Columns Spring 2018

Southern Adventist University

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Building a Stronger Southern Together
The Southern family grapples with a complex racial history, while making strides toward an inclusive, Christ-centered future | page 12
Celebrating Southern’s Culture

Student Association (SA) ended the year with a festive night celebrating the diverse cultures that combine to enrich Southern’s campus. “This Is Us” featured a wide variety of food, skits, and performances by students. Freshman Jamelis Figueroa, who is majoring in health, physical education, and recreation, carried the Malaysian flag during the opening parade of nations. This event was the brainchild of SA President Phillip Warfield (see page 19) and was the culmination of his year-long campaign to foster inclusion and unity on campus.

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Graduation weekend is a high point in any college career. The pomp and circumstance, friends and family, and guest speakers contribute to the air of celebration. Yet Commencement is just the tip of the iceberg.

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Southern is making strides to lay a history of racial tension to rest and commit to more intentional inclusion moving forward.

20 Let Your Light Shine
Southern is shaped in large part by students who are so full of God’s love that it overflows to those around them. Meet a few of these shining lights.

22 A Southern Welcome
A thriving university is like a stone cast into a pond, with a ripple effect that reaches far beyond grades and diplomas. As Southern strives to offer a first-rate education and resources for its students, it also welcomes the surrounding community to enjoy numerous enriching opportunities on campus.

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In 1972, when Southern was still Southern Missionary College and Four Corners was a simple four-way stop, the yearbook staff documented the drive from I-75 to campus. While the last 46 years have brought significant change and growth to the surrounding area and to the school, travelers can still find familiar landmarks, such as the gas station at the intersection of Old Lee Highway and Apison Pike, and the iconic columns of Wright Hall. See how these photos compare to your time at Southern!

To view larger versions of these comparison photos, visit southern.edu/thenandnow.

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**Students Mentor Middle Schoolers in Computer Science**

Southern Adventist University students have taken the initiative to mentor middle-school-aged girls through a program they call Hire Tech Minded Ladies (HTML).

Headed by Enactus members Eileen Flores, junior management major, and Natasha Panjaitan, sophomore management major, the program is in collaboration with Girls Who Code, a nationwide nonprofit organization that works to increase the number of women in the field of computer science.

“I just wanted to do something bigger than myself, and I think there is a lot of potential in the Chattanooga area to impact women in the technology industry,” Panjaitan said. “With computer science, you can be really independent. You can start companies and have big opportunities just because of this one skill. So we wanted to bring this opportunity to the younger girls in our community.”

Each weekly meeting consists of spending time discussing the prior week, watching videos about prominent females in the computer science field, and working on a health and wellness app that the girls are designing and coding.

“The middle school girls who take part in this on-campus program say they deeply enjoy being able to spend time with new friends, learn new skills, and be mentored by the college-aged girls. “A friend told me about the program, and we had something like this at our school, but it wasn’t as interesting as HTML,” said Naomi Diaz, a participant. “I also want to do something like this in the future. I like the videos and coding.”

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As a student at Southern, the ideologies of several faculty members impacted Shaw. Former physics professor Ray Heffelfin, for example, made a lasting impact on his outlook on life.

“I really enjoyed classes taught by Dr. Heffelfin; he had a natural ability to connect science, philosophy, and religion together,” Shaw said. “His course on the philosophy of how the universe works is what I remember more than any other academic experience in college.”

The first awards of the endowment will be given to students in the fall 2018 semester. Southern invites additional gifts to grow the Dr. Rahn and Natalia Shaw Endowed Scholarship Fund, part of Southern’s Campaign for Excellence in Faith and Learning.

She is also a gifted communicator and good listener. These abilities will serve her well in any setting, whether here or internationally,” said Karaan Powell, JD, MFA, director of the Global Community Development program.

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**Southern Welcomes New Associate Vice President for Academic Administration**

Donnie Felix, PhD, will join Southern’s administrative team as the new associate vice president for Academic Administration beginning this June.

Felix will oversee institutional research, online learning, and much more as she works closely with Senior Vice President for Academic Administration Robert Young, PhD.

“I am delighted Dr. Felix has agreed to join the administration of the university,” Young said. “She brings a passion for faculty development and student success that will be very helpful in her daily work.

**Endowed Scholarship Funds New Global Community Development Program Offers Local Field Work Option**

The Global Community Development program at Southern can now be completed without leaving the United States. We required students to spend several weeks abroad gaining hands-on experience in the field, now they can choose to work with the United Way in Chattanooga to gain applicable experience in a more affordable and accessible way.

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Fascinated by People
by Natalia Perez, junior mass communication major

At the age of 3, Ruth gathered a stack of Christmas cards sent from family friends. She lined them up, named each one, and treated them as her students. She taught them everything she knew including the alphabet, counting, and Sabbath school lessons. Her makeshift classroom