in the country. For this they received the foundation’s Leadership for a Changing World Award. They are also recipients of the Civic Ventures Purpose Prize (Palo Alto, California); the Faith and Politics Institute Beloved Community Award (Washington, D.C.); and the North Carolina Justice Center’s Defenders of Justice Award (Raleigh, N.C.).

As individuals, this pair is no less deserving of this honor. Guided by his three-part emphasis on diversity, justice and democracy, Rev. Johnson has been active in the movement for social and economic justice since high school. In addition to his role at Beloved Community Center, he is pastor of Faith Community Church. He is frequently invited to share his success stories in workshops and meetings, including those sponsored by labor organizations.

Mrs. Johnson also has also been an activist since high school, and her involvement increased during her years as one of the earlier black students at Duke University, where she supported campus non-academic employees and the movement for relevant education. She was instrumental in establishing the Jubilee Institute, which serves as the administrative arm of the Beloved Community Center of Greensboro and as a vehicle for building the capacity of the organization and the larger movement.

Both individuals have earned a degree from North Carolina A&T State University: he a bachelor’s degree and she a master’s. She is also a retired A&T professor and former director of the Transportation Institute. The Johnsons are the parents of two adult daughters, and they have four grandchildren.
UEI Focuses On African American Males in STEM Professions

The fourth annual Urban Education Institute, sponsored by the School of Education and College of Engineering at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, convened March 23–24, with a focus on African American males in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

This year’s institute examined specific strategies and practices that produce positive outcomes for African American males in the STEM disciplines while simultaneously highlighting nationally celebrated black male exemplars in STEM professions including Dr. Solomon Billig, professor of physics and director of the NOA-ISET Center at N.C. A&T; Dr. Fitzgerald B. Bramwell, former associate provost for academic research activity, Howard University; Dr. Clifford W. Houston, Herman Barnett Distinguished Endowed Professor in Microbiology and associate vice president for educational outreach, University of Texas Medical Branch; Dr. Catalfo Laurencon, university professor, Albert and Wilda Van Dusen Distinguished Chair in Orthopaedic Surgery, and professor of chemical, materials and biomolecular engineering, University of Connecticut; Dr. Courtney H. Lyder, professor and dean, UCLA School of Nursing, executive director of the UCLA Patient Safety Institute, and assistant director of the UCLA Health System; Dr. Harold L. Martin Sr., chancellor, N.C. A&T; Dr. Marcus L. Martin, professor and past chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine, University of Virginia; Leland D. Melvin, associate administrator for education, NASA; Dr. Lee V. Stiff, professor of mathematics education, North Carolina State University College of Education; Dr. James H. Stith, vice president emeritus, American Institute of Physics; Dr. Louis W. Sullivan, chairman of the board, National Health Museum (Atlanta, Ga.); Dr. Edward Tunstel, space robotics and autonomous control lead in the space department, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory; and Alfred W. Zoller, retired general manager, IBM Tivoli Software.

Nationally celebrated African American male exemplars in the STEM professions participated

Dr. John Slaughter, the first African American director of the National Science Foundation, former chancellor of the University of Maryland, and former president of the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering, was the keynote speaker for the awards banquet where he and the other exemplars were honored.

The Urban Education Institute is committed to examining issues that affect the personal, academic, and social growth and development of marginalized and disfranchised groups in urban educational contexts. The institute emphasizes five strands: promising practices, engagement, leadership, scholarship/research and policy.

Guilford County Schools to Have STEM Early College at A&T

Students interested in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math will have a new opportunity next year to prepare for the two million new jobs that are expected in those fields.

The Guilford County Schools Board of Education has approved a proposal to create an early college on the campus of North Carolina A&T State University that would focus on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education.

The STEM Early College at N.C. A&T will open in fall 2012 with a class of 50 freshmen. It will be Guilford County Schools’ (GCS) second early college, joining The Early College at Guilford, which is consistently listed among the top 20 high schools in the nation.

The new school will offer students the opportunity to graduate high school with 60 hours of college credit, transferable to most public and private colleges and universities. Students will take advanced high school classes in grades 9 and 10, followed by two years of college classes in grades 11 and 12.

The STEM Early College will prepare its graduates for one of three career pathways: renewable energy, engineering and biomedical sciences. College graduates with STEM-related degrees may earn up to $1.2 million more during their lifetime than those without a college degree.

Generous financial support has been pledged from many organizations, including the Joseph M. Bryan Foundation, Cemala Foundation, RF Micro Devices, VF Corporation, Solstas Lab Partners, Blue Bell Foundation, HondaJet, Tyco Electronics Foundation, Unifi, Toleo Foundation, Samet Corporation, Randall Kaplan, Gilbarco and Smith Richardson Foundation. Current pledges total nearly $700,000.

N.C. A&T, which offers more than 50 STEM-related majors, has been a strong supporter of a second GCS program on its campus. The university already houses The Middle College at N.C. A&T, one of the district’s two single-gender programs, which serves about 120 young men.

Middle colleges differ from early colleges at GCS in that, while both programs offer the opportunity to earn college credit, middle colleges are designed to reach students who may not thrive at a traditional high school. Early colleges are an intensive college-prep option for students who are highly successful.

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Dr. Cathy Kea, professor of special education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, attended the World Council of Educational Researchers and Scholars in Havana, Cuba, Feb. 1-4. She, along with two colleagues from East Carolina University, presented a paper, “Sociocultural Implications of Educational Aspirations of Latina/Mexican Adolescents in Eastern North Carolina and Mexico.”

Three A&T nanoengineering professors at the Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering (JSNN) have been awarded research grants totaling $3.5 million.

Dr. Ajit Kelkar, professor and chairman of the Department of Nanoengineering, is the principal investigator of “Computational Modeling and Enabling Technologies for Nano and Bio Systems and Interfaces,” a $1.2 million grant from the Army Research Office. The research will explore the molecular-level interaction of material systems and biological constituents through molecular nano modeling.

Dr. Ram Mohan, associate professor of nanoengineering, is the principal investigator of “Nano to Continuum Multi-Scale Modeling of Cementitious Materials under Dynamic Loading,” a $1.8 million grant from the Army Research Office. Project research efforts will enable the better understanding of the performance of cementitious-based protection materials for defense and civilian uses and will help to develop advanced cementitious concrete panels.

In addition, Sang has received a $490,000 grant from the USDA to research the connection between diabetes and flavonoids, which are a group of compounds found in fruits, vegetables, herbs and teas. His project was deemed “outstanding” by the USDA’s competitive Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), and was among 7 percent of the submitted proposals earning that designation. Recent research in Sang’s functional foods lab indicated that flavonoids could minimize complications of diabetes. The current study will continue that work.

The Center for Excellence in Post-Harvest Technologies at the North Carolina Research Campus is administered by the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences.

Dr. Lisa Gueldenzoph Snyder, professor and chair of the Department of Business Education, received the 2011 Meada Gibbs Outstanding Teacher Award at the Association for Business Communication Conference in Montreal, Canada, in October. The national award recognizes, encourages and rewards excellence in teaching business communication. Ironically, the late Dr. Meada Gibbs was faculty and chair in the same department at A&T. Snyder presented a paper at the conference, “Strategies for Integrating Technology Skills in Business Communication Classes.”

Also in October, Snyder was elected vice president of Delta Pi Epsilon, a national graduate honorary society whose mission is to improve the teaching of business through scientific research, leadership development and the advancement of education for and about business. After her two-year term as vice president, she will serve a two-year term as president.

