

Digest

► **April 22, 2009**

A newsletter for North Georgia College & State University

North Georgia promotes language education programs

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New VP named for institutional advancement

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Alumni Association honors alumni, faculty and students

Cadets participate in national military leadership conference

Gen. William J. Livsey Field dedication

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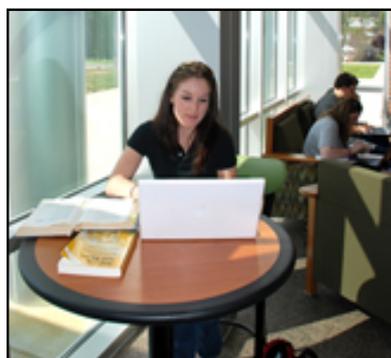
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residents. They came for the Night Hike education event at Yahoola Creek Park to participate in activities North Georgia's student leaders had planned for three months. The turnout was far beyond expectations, but students in the Foundations of Leadership course were prepared to offer an educational experience local families wouldn't soon forget.

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education in the north Georgia region as demand within the University System of Georgia is anticipated to add another 100,000 students to the system by 2020.

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Director of University Relations: Kate Maine
Public Relations Coordinator: Joshua Preston
Designer: Debbie Martin

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Service-learning experiences prominent at leadership conference

By Joshua Preston

North Georgia's single largest service project this academic year took place under the cover of darkness along a mile-and-a-half of wooded hillside trails in October and attracted more than 700 local residents. They came for the Night Hike education event at Yahoola Creek Park to participate in activities North Georgia's student leaders had planned for three months. The turnout was far beyond expectations, but students in the Foundations of Leadership course were prepared to offer an educational experience local families wouldn't soon forget.

Students dressed as nocturnal wildlife and became trail guides, they set up telescopes that children could view the stars through, and they made nature-themed arts and crafts with participants of all ages. The concept of the Night Hike was to help children to "not be afraid of nature and make them want to come out and explore," Harriett Grau, a student organizer, said.

The scope of the students' impact in the community, through more than 30 service projects inspired by Yahoola Creek this past fall semester, was presented to audiences for the first time at the North Georgia Regional Leadership Conference, an annual event that brought together college student leaders from across Georgia in April.

At the Yahoola Creek presentation, one of the best-attended sessions of the two-day event, the audience saw just how deeply North Georgia's students have connected their classroom leadership theories to real-world applications through Foundations of Leadership, the 2-year-old core curriculum course that has become a cornerstone for freshmen developing their personal leadership styles.

North Georgia's entire freshman class partnered with the Yahoola Creek Trails Conservancy, contributing 4,000 volunteer hours and more than \$35,000 in labor, to enhance the non-profit's capacity to expand the Yahoola trails and create a future 500-acre park preserve for Dahlonega.

The 18-month-old Yahoola Creek Trails Conservancy developed a dream list, "something maybe we could accomplish in 10 years, and with the college, we did it in three months," Judy Toppins, president of the group and a biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said.

The service-learning projects students developed are some of the most critical efforts in creating awareness of Yahoola and meeting the many needs of the community, Toppins said at the conference. The trails and green space at the park add to the quality of life, benefit the local economy, and build a sense of community, she said.

The leadership conference allowed North Georgia's students to showcase the projects and emphasize how meaningful the service has been to their college experience, and it gave audience members an understanding of how students took on such far-reaching ideas.

The key was allowing students to have creative freedom within certain boundaries, Ashley Parker, a project leader, said. "That's why I think Yahoola was such a success — we weren't saying you have to do things this way or that. The freshmen were able to make it their own."

The impact of the projects, roughly split into three categories, would be hard to quantify. Educational pieces, such as online videos and brochures, are now used to attract visitors to Yahoola Creek Park. Projects



At the annual leadership conference, Judy Toppins, president of the Yahoola Creek Trails Conservancy, along with students Ashley Parker and Harriett Grau, student instructors for Foundations of Leadership, talk about the experience to develop major green space efforts in the community. (Photo: Joshua Preston)

that focused on community engagement will last for years, such as the "nature packs" filled with supplies that were donated to the Dawson County Library and can be checked out and used to learn about the outdoors. Even one-time events, such as Art in the Park, the Night Hike, Trail Day and Field Day, built a stronger relationship between the community and North Georgia. A multi-media presentation of some of the projects is available at glogster.com using the search term "NGCSU leadership."

Toppins said students may not truly appreciate what they have done and that "the students have inspired us and we've been able to continue the work" on the Yahoola trails.

The benefit to students has also been immeasurable. In North Georgia's efforts to build a leadership paradigm for its entire student body, the Foundations of Leadership course, fostered by Dr. Michele Hill, has become a rallying point for those looking to become involved beyond the campus.