Dr. Teresa Jo Styles, professor of journalism and mass communication, spoke last November at the National Library of Ireland in Dublin on the subject of “Writing Press History.” Contributions on press and journalism history came from scholars and journalists located in Ireland, Britain, Spain, France, Germany, Italy and the United States. The fourth annual conference of the Newspaper and Periodical History Forum of Ireland critically examined the relationship between writing about the press and national and transnational histories.
In December, Dr. Tammy T. Webb, associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Services, traveled to Haiti with several teams from North Carolina, Florida and Michigan to host three Christmas parties for over 9,000 orphans and other children. The children were served hot meals and given gift bags that consisted of treats, educational materials and personal items.

Since the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti in January of 2010, the country's orphan rate has increased to over 200,000 children. It is estimated that over 250,000 people died as a result of the earthquake, and another 10,000 have died from cholera and 5,000 from malaria. Over one million people still live in tents in vacant lots and parks across the country. Webb plans to return to Haiti with a team of counseling students.

Dr. Godfrey A. Uzochukwu, professor and director of Interdisciplinary Waste Management Institute, participated in the Oxford Round Table at the Harris Manchester College of the University of Oxford in England, March 18–22. Participation is by invitation, and Uzochukwu joined scholars who have an interest in environment and climate change. He presented a paper, “The Impact of Global Warming on North Carolina,” and discussed the evidence of global warming and potential impacts on the citizens, natural resources, agriculture and economy of North Carolina.

Dr. Leonard Williams, lead scientist for food safety and microbiology and interim director of the Center for Excellence in Post-Harvest Technologies, received an Andrew Mellon HBCU Faculty Fellowship by the Salzburg Global Seminar. The fellowship funded Williams’s travel to and attendance at the “Transforming Agricultural Development and Production in Africa: Closing Gender Gaps in Policy and Practice” seminar in Salzburg, Austria, last November.

The National Association of Black Journalists is honoring distinguished professor and director of the Institute for Advanced Journalism Studies at N.C. A&T, DeWayne Wickham, with a lifetime achievement award. Wickham, the interim chairman of the department of journalism and mass communication, is a founding member and former president of the largest organization for journalists of color in the nation. He is a columnist for USA TODAY and the Gannett News Service. His syndicated column is distributed to more than 130 daily newspapers in the United States.

In addition to this award, the organization also named one of its newest scholarships after him. The DeWayne Wickham Founders High School Scholarship will be awarded to a graduating high school senior who has shown strong promise in overcoming personal obstacles and has a strong passion to pursue journalism in college. The scholarship is valued at $2,500.

Anjelica McRae, senior music major from Charlotte, N.C., won the 105 Voices of History National Vocal Competition for 2011-12. The competition was held Sept. 17, 2011, in Washington, D.C., at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Under the tutelage and vocal preparation of Maestro Travis W. Alexander, 105 Northern Regional Conductor, official Kennedy Center concert organist and director of the University Choir at N.C. A&T, McRae competed in five rigorous rounds of auditions judged by the Washington National Opera Company to win the title of “National Voice” of the 105 Voices of History National Concert Choir 2011-12 as well as a scholarship.

On Sept. 18, 2011, McRae made her solo Kennedy Center stage debut singing George Gershwin’s “My Man’s Gone Now,” from the opera “Porgy and Bess,” at the sold out performance of the 105 Voices of History National Concert Choir. This year’s guest artists were Broadway star and singer Jennifer Holiday and jazz saxophonist Kirk Whalum.

For the second year in a row, the University Choir was invited to the White House for a special Black History Month performance. This year the performance was taped and featured as part of “The West Wing,” a weekly video magazine documenting the president’s activities.

*The students presented themselves with the grace, poise and dignity befitting our beloved A&T throughout the trip,* said choir director Travis Alexander. “The hotel staff manager commented to the students that they were the best behaved group of students ever to stay in the hotel thus far.”

The students performed at the White House on Feb. 17, a year after their February 2011 debut there. The clip on “The West Wing” shows them rocking Wilson Pickett’s classic, “In the Midnight Hour,” part of their crowd-pleasing Motown revue.

The choir’s performance, which met with rave reviews, happened just a few days before President Obama himself joined blues legends including B.B. King in singing “Sweet Home Chicago” on Feb. 21, during the PBS program “In Performance at the White House: Red White and Blues.” Clips from his performance were part of the same episode of “The West Wing.”

For the fourth consecutive year, the Institute for Advanced Journalism Studies at North Carolina A&T will send students from the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication and faculty members from the College of Arts and Sciences to participate in the African Presidential Roundtable in South Africa, May 23–25, as part of the institute’s continuing effort to provide JOMC students with valuable learning experiences outside of the classroom and as close to the frontlines of journalism as possible.

In previous years, the institute has sent three journalism students and two students from the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice. This year there will be a team of five journalism students: Deryck Nicholson, Kelcie McCrae, Shawn Jackson II, Kelsey Fair and Khalil Lewis. The faculty representatives are Dr. Linda Florence Callahan, journalism and mass communication, and Dr. James Steele, political science and criminal justice.

This year’s roundtable meeting, “21st Century Energy Agenda for Africa,” will take place at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. The African Presidential Roundtable is a signature program of the African Presidential Archives and Research Center (APARC) at Boston University.

Through its collaboration with nine universities worldwide, Boston University invited N.C. A&T to participate as part of APARC’s American-African Universities (AAU) Collaborative.
Seniors Jasmine Farrar and Joel Williamson, along with Dr. Lemuria Carter, assistant professor of accounting, recently represented the university at the institute for Emerging Issues Forum in Raleigh, N.C.

During the two-day conference, “GenZ” ambassadors had an opportunity to meet with the state’s top educators, corporate leaders, community activist and public officials to exchange ideas and offer viable solutions to some of North Carolina’s problems.

Jessica Dara Webb, a junior chemistry major from Hollister, N.C., is featured in a national advertising campaign by the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi to promote its study abroad scholarships. A picture of a broadly-smiling Webb appears prominently on a poster that has been sent to colleges and universities across the country.

In the spring of 2011, Webb applied for and won one of only fifty $1,000 grants provided by the group to help students afford the expense of studying abroad. Last summer, Webb used her Phi Kappa Phi grant to help fund her study abroad experience at a university in Denmark.

Kori Higgins, 31, graduated at the top of her class with a perfect 4.0 G.P.A. in December. The Ocean Springs, Miss., native received her Bachelor of Science degree in biological engineering with a concentration in natural resource engineering.

According to Higgins, A&T wasn’t her first attempt at obtaining a college degree. After graduating from high school, she enrolled in a small college in South Carolina, but found the experience to be too overwhelming. She wasn’t able to focus and her grades reflected it.

Higgins left college, went back home for a while and then moved to California to volunteer with AmeriCorps. After securing a job as a community organizer, she moved to Louisiana and later to Charlotte, N.C., where she worked as a member services representative. By this time, Higgins realized that she needed a college degree to fulfill her goals, so she enrolled at Central Piedmont Community College.

“I felt like I would have greater opportunities with a college degree,” she said. “And I also knew the work I wanted to do around environmental issues would require professional training.”

Higgins made all A’s at Central Piedmont and graduated with an associate’s degree. But she knew she needed a bachelor’s degree to pursue her career. After hearing about A&T’s engineering program from her brother and visiting the biological engineering department for herself, she decided to enroll.

At A&T, her mission was to remain focused and to excel. The honor student emphasizes the importance of setting priorities in college.
It’s all about love for North Carolina A&T State University physics researcher, Dr. Solomon Bililign. Love drives the work that won him The Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring.

Bililign, a member of the physics faculty at A&T since 1993, received the award—which includes $25,000—at the White House last year, along with seven other individuals and eight organizations.

“I was very happy and humbled by the recognition,” Bililign says of the honor and the opportunity to receive it from President Obama. “It is a very rare and a once in a lifetime opportunity to be in the presence of the most powerful leader on Earth. I admire his sincerity and determination to support STEM education.”

STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and math, and Bililign shares the president’s commitment to promoting education in these areas. He says he will use the $25,000 to support efforts in Guilford County to mentor young students.
“I encourage students to study to pursue careers in STEM areas,” Billilign says emphatically. “The innovation and discovery that come from these disciplines create wealth and bring economic prosperity to a nation. I plan to partner with science teachers in some schools in the county to mentor kids as early as elementary school to help them develop interest in STEM areas.

“Students need to overcome the myth that science and engineering are too hard,” he adds. “Nothing in life comes easy. Everyone needs to work very hard to be the best in what he or she does. But people work hard because they have passion and enjoy what they are doing. Everything will give up its secrets if you love it enough. So it is true in science and engineering.”

This has proven true in his own life, during which he has overcome major obstacles to achieve success. A native of Ethiopia and the son of two teachers, Billilign was imprisoned for five years under the terroristic Deng regime before coming to the United States and earning his Ph.D. in physics at the University of Iowa.

His successes since then have been numerous and include winning a $12.5 million grant to establish the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s interdisciplinary environmental technology cooperative science center. The center, based at A&T and for which Billilign serves as director, is a consortium involving eight universities that allows students to conduct high level research that prepares them well for the future.

Billilign’s devotion to creating research opportunities for students is among the most valuable parts of the work he does.

Benjamin E. McCarter is an Aggie who now works as a senior measurement engineer and project manager with Corning Inc., the Fortune 500 world leader in specialty glass and ceramics. He describes himself as a wayward physics undergrad when he met Dr. Billilign and began benefiting from his guidance and support.

Among the ways Billilign helped him and other students is by getting grants to build laboratories on campus where students can do research without traveling. McCarter also credits him with the connection that led to a research opportunity at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee.

“The professional relationships that he had developed and nurtured throughout his career are what made this opportunity possible,” McCarter wrote in a nomination letter for Billilign. “This experience resulted in a master’s degree in applied physics and my first publishable research paper... It has been a real honor to have him as a mentor and friend, and to watch his career blossom as the lives of those who have had the privilege of knowing him have done so also.”

To say Billilign enjoys his work would be an understatement.

“I do what I do because I enjoy doing it and I am passionate about it. I don’t do it to impress or please any one. I don’t do it for recognition or fame or personal gain,” he says. “I do what I do out of love of what I do. I do it to honor the source of all gifts—God. I have been given a gift and an opportunity to teach, train, mentor and help young people. I am only using and giving what is given to me.

“God places different people along our path. I have been blessed by a loving family, a very supportive wife who is also a pre-K teacher, friends and colleagues, and students who believed in me. I have been blessed by wonderful mentors throughout my career that helped me along the way and shaped my life in a number of ways,” he adds.

“I have had parents who were both teachers and they went out of their way to spend time and their resources to help and educate children under the most difficult conditions in Ethiopia. I learned value and the reward of teaching and mentoring from them, and their hundreds of former students who have had and still have very high regard for them.

“Finally, as a father of four children I try to do as much as what I expect my kids to receive from educators.”

Dr. Abdella Ahmidouch, chairman of the physics department at A&T, counts Billilign as a friend, in addition to a colleague, and says the award is “a great achievement for him, for our department, our college, and for the university as a whole. It is recognition of many years of hard work with our students, many years of mentoring and training of our students, and many efforts in securing the necessary funding to support our students.

“The same way Dr. Billilign is very demanding of himself, he is very demanding of his students, the ones in his class as well as the ones he advises and mentors,” Ahmidouch added. “He always pushes to the limit, urging them to deliver the best of themselves. At the beginning some might complain, but after going through it, students do recognize and appreciate the value of their efforts.”

Billilign’s advice to students also centers on love.

“You need to love what you do and have passion to do it. Than it is as easy as dancing is to the dancer, or running is to the athlete,” he says. “Only do what you enjoy doing, don’t be persuaded by peer pressure or family pressure or the potential of making more money in making career choices. There is nothing more dreadful and boring than doing or engaging in a job you don’t like.”
Thanks to an impressive infrastructure, good classes and friendly people, N.C. A&T is helping the United States live up to its reputation as the land of opportunity for three Brazilian students spending the year here under a new exchange program.

Paula Stapenhorst Franca, Henrique Tavares de Melo and Eníci Rabelo Frota are undergraduate industrial engineering students who are the first A&T participants in the Brazil Science Without Borders Program, part of the Brazilian government’s initiative to send 100,000 undergraduate Brazilian students to study STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines for two semesters at U.S. universities.

Frota, from Fortaleza, Brazil, is a senior at the Universidade Federal do Seara. He says the welcome he has received here has been warm, even if the weather has not.

“In my city it is always summer,” he says. “I definitely have to get used to Greensboro’s weather.”

Otherwise, the adjustment for the three students has been smooth, according to Dr. Eui Park, the industrial engineering faculty member serving as advisor to the students.

“I think they are having a good time,” says Park. “I try to make sure they’re happy. So far they are doing well. They speak English well.”

The program is designed to strengthen STEM education in the United States and in Latin America, with 100,000 U.S. students studying in Latin America and the Caribbean in exchange. President Obama and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff set the complementary goals when they met last year.

Park, who previously has hosted international graduate students, says such exchanges offer benefits that extend beyond the actual exchange students. For example, A&T students who interact with exchange students receive the benefit of experiencing a foreign culture without leaving home.

“There are many Asian students at A&T, so our students have had exposure to Asian culture, but our undergraduate students haven’t had (many opportunities) to interface with Latin American students. This will broaden their experience,” said Park.

Park has made sure all three of the Brazilian undergraduates are having a chance to participate in two research projects funded by the National Science Foundation—one involving human-centered design and the other involving designing tools for a medical device.

“I want them to gain good research experience, so they will consider coming back to our graduate program,” he says.

All three students say they have been pleased so far with the experience they are having at A&T.

Tavares de Melo, from Recife, is a sophomore at the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco.

"The university has an amazing infrastructure, with dedicated professors, comfortable rooms and very receptive people," he says. "For me, the most amazing thing is the different teaching system, compared to Brazil. Here you get to know better your professors and they follow your development continuously throughout homework, projects and so on, being able to help you if you’re having difficulties.”

Franca, from Porto Alegre, is a junior at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande Sul. Similarly, she likes what she has found at A&T in terms of teaching and learning.

“I believe I am learning a lot because the classes here are very good and well structured,” she says. “The teachers not only transmit the theory, they also explain the subjects through examples, which facilitate the understanding. Another important issue is that there are homework and quizzes that force the students to study constantly, and therefore, improve our knowledge.”

Franca, like her compatriots, also believes that the exchange experience itself has benefits beyond what she’ll actually learn in the classroom.