Undergraduates actually teach the required course, another one of its unique dynamics, and the success the students have had in building the service-project component has only made them more motivated.

"I love transforming someone, teaching them and watching them grow and knowing I contributed to that," Brittany Hellmeister, one of the student instructors, said. "In the leadership course, you help students find their own inspiration and vision and guide them."

Growth in online courses increases university access

By Joshua Preston

As North Georgia's new master plan to increase physical capacity for enrollment growth nears completion, a goal to accommodate increased access in cyberspace is taking shape. The two parallel tracks are designed with the primary purpose of increasing access to higher education in the north Georgia region as demand within the University System of Georgia is anticipated to add another 100,000 students to the system by 2020.

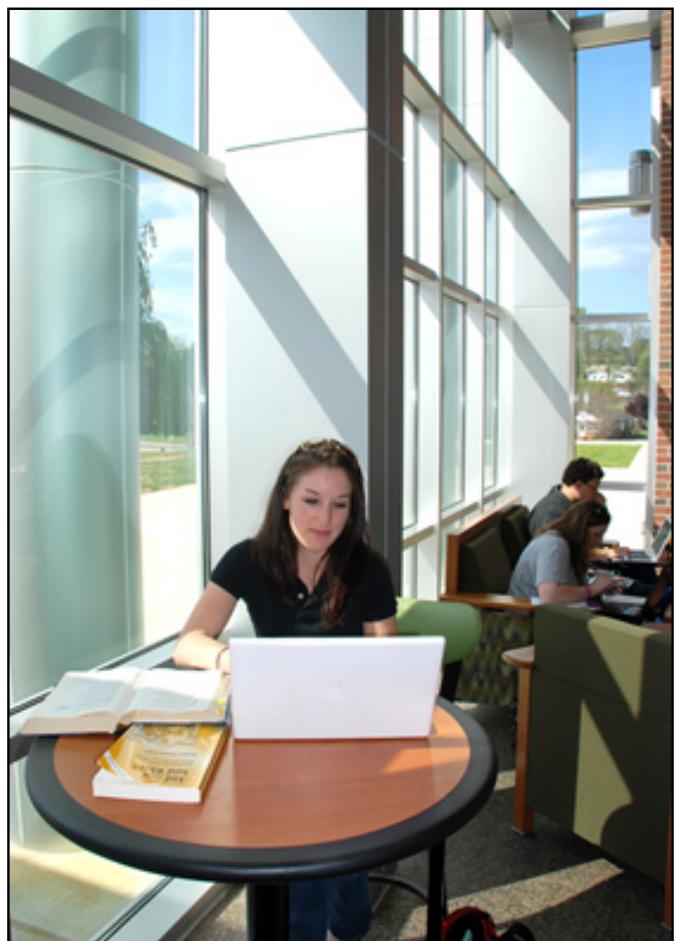
According to the university's Center of Teaching and Learning Excellence, or CTLE, 30 Web-based courses are in the development or review stage at North Georgia, and of the 1,613 class sessions offered this academic year, 70 were online.

North Georgia's online courses — defined as 95 percent of content delivered via the Internet — accounted for 4.3 percent of all courses offered during the 2008-09 academic year, based on the results from a Board of Regents technology survey filled out by faculty members.

Plans are under way to improve that percentage and identify a targeted increase in online learning to support the USG's strategic goal of 8.4 percent of all system courses offered through distance learning by 2012, up from the current 5.4 percent.

Online instructional design services, offered through the CTLE, and incentives for faculty to make the jump into the virtual classroom have already had an impact on campus.

One example is the Foundations of Leadership course, a key leadership class taken by every freshman,



Laptop computers and wireless Internet have made it possible for classes to take place anywhere. Brittany Parson, an English education senior, finishes her finals on her Mac at the Java City coffee bistro in the library.

(Photo: Joshua Preston)

designed as an online course in collaboration with the CTLE and delivered through VISTA, the school's primary online learning tool.

"The course contributes to our success of having more online learners because freshmen are exposed to VISTA from their first semester," Dr. Irene Kokkala, director of the CTLE, said. "Students are becoming more comfortable with the online course delivery system."

Kokkala noted two departments that are leading the way in teaching courses online. Nursing offers the entire program for the Bachelor of Science in nursing online as well as in the classroom, an option since 2004. Through teacher education, a Master of Education degree in middle grades math and science education is taught online in collaboration with Valdosta State University, who has also partnered with North Georgia on two other online master's programs.

Dr. Terrie Millard in physical therapy used the CTLE to develop transitional courses for graduate students who are enrolled in the Doctorate of Physical Therapy degree program but who started the program while it was still at the master's level. The DPT is now the terminal degree for the field.