“Everyone says ‘I love Brazil, I wanna go there.’ I’m very glad about this opinion about my country, and actually I’m happy to find out that here at A&T there is a large range of opportunities, not only to Brazilian, but to every exchange student that is willing to work hard and produce results.”

Despite appreciating the opportunity, all three students say they miss home.

“I miss Brazil a lot! I miss my house, my city, and especially my family, my boyfriend and my friends.” Franca says, adding that she knows she will feel the same when her time at A&T is done. “I will miss the university and the friends I met here.”
In Rod Broadway’s first season as head coach, A&T went 5-6 overall and 4-4 in the MEAC. For the first time in the school’s history, the Aggies produced a 2,000-yard passer, 1,000-yard receiver and a 1,000-yard rusher. Linebacker D’Vonte Grant was a Jerry Rice finalist for best freshman in the nation, as he led the Aggies in tackles. After his second straight season where he rushed for 1,000 yards, senior running back Mike Mayhew comes into the 2012 season needing 163 yards to become the school’s all-time leading rusher.

The season opens on Labor Day weekend near Myrtle Beach, S.C., as the Aggies face Coastal Carolina for the third time in school history. It will be the Aggies’ second trip to Coastal Carolina in three years following their 2009 appearance at Brooks Stadium. It also will be the third meeting in five years between the two schools.

Another rematch will occur Sept. 15, at 6 p.m., when the Aggies face Virginia University of Lynchburg at Aggie Stadium. The Dragons lost to A&T 38-7 last season at Aggie Stadium.

Morgan State will be the Aggies’ first MEAC opponent when the teams face each other on Sept. 29, 1:30 p.m., at Aggie Stadium. Homecoming 2012 is Oct. 27 against defending MEAC Champion Norfolk State at 1:30 p.m.

A&T’s other three road games are against Bethune-Cookman, Delaware State and N.C. Central on Oct. 6, Oct. 20 and Nov. 17, respectively.

Active redshirt freshman linebacker D’Vonte Grant was named as one of the 20 finalists for the inaugural Jerry Rice Award, which honors the top freshman of the year in the Football Championship Subdivision.

“Grant did an outstanding job for us this past season,” said North Carolina A&T football head coach Rod Broadway. “This honor is well-deserved because he has made tremendous strides throughout the season. His attitude and work ethic are phenomenal. He’s only going to get better.”

Grant earned a spot on the Jerry Rice Watch List after making 11 tackles against Appalachian State on Sept. 10, 2011, and he followed up that performance with 12 tackles against Coastal Carolina two weeks later. He was one of two MEAC players named to the finalist list.

The winner of the Jerry Rice Award is presented by The Sports Network and sponsored by Fathead.com. More than 150 sports information and media relations directors, broadcasters, writers and others serve on the panel that selects the winner.
Aggies Hire New Men’s Basketball Coach, Women’s Head Coach Resigns

Cy Alexander has been hired as the men’s basketball coach at North Carolina A&T State University, while Patricia Cage-Bibbs has resigned as the head women’s basketball coach.

He brings a wealth of experience in constructing a championship program within the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference.

Alexander led South Carolina State University to seven MEAC tournament title games, winning five of those contest over a 16-year span. Before he arrived in Orangeburg, the Bulldogs had captured only one MEAC regular season title, and they reached just one MEAC tournament final. In addition, the school was coming off of its ninth straight losing season.

When Alexander left S.C. State in 2003, he had won nearly 60 percent of his games and more than 70 percent of his conference games. Alexander will be asked to restore the Aggies tradition of winning MEAC titles. The Aggies own a league-leading 15 MEAC tournament titles, but have not been crowned champions since 1995.

“We want an inspired program that forms its foundation on young men who graduate to become productive, successful citizens in society, and, who during their time at N.C. A&T, win conference championships and advance in the NCAA Tournament. As an A&T family, we believe Cy Alexander has both the knowledge and the wisdom to help us achieve these goals and objectives,” said Earl Hilton, director of athletics at A&T.

Alexander is a Winston-Salem, N.C., native, who has a 344-308 career record over 22 seasons. His time in the MEAC began in 1976. He spent 11 seasons as an assistant coach at Howard University. In 1987, he was named head coach at S.C. State, where he compiled a 277-202 record overall and a 191-79 record in the MEAC. He left S.C. State to serve as head coach at Tennessee State (2003-09), and then served as associate head coach at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi (2010-11).

Cage-Bibbs, a graduate of Grambling State University, was announced as her alma mater’s next head women’s basketball coach on April 20. The legendary coach spent the last seven seasons at A&T, where she compiled a 130-88 record. Cage-Bibbs’ .596 winning percentage is the best in school history, and her win total is second all-time behind Tim Abney. She recently became the first women’s basketball coach in history to win 500 career games exclusively at a Division I historically black college or university.

The wonderful and kindhearted people at North Carolina A&T will always be a part of my extended family,” said Cage-Bibbs, who has a career record of 501-294. “There are not enough words to express my gratitude for all Aggie Nation has meant to me and my family.

At this time in my life, however, I want to be closer to my immediate family,” the Louisiana native continued. “I’m looking forward to the fortunate opportunity I have to coach at my alma mater again. I will miss the A&T fans and my players so, so much, but I will cherish all the outstanding memories we shared.”

Forbes Earns All-American Honors

Long jumper Shakia Forbes has been named a second-team All-American by the USA Track and Field Cross Country Coaches Association.

Forbes, a senior from Hampton, Va., finished 15th in the women’s long jump at the NCAA Division I Indoor Track and Field Championships at Jackson Indoor Track on March 9. By virtue of finishing in the Top 15, Forbes earned All-American status. A Top 8 performance would have yielded her first-team honors.

Forbes joins Alexandria Spruiel and Loreal Smith as the only three female All-American track and field athletes in school history with both Spruiel and Smith being named first-team. Forbes jumped 19’7” in Nampa, Idaho, after committing fouls on her first two jump attempts. Forbes, who was ranked 11th nationally in the women’s long jump, was the only athlete representing A&T at the meet.

Forbes ends her indoor season with a multitude of accomplishments, earning MEAC Athlete of the Week as well as two first-place finishes and breaking the school indoor long jump record with a leap of 20’9” at the New Balance Invitational on Feb. 3.

The two-time MEAC Outdoor long jump champion wants to be recognized among the Top 8 competitors in the nation. In fact, she wouldn’t mind being the national champion.

“I am glad I earned a place on the second team All-American squad. I am motivated to earn a spot on the first team All-American for the outdoor season,” Forbes said.

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AGGIES ON THE MOVE

With 15 years of experience in the construction industry, Carmen Vann has managed some of the most interesting projects in San Diego. After graduating from North Carolina A&T State University with a degree in construction management, she worked for a small minority contractor as a construction engineer. She later moved to Nashville, Tenn., and in July of 2000, joined Turner Construction Co.’s Nashville office and served as lead project engineer role on several school projects.

Vann transferred to Turner’s San Diego office in 2003, moving quickly through the ranks from project engineer to project executive. She worked on high-profile projects such as the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Center for Conservation Research and The Hard Rock Hotel San Diego. The Hard Rock Hotel project received multiple awards in 2008 including the CMAA Project Achievement Award and CCDC Paradise in Progress Award, among others.

Currently, Vann is project executive in charge of the San Diego New Central Library, a 500,000-square-foot, LEED Silver designed facility. At completion of the downtown library, the combined construction volume of projects Vann has managed will be over $400 million.

Kenneth M. Pinnix ’78 is the branch manager in the Jacksonville, Fla., office of Cardno TBE, a member of the Cardno family of companies that offers a full range of consulting, design, engineering and construction services. In his role at Cardno TBE, Pinnix will be responsible for project management, client services and business development in northeast Florida. He most recently served as manager, historic preservation and administration for the City of Jacksonville, Community Planning Division. He holds a B.S. degree in zoology from N.C. A&T and an M.S. in biology from North Carolina Central University.

1970s

Kenneth W. Hairston ’73 has joined the intellectual property law firm of Fitch, Evn, Tabin & Flannery as counsel in the firm’s Washington, D.C. office. Hairston most recently served for the past 23 years as an administrative patent judge at the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences at the United States Patent and Trademark Office where he decided over 1,000 appeals involving disputes over patentability of inventions arising from electrical, mechanical, computer, and inorganic chemical technologies.

Drawing upon the insights and experience he gained from his judicial experience, Hairston will counsel clients in complex patent prosecution matters and patent office appeals as well as administrative post-patent grant challenges, including ex parte reexaminations. Prior to his appointment as a judge, he worked for seven years with the U.S. Navy’s Office of Patent Counsel and Office of General Counsel, focusing on intellectual property rights matters in government contracts. Before entering government service, he was in private practice.

1980s

Octavious Murphy ’85 is a financial representative in the Charlotte, N.C., office of Consolidated Planning, Inc. He has a B.S. degree in computer science from N.C. A&T.

Sonya Stewart ’86, a vice president in Lockheed Martin’s Information Systems & Global Solutions-Civil division, has been named a Washington Business Journal (WBJ) Minority Business Leader. The 25 WBJ honorees are recognized for their entrepreneurial drive, creativity, and decisive leadership.

Vincent W. Howell ’75 was awarded the 2011 Outstanding Industrial Technologist Award by the Association of Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering (ATMAE) at the organization’s annual conference awards banquet in Cleveland, Ohio, last November. Howell, who resides in Horseheads, N.Y., is the engineering projects portfolio manager within the Portfolio and Technology Strategy group of Corning Inc.’s Display Technologies groups’ Division Engineering organization.

Howell has been recognized by Corning and the Society of Manufacturing Engineers for his outstanding leadership in the workplace and in SME’s local and national organizations.

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Three Aggies are directors of Pepsi manufacturing plants in the Greater Atlanta area: Ray Reddrick ’89, Atlanta Hot Fill Plant; Tony Leath ’91, Atlanta Cold Fill Plant; and Donovan Kirkland ’93, Stone Mountain Plant. Reddrick and Leath are School of Technology graduates and Kirkland is a College of Engineering alumnus.

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1990s

Carson D. Funderburk ‘93 is director of manufacturing systems for General Mills in Minneapolis. He formerly served as a plant manager for the company in Lodi, Ca.

Dr. Craig Fletcher ‘95 is the new director of the Division of Laboratory Animal Medicine and attending veterinarian for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Fletcher will lead an organization responsible for the daily care of more than 100,000 laboratory animals used in research and teaching at the university. He previously served as interim associate director of husbandry at DLAM and as a clinical veterinarian.

Fletcher received a B.S. degree in laboratory animal science at N.C. A&T. He earned his Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Florida (1999) and a Ph.D. in HIV pathogenesis at Johns Hopkins University (2005). After post-doctoral fellowship positions at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in the Department of Molecular and Comparative Pathobiology and the Division of Cardiology, he joined the faculty of the former in 2006. Fletcher was board certified by the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine in 2008, and in 2009, he started his career at UNC-Chapel Hill as an associate professor in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and senior clinical veterinarian in DLAM.

Dr. Jabbar Bennett ‘96 is associate dean for diversity, Division of Biology and Medicine, and director of the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, The Warren Alpert Medical School, Brown University. Bennett most recently served as assistant dean for recruiting and professional development for the graduate school at Brown. Before joining Brown in 2009, Bennett worked at Harvard Medical School as director of the Office for Multicultural Faculty Careers at Brigham and Women’s Hospital.

Erica N. Best-Hunt ‘96 is a recipient of the 40 Under Forty Awards given annually by The Business Journal. The award recognizes the Triad’s “outstanding young professionals who are driving success for their employers and empowering their respective communities by giving of their time and talents.” Best-Hunt is an internal controls and financial processes analyst for Sealy Mattress Company in Trinity, N.C.

Nisha V. Watson ‘96, a physical education teacher at Eastway Elementary School in Durham, N.C., has earned the highest credential available to American educators by recently becoming a National Board Certified Teacher through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

National Board Certification is achieved through a rigorous, performance-based assessment of a teacher’s pedagogical skills and content knowledge. The certification takes one to three years to complete. While state licensing systems set the basic requirements to teach in each state, National Board Certified Teachers have demonstrated advanced teaching knowledge, skills and practices. NBPTS certification identifies qualified teachers as leaders in their field, much like the certifications earned by experts in law and medicine. Completion of NBPTS’s National Board Certification process signifies that the certified teachers have developed and demonstrated the skills required of a true education professional.

Trena Lilly ‘97 is president of the Military Operations Research Society (MORS). Based in Alexandria, the nonprofit professional society fosters the sharing of knowledge within the national security analytic community. Members include analysts, operators and managers from industry, academia and government. Lilly works as a project manager in the Joint Naval Operations Group at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory in Howard County, Md. In addition to a bachelor’s degree in engineering from N.C. A&T, Lilly holds master’s degrees in systems engineering, business administration and management.

In 2011, Joletta O. Patrick ’97 completed a six-month fellowship in the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Office of Education at the agency’s headquarters in Washington, D.C., as part of NASA’s Minority University Research and Education Program. Working with the MUREP program, Patrick, a former Miss A&T, helped develop an MSI and Community College Reduced Gravity Flight Week where she had the opportunity to participate in the reduced gravity flight.

Dr. Mable Springfield Scott is the new public information officer for Rockingham County (N.C.) Government. Her role involves strengthening two-way communications between local citizens and county government including the county website, traditional and social media, community outreach, marketing, and helping citizens better understand county policies, programs, and services.

Prior to this appointment, Scott led communications@scott.com. She also has worked for Viacom, RKO, Plough and James Brown radio stations, WPPFY- NEWS 2, Greensboro City Schools, Guilford County Schools, and North Carolina A&T State University.

A native of Memphis, Tenn., Scott graduated from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville with a bachelor’s degree in communications, and from N.C. A&T with a M.S. degree in adult education (1999) and a Ph.D. in leadership studies (2009).

Dr. Christa C. Watson ’99, a December 2011 graduate of the Ph.D. in energy and environmental systems program at N.C. A&T, received a one-year renewable postdoctoral National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHBLI) research training fellowship (T32) from Harvard University in the School of Public Health. Watson is working in the molecular and integrative physiological sciences program in the Department of Environmental Health where her research focuses on various aspects of inhalation toxicology and nanotoxicology.
2000s

- Styron Curtis Bond III ’00 was a recipient of the 2012 Modern-Day Technology Leaders award honored at the annual Black Engineer of the Year Awards (BEOY) Global Competitiveness Conference in Philadelphia, Pa., Feb. 16-18. Bond is a senior systems engineer at Lockheed Martin MS2 in Moorstown, N.J.