"One of the biggest incentives we have to keep online learning growing is the Military Education Initiative," said Kokkala, referring to the USG program that North Georgia is leading to increase public higher education access to military personnel stationed around the globe.

North Georgia will introduce an online Master of Arts in International Affairs, the first in the state, starting fall semester and whose target demographic includes military service members. The program will come with its own tuition model, \$250 per credit hour, which has been approved for all online courses offered by North Georgia starting in the fall of 2009, to support the requirements needed for distance learning, such as custom technology support and a position for an instructional designer.

The CTLE will support faculty for the new online MA degree and be the university's primary source for faculty development as online education increases. Its goal will be to develop dynamic online courses that integrate sound teaching techniques, address different learning styles and promote collaboration.

North Georgia promotes language education programs

By Christian Pennington and Kate Maine

In the short span of a few days, North Georgia College & State University hosted two events to support and promote education programs in modern languages. The first was the university's 34th annual Foreign Language Day and the second was a professional development workshop for Chinese teachers. The success of both events demonstrates the growth in modern language education programs at the high school level and North Georgia's goal to prepare students to work and live in a global community.

Foreign Language Day showcases student achievement

This year's Foreign Language Day drew nearly 300 students and their teachers from 12 area schools to show off what they have been working on and have learned during the school year.

The event, which was held on April 16 in the Hoag Student Center, included exhibits reflecting the culture of countries around the world, a performing arts portion and a language bowl competition.

"This big celebration is very important to me and to our visitors, whose energy, vibrant spirits and healthy competition are at the end the most precious reward," said Dr. Alvaro Torres-Calderon, the event director and assistant professor in the Department of Modern Languages.

Foreign Language Day involves many North Georgia faculty members who help coordinate, judge and direct events.

Students performed skits in Spanish, German, French, and Chinese, and musical and dance performances added to the entertainment of the day. The language bowl competition featured each of the 12 participating high schools and provided students an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to speak and understand the languages they have been studying.

Chinese teachers explore and exchange classroom techniques

North Georgia's School of Arts & Letters and School of Education sponsored a professional development workshop on April 18 to help Chinese language teachers enhance their teaching and classroom skills. The event attracted nearly 20 teachers from Georgia schools.



Jian Gao, a nationally acclaimed Chinese language teacher, demonstrated classroom techniques and activities at a professional development workshop at North Georgia.

(Photo: Kate Maine)

"Most of the participants teach at the high school level, but there were also some who teach at the elementary and middle school levels," said Dr. Yan Gao, associate professor of Chinese in the Department of Modern Languages.

The event featured Jian Gao, a nationally acclaimed Chinese language teacher from Belmont Hill School in Massachusetts, who demonstrated techniques and activities that helped lead her students to success in national and international competitions.

During the workshop's afternoon session, Mariana Stone, assistant professor and coordinator for the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program in North Georgia's School of Education, presented a session on classroom management skills.

The workshop concluded with an opportunity for the teachers to participate in round-table discussions to share their own successful examples for instruction.

University names new vice president for institutional advancement

By Kate Maine

North Georgia College & State University has hired Dr. Andrew Leavitt as its new vice president for institutional advancement. Leavitt, who will begin working at North Georgia on June 1, succeeds Bruce Howerton, who retired in December 2008.

"North Georgia is striving to meet growing student and regional needs, and there are many exciting projects on the horizon that depend upon expanded state and private support for their success," Dr. David Potter, university president, said in sharing the news with the campus community. "Andy Leavitt brings valuable experience to the advancement function at North Georgia and the important role it plays in communicating the mission of the university and developing resources that support and enhance our work."



Dr. Andrew Leavitt

As associate vice president for development and alumni relations at the University of West Georgia from 2005 through 2008, Leavitt managed the university's donor programs, community relations activities, and alumni special events programs and recognition activities.

During that same time, he served as executive director and treasurer of the institution's foundation and worked with the board of trustees to develop fund-raising strategies, administered major real estate holdings for residence hall development, and oversaw the development of two major construction projects – a 9,500-seat stadium and a Greek Village.

North Georgia's Office of Institutional Advancement encompasses alumni affairs, development, university relations, and management of the NGCSU Foundation, which provides philanthropic support to the university.

Leavitt, a native of Tucson, Ariz., is also a chemistry professor at the University of West Georgia and has taught at the institution since 1994. He holds a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Utah and a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of Arizona. In 2006, he completed the Management Development Program at the Harvard Institutes for Higher Education.

Alumni Association honors alumni, faculty and students

By Kate Maine

The Alumni Association of North Georgia College & State University presented Martha Merritt, assistant professor in the university's Mike Cottrell School of Business, with this year's Alumni Distinguished Professor Award at the organization's annual awards banquet on April 18. Merritt began teaching accounting at North Georgia in 1988.