- Al-Aakhir A. Grimes Rogers ’03 completed his Ph.D. in electrical engineering at the University of South Florida in August 2011. His dissertation title was “Evanescent Wave Coupling for Multi-Chip Module Technology.” Rogers received his Ph.D. in electrical engineering at the University of South Florida in August 2011. His dissertation title was “Evanescent Wave Coupling for an Optical MEMS Accelerometer. Rogers received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in electrical engineering from N.C. A&T. Currently, Rogers is a senior member of the technical staff at Draper Laboratory in St. Petersburg, Fla., responsible for developing and integrating new processes for multi-chip module technology.

- Amber O. Evans ’05 has earned the Doctor of Philosophy degree in pharmaceutical sciences/biopharmaceutics with a concentration in cosmetic science from the University of Cincinnati in Ohio. Her dissertation is titled “Investigation of the Interaction between Water Hardness Metals and Human Hair.” Dr. Evans is the fourth African American to earn a Ph.D. in the field of cosmetic science. The Columbia, S.C., native currently resides in Cincinnati.

- Elesia Summers-Thomas ’10 is Miss Black Guilford County (N.C.) 2012. Summers-Thomas has a Bachelor of Science degree in journalism and mass communications and a Master of Science degree in agricultural education (professional service). She was Miss Black Greensboro 2011 and second runner up in the Miss Black NC USA competition.

IN MEMORIAM

ALUMNI (2011)

- Robert R. Faison ’61, Dec. 18

EMPLOYEES (2011)

- Fereeshah Fateh, professor, School of Technology, July 24
- Alfred Hill Jr., retired biology professor, Aug. 3
- Ireta “Sunny” Howard-Wharton, program administrator/grant coordinator, College of Arts and Sciences, Aug. 14
- Lillie Smith King, retired assistant vice chancellor of development, May 16
- Gregory Lewis, former adjunct instructor, May 17
- David William Libby, former interim chair, Department of Animal Sciences, May 19
- Dorothy S. Lightford, retired, Oct. 17
- Magdeline H. “Polly” Nash, retired, canteen and Bluford Library, Aug. 21
- Sarla Garg Sharma, professor emeritus (psychology), May 25
- Sherman Norman Shelton, former adjunct instructor, Sept. 5
- H. Alexander “Hal” Sieber, former associate dean, Aug. 27

ALUMNI (2012)

- Robert R. Faison ’61, Dec. 18

IN MEMORIAM

ALUMNI (2011)

- Bobby Barham, Davidson County, N.C., Aug. 9
- Hildred J. Barringer, Thomasville, N.C., Oct. 26
- Carline Leigh Batts ’03, Rocky Mount, N.C., Oct. 27
- Herman Lee Bridges, Charlotte, N.C., June 13
- James Walter Bridges, Greensboro, N.C., Sept. 19
- David Lee Brown ’71, Raleigh, N.C., June 10
- Louis Edward Canady, Greensboro, N.C., May 15
- Albert Carr ’55, Washington, D.C., Dec. 11
- Hazel Southerland Collins ’49, Marietta, Ga., Sept. 5
- Coley Davis Jr., Springfeld, Mass., Sept. 2
- Wilbur Eggleson ’48, Ashevill, N.C., June 23
- Joe Anne Hardin ’74, Winston-Salem, N.C., Sept. 28
- Bettye Harris Hayes, Greensboro, N.C., Aug. 10
- Gregory Ray Hill, High Point, May 11
- John Jackson St., Greensboro, N.C., June 4
- Ashley Johnson ’08, Lexington, N.C., Dec. 20
- Barbara Bell Jones ’47, Jackson, N.C., Dec. 31
- Henry Joyner Jr. ’51, Atlanta, Ga., July 8
- Ernestine Joyner ’52, Philadelphia, Pa., Aug. 5
- Emma Boone King, Aug. 22
- Merilyn N. Linney, Greensboro, N.C., Oct. 14
- Thomas Erin Moore, High Point, N.C., June 5
- Yulonde Clinton Mosley, Greensboro, N.C., June 15
- Thomas J. Pace ’52, Greensboro, N.C., May 13
- Kenneth Eugene Page ’70, Greensboro, N.C., Nov. 4
- Annashia Alia Page-Smith, Durham, N.C., June 11
- Michelle Denise Petteway ’95, Greensboro, N.C., June 26
- Justin Bryant Raper, High Point, N.C., April 28
- Lawrence Selfridge ’63, Piscataway, N.J., Nov. 1
- Jimmie D. Sharpe ’59, Wilson, N.C., Sept. 15
- Bobby B. Stafford ’61, Washington, D.C., Nov. 8
- Bertha Hall Stevenson, Greensboro, N.C., Aug. 2
- Alvin Taylor Jr. ’57, Washington, D.C., June 4
- Jeffrey Taylor ’82, Bronx, N.Y., Sept. 19
- James Allen Toon ’61, Greensboro, N.C., June 4
- Silly Curtis Vantel, Greensboro, N.C., Sept. 21
- James Alvis Watson, Fredericksburg, Va., June 18
- Jing Wei, Winston-Salem, N.C., Dec. 23 (in Arabia)
- John Kenneth White Sr. ’69, Greensboro, N.C., June 8
- Peggy H. Wilkins, Greensboro, N.C., May 30
- Josetta Godette Williams ’70, Greensville, N.C., June 18
- Nina May Johnson Williams ’51, Miss A&T 1950-51, Aventura, Fla., Nov. 12
- Eliza Margarette Gill B. Wilson, Greensboro, N.C., Aug. 27
Two Aggies generations apart protect world leaders

By Joya Wesley

ROBERT R. FAISON '61 (1929-2011)
Special Agent, Secret Service

As it became apparent that he would lose his battle with cancer, like his first wife and oldest son had before him, Robert R. Faison began working on his own obituary. In it, he told stories about his career that many of his friends and relatives had never heard.

“He was the first African American permanently assigned to the White House and had the pleasure of serving six U.S. presidents during his career and traveled to more than 30 countries until he retired in 1995,” Faison wrote in the document.

Born in Montclair, N.J., and raised in Seaboard, N.C., Faison graduated with honors from A&T, where he pledged Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. Longtime friend Newton Rucker ’58 remembers him fondly, at A&T and after they graduated and both lived in the national capital area.

“He and I were very close friends, and we did a lot of things together socially,” Rucker remembers. “He was an Alpha and I’m an Omega, but that didn’t hinder our friendship any at all. ... He already had been in the military when he came to A&T when I met him. Upon graduation he left and went to the Secret Service. I went to the Department of Army as a civilian.”

Rucker, who earned a master’s degree in library science and beginning a career running the library system for Walter Reed Army Medical Center, acknowledges that his friend didn’t talk much about his work.

“Neither did I,” Rucker said. “When you go to Washington and you work, you really don’t want to talk about work. ... And the type of work that he was involved in was pretty difficult to talk about.”

Assigned to President John F. Kennedy in 1963, after beginning work with the Secret Service in 1962, Faison had a commitment to excellence that earlier had made him one of the youngest first sergeants in the Korean War at the age of 22.

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover reportedly questioned the president on the wisdom of entrusting his life to a black man.

Another sign of the times was the trouble the detail ran into when trying to check into the hotel in Dallas on the trip during which Kennedy was assassinated. According to Gerald Blaine, a former special agent and co-author of the book The Kennedy Detail, a clerk told them they “would have to make other arrangements for the Negro.” He quickly changed his mind after being told that if Faison couldn’t stay, no one would.

After ending work as a special agent, Faison spent the next several years as a contractor for the Secret Service, conducting background investigations for prospective agents before retiring in 1995.

“He was a very friendly and outgoing person,” Rucker says. “He was a person that was very thoughtful about the individuals that were around him and surrounded him. He was involved with the community. He was an overall good person. ... He didn’t wear his achievement on his sleeves or anything.”

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Anthony Walker ’97
Special Agent, State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security

By the time Anthony Walker graduated in 1997, Robert Faison had already retired. But the trail Faison blazed was still there for Walker and others of his generation.

“I went through training with other men and women from HBCUs (Howard, Morgan State, FAMU, Morehouse),” Walker says. “We certainly are aware that we stand on the shoulders of men like Agent Faison. ... He’s gone but you can see his legacy throughout all areas of the Federal law enforcement community.”

A&T played a key role in Walker’s journey to his current position and to success in life.

“My very first day at A&T, Mr. Joe Dudley came and spoke to the entire freshman class. I can hear his words clear today, ‘Don’t ever give up—ever!’”

“Aggie and had the opportunity to promote the U.S. in my own Southern style,” he says. “But I have been in the company of kings and queens, slept under the stars in the Kalahari, and had the opportunity to promote the U.S. in my own Southern style,” he says. “But I was in the company of kings and queens, slept under the stars in the Kalahari, and had the opportunity to promote the U.S. in my own Southern style.”

Walker credits one sociology professor in particular, Dr. Thorpe, with helping him choose his life’s work.

“He once spoke about catching a criminal using only the butt-end of a cigarette. From that moment on, I wanted to be a Federal Agent,” Walker recalls. “Growing up in my small Southern town, my school’s English and grammar curriculum were sorely lacking. During the English placement testing, the English professor said, ‘Honey, we need to work with you. This is not going to cut it — but we will get there.’ They did work with me, and before I graduated I completed an internship with the Guilford County DA’s Office in Greensboro and then became a probation officer, finally landing at the State Department.”

The Bureau of Diplomatic Security’s special agents comprise the security law enforcement arm of the State Department. Among their duties are protecting the Secretary of State and visiting foreign dignitaries, investigating passport and visa fraud, and protecting more than 285 U.S. foreign missions worldwide.

Walker has had overseas postings including Belgium, Botswana and Canada, where he currently lives with his wife and fellow Aggie Taushia Walker ’97 and their young son.

He served several years on U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell’s protective detail.

“I have been in the company of kings and queens, slept under the stars in the Kalahari, and had the opportunity to promote the U.S. in my own Southern style,” he says. “But if I had to choose one highlight, it would be meeting Nelson Mandela.”

A native of Reidsville, N.C., Walker is grateful for the opportunity he has to take Aggie Pride worldwide.

“I have had a great opportunity to serve my country,” he says. “It is a humbling thing when I sit and really think about it — I owe so much to so many. That debt drives me to keep pushing, learning and making a little difference along the way.”

Alumni Ralph and Christine Shelton have shared the fruits of their labor with the university for decades, establishing an endowed scholarship fund and athletics endowments along the way.

Fifty years ago, Christine and Ralph Shelton, both class of 1964, met for the first time in the campus dining hall on a dark, cold, wintry evening. Ralph had caught her eye that autumn and friends eventually set them up.

“At the time, A&T was known to have many more males than females, so we could be pretty choosy,” said Christine. “It was September of my sophomore year when I noticed my husband. There was something about his persona. We met in February 1962, and from that moment forward things progressed as I liked it.”

Ralph, who was also a sophomore, walked her back to her dorm. They quickly found similarities in their backgrounds and set a date to see a movie. They became best friends, married a year later, and today have decades of shared memories and experiences behind them. The laughter and understanding come easily. But do they argue? “Oh, yes!” they both said, as the conversation grew lively.

“Marriages that last the longest are the ones where you are each other’s best friend, but you also differ with each other and complement each other,” said Ralph. “There are things that we disagree on, but at the end of the day, we help each other arrive at the right decision. Differences can end up being very wholesome because you help each other. And that’s probably how I would describe our marriage.”

They both first arrived on campus in September 1960, a little over six months after the Greensboro sit-ins.

“AGT helped us realize our chance of a better life, and for many of us they did a great job with that,” said Ralph. “We did not come from families of wealth, but we were raised to value family, hard work and community.”

She studied business education and, as they neared graduation, initially accepted a job with the U.S. Department of Labor. But an internship in the business office at A&T led to a second job offer. She accepted it and worked in the office for 30 years. He studied sociology with a minor in economics, took a job in Guilford County’s welfare department, soon went back to school and got his MBA at Wake Forest University, graduated from the Minority Executive Program at the University of Virginia, and eventually started his own business, Southeast Fuels.

The Sheltons settled in Greensboro, and even as they began paying back their student loans they started giving back to A&T as donors.

“We both grew up surrounded by love and were told by our parents to treat others as we would want to be treated. I don’t think there is a better investment anyone can make than in the investment in the education of our youth. It’s the best equalizer and does so much for our society. For these reasons, we gave back and we’ll always give back,” he said.
Adding Value

Roast pays tribute to alumna Dr. Velma Ruth Speight-Buford '53 and raises funds for N.C. A&T

By Jaya Wesley

“Adding Value”

Roast pays tribute to alumna Dr. Velma Ruth Speight-Buford ’53 and raises funds for N.C. A&T

From the legions of Aggies before and after her class of 1953, to current students, employees and alumni, Dr. Velma R. Speight-Buford is known and loved by individuals throughout Aggieland.

Both on the campus and through far flung places worldwide where the university’s graduates are making their mark, you can hear her praises sung. On May 11, those praises—along with a few anecdotes—were heard at a fundraiser and roast held in Speight-Buford’s honor.

The event came about at the urging of Julia Books, class of 1943, and under the leadership of Shirley T. Frye ’53, Speight-Buford’s longtime friend and classmate.

“She adores Velma,” Frye says of Brooks. “She came to me (last) Homecoming and said to me, ’Shirley, for five plus years I have asked you to do something to honor Velma. I’m 90-something years old and I don’t want to die without you having done that.’”

That just touched my heart.”

So Frye got busy and called together a committee with the help of Helen Butler-Duncan ’73 and Pamlyn Stubbs ’66. The committee met weekly, and by the time the invitations were ready to send out, they already had sold six tables.

It couldn’t have been an easier sell—culling together support for a woman who puts her money where her mouth is, and can’t get enough of talking up A&T.

“Adding Value”

Roast pays tribute to alumna Dr. Velma Ruth Speight-Buford ’53 and raises funds for N.C. A&T

“I’m excited about the future for A&T, because I think that Dr. Martin (chancellor) not only has the best interest of A&T at heart, but he is a good administrator and he knows exactly what needs to be done,” Speight-Buford said in a recent interview. “With his strategic plan for 2020, I think we’re well on our way.”

That unwavering faith in her alma mater is rooted in her personal history with the school that began when the Snow Hill, N.C., native was a student almost too poor to attend, but got financial assistance alongside with other support and nurturing. At age 15, Speight-Buford enrolled at what was then A. and T. College. She arrived on campus with $1.50, and was told by her father that she could come home only during the Christmas holidays.

Speight-Buford made friends with those whom she remains close to this day, and developed an unrivaled devotion to adding value to the education she received by continuing her education, making a difference in the workplace and then literally paying it forward. Over the years, she has given generously to the university in donations that included monetary gifts as well as several acres of real estate property and a planned gift. She has also helped countless students when they were in need—even when she didn’t personally know them.