The Alumni Association also recognized Anne Amerson, a Dahlonega native and 1956 graduate of North Georgia, with its Hall of Fame Award.

"Membership in the Hall of Fame Award is the highest and most prestigious internal recognition that the university and the Alumni Association can bestow upon a graduate," Mark Howarth, director of alumni affairs, said of the award.



Martha Merritt (right) accepts this year's Alumni Distinguished Professor Award from Dr. Linda Roberts-Betsch, vice president for academic affairs, at the awards banquet held on April 18.



Anne Amerson

Amerson, who grew up on the North Georgia campus, where her father taught from 1933 to 1963, began collecting oral history in 1989, and wrote a column, "I Remember Dahlonega" for *The Dahlonega Nugget* until 1999. She has since authored Dahlonega's Public Square and four volumes of *I Remember Dahlonega*. Her most recent book, a historical novel published by the University Press of North Georgia, is called *Dahlonega's Gold*. It tells the story of America's first major Gold Rush, the Trail of Tears and the Civil War through the eyes of young bride.

Bob Stein, a 1971 North Georgia graduate who lives in Tucker, Ga., received the Distinguished Alumnus Award for his record of service and support to the university. Stein, once a member of the university's baseball team and a volunteer assistant coach, is the sponsor of the Bob Stein Baseball Scholarship. Additionally, the university's new baseball stadium has been named in Stein's honor.

Tiffany Hudak, a 1995 graduate of North Georgia and resident of Bishop, Ga., received the Young Alumnus Award. Hudak, a surgical nurse, was crowned Mrs. Georgia United States in 2008 and used her platform to bring attention to the prevention of lung cancer, a disease from which her mother died.

The Alumni Association also recognized two students with the Paul M. Hutcherson Award, which is presented annually to a male and female senior who have shown strong personal conduct, as well as individual accomplishment on campus, at home and in the community. This year's award recipients are Lorraine Villasenor, an English education major, and Earl Porter III, a criminal justice major.

Gen. William J. Livsey Field dedication



The drill field at North Georgia College & State University, an icon for generations of students, was dedicated in honor of Gen. William J. Livsey, pictured here, on Saturday, April 18, during the university's 2009 Parents-Alumni Weekend. Livsey, a native of Clarkston, Ga., graduated from North Georgia in 1952 and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in U.S. Army's infantry division. He is the only North Georgia graduate to achieve the rank of four-star general. *(Photo: Kate Maine)*

Take note...

Visual Arts to host open house this Friday

The Department of Visual Arts will host an open house on Friday, April 24, 11 am to noon, in 212 West Main Hall, to showcase digital art created by students in digital photography and graphic design courses. This marks the end of a momentous first year for the department's new graphics production studio. With the increased capabilities of the new hardware and software and the innovative teaching of Paul Dunlap in photography and Jon Mehlferber, new graphic design professor, students are producing significantly more advanced and creative digital art. The Board of Regents has approved North Georgia's plan to offer a minor in graphic design effective immediately, and the minor is open to all majors except those in visual arts degree programs (art, art marketing and art education).

Campus in Action

Carpenter receives grant

Dr. Holly Carpenter, assistant professor of chemistry, has received a three-year research grant from the U.S. Air Force Office of Scientific Research. The grant will fund her work and that of two undergraduate students on "Synthesis and Structural Characterization of Reflectin Proteins," beginning this summer.

Roberts competes in national championship

Cheryl Roberts, All-American and captain of the university's intercollegiate pistol team, competed in the Junior Olympics National Championships, held at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Col., this past week. In the women's air pistol event, Roberts made it to the final round, which is limited to the event's top eight athletes, and placed fifth. In the women's sport pistol event, a challenging mix of precision and rapid fire with a .22 semi-automatic target pistol, Roberts again earned a spot in the final round and earned sixth place.

Webb earns CISSP designation

Jim Webb, information & instructional technology, has achieved the Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) designation. CISSP is an independent information security certification governed by the International Information Systems Security Certification Consortium, commonly known as (ISC)². (ISC)² promotes the CISSP certification as the "international gold standard" for information security professionals,

and Webb is the first IIT staff member at North Georgia to receive this prestigious recognition. He is the university's information security officer, managing the Information Security Services team, and has worked in IIT at North Georgia since 2000.

Softball team wins PBC championship

The **Saints softball team** won the Peach Belt Conference regular season championship and the Peach Belt Tournament Championship. Congratulations to the athletes and their coaches, particularly **Mike Davenport**, who was named PBC Coach of the Year and earned his 354th career win with the championship victory. Read more details [online](#).

North Georgia faculty and staff are invited to submit news of professional accomplishments for the Campus in Action section to digest@ngcsu.edu.