Yolanda Briggs ’12 was one such person. Briggs was introduced over the phone by her friend Dexter Mullins ’11 when she was in the midst of a financial dispute with a housing administrator.

“She hadn’t even met me. I explained to her what happened and she went over there and talked to (the housing administrator) and the chancellor, and wrote a check out of her own account,” Briggs remembers. “I looked at Dexter and I was crying, ‘I can’t believe she did that and she doesn’t even know me.’”

Rashaad Hoggard ’09, a recent divinity school graduate, also has benefited from Speight-Buford’s multifaceted support. He describes her as a living legend and notes that she encourages all Aggies to dig deep and financially support A&T as she has, with gifts and planned gifts in the millions of dollars.

“She pushes her mentees and students forward, encouraging us to create opportunities for those who come after us,” he says. “Additionally, she demands that we promote and uplift our alma mater with excellence in all that we do.”

Frye, who calls Speight-Buford her sister away from home, credits her with the introduction that led to her marrying classmate Henry E. Frye ’53, a former N.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice. It happened at an honor society’s party at Greensboro’s old Magnolia House.

Also at that party was David McElveen ’53, who was president of the class and one of the individuals who paid tribute at the event on May 11.

“I have known her since we were both teenagers. Shirley, Henry, Velma and I were probably closer than most people on the campus. We are—all four of us—still close friends,” he says. “There have been some times worthy of roast. Seasoned well and rare.”

There were many laughs at the event, as well as heartfelt moments recounted by the recipients of her generosity over the years.

Even though the event is over, contributions can still be made to the Velma R. Speight-Buford Scholarship Fund by contacting the North Carolina A&T University Foundation at 336-433-5560 or by sending a check made out to the N.C. A&T University Foundation and write ‘Velma R. Speight-Buford Scholarship Fund’ on the memo line.

During and after her pioneering and stellar career with Maryland’s Department of Education, Speight-Buford also has shared her invaluable leadership ability through service in roles including president of the alumni association, director of alumni affairs and chair of the board of trustees.

Says McElveen: “She is a very natural leader. In fact, probably the best leader overall we had in our class. She has been a major contributor to the university and to our class. She’s kind of the web that keeps us together. ... The class of ’53 has contributed more than any other class in the university’s history. Velma is the cog that makes that wheel go.”

Shirley Frye agrees.

“Somebody will be complaining about an athletic team or something, and Velma will say, ‘You know I looked at the list and you haven’t given a dime. You don’t have a right to complain.’
The Will: An Essential Part of Adult Life

By Carlo Laurore

How many times have you seen or read an article about the importance of having a will? Probably more often than you care to remember.

Every adult needs a will; yet many put off establishing one as long as possible. And even those who have one should update it when major changes occur in their lives.

This could be the last article about wills you’ll ever need to read. The Office of Gift Planning at North Carolina A&T State University has a free packet of information ready to send to you that contains up-to-date material on wills, probate and estate planning tips and ideas. And it’s available by postal mail or email, your choice.

Our wills kit is interesting, practical, very easy to understand, and useful. In it you will find sample language for making a variety of different bequests, testimonials from other individuals about how our kit helped them, a Q&A about general estate-planning issues, information about will “substitutes,” and other planning techniques that supplement an effective will.

The wills kit might also save you money, both now and in the future. After spending a few minutes with our kit, you will begin to realize the more important matters at hand. This small effort can save you time and money when you then visit your attorney and, at last, set up or update your will. You’ll be prepared to meet with your attorney and direct how you want things to go once your estate is activated.

We have the packets, and we are standing by to put your name on one. Call me, Carlo Laurore, director of gift planning, at 336-334-7600, or send an email to claurore@ncat.edu. Think of it as the beginning of the end of wills articles and procrastination.

The Will: An Essential Part of Adult Life

North Carolina A&T State University celebrated the 70th anniversary of the B-1 U.S. Navy Band on April 14.

The story of the first all-Negro Navy band of World War II dates back to April of 1942, when plans were being advanced to organize a 44-piece band for the U.S. Navy Pre-Flight School scheduled for commission the following month at Chapel Hill, N.C. The objective was to form the band from the best Negro musicians available in the state, and on May 27, 1942, the B-1 U.S. Navy Band was officially formed. On July 31, 44 young men reported to Chapel Hill, then entrained for Norfolk, Va., and nine weeks of naval indoctrination.

The recruits were young men who “knew how to act: as well as be excellent musicians.” The A&T College Band, “recognized as one of the finest college organizations of its kind in the country” was “to be the nucleus of the first colored Navy Band,” as written in the Chicago Defender (1942). Serving in this band allowed the band members to serve the military without being drafted and, as they figured out, they were breaking the color barrier and had roles beyond being messmen and janitors.

As a segregated unit, the establishment of the B-1 was a major move toward integration of the modern U.S. Navy. The unit was essentially a college trained group, one-third of them being college graduates and nearly all of the rest having at least two years of college work to their credit. They marched from their campuses into the history books, only to be forgotten by both the Navy and American history as true heroes.
When you hear the word “library,” you probably think of books. For decades, books have been the library’s defining decorative element and have served as a primary means of disseminating information and knowledge. With the advent of the digital age, one must give thought to the future of the library. Before delving into the future, let’s talk about the present.

As members of the N.C. A&T alumni community, when visiting the campus feel free to stop by the library and access thousands of licensed electronic resources or browse the books in the stacks. Also, I invite you to stay abreast of the library’s activities by following us on Twitter at @blufordlibrary. In the future, please consider an annual gift to Bluford Library so that we can continue to bring digital collections, such as the student newspaper and the yearbook, to you. Your contribution will help to maintain a premier library system that serves students, faculty, alumni and the state of North Carolina.

Vicki Coleman is the dean of library services at North Carolina A&T State University.

Academic Libraries: Past, Present, and Future
By Vicki Coleman

Academic libraries today are as much defined by accessibility to information and knowledge in digital formats, such as electronic books and journals, research databases and streamed media, as they are books and journals in printed format. Digital resources and collections make it possible for faculty, students, and researchers to use library resources anytime and anywhere, regardless of location. Where prior generations came to the library armed with a notebook and pen to record information, today’s library users retrieve and download many of the library’s resources via their smart phones, laptop computers, and tablet PCs.

In the future, academic libraries will continue to foster research and discovery. The library’s virtual presence will be well integrated into the university’s research, teaching and learning environments. Core services will provide library users with access to physical and virtual resources that that cultivate and inspire the exploration and discovery of knowledge. The physical library will continue as a vital academic resource, providing spaces that support the university’s culture of transformative research and creative scholarship.

Presently, the F.D. Bluford Library at North Carolina A&T State University is deeply immersed in the strategic planning process for Preeminence 2020. Our goals focus on enhancing student success, advancing research, expanding the library’s digital presence, and preserving the intellectual and cultural record of the University. Regarding the latter, the library recently engaged in initiatives to digitize The A&T Register and the Ayantee Yearbook; both are accessible via the library’s website at www.library.ncat.edu.

Sometimes, a classroom is more than a space filled with desks, students and a professor. Sometimes it’s a gateway—a place where we finally begin answering the question “what do you want to be when you grow up?” At North Carolina A&T State University, we offer students the chance to see themselves in the careers they’ve dreamt of pursuing. That means ensuring that the learning experience at our university mirrors the world awaiting our students after they leave. Because at A&T, a degree doesn’t mean you’re finished learning. It means you’re about to begin making a difference in the world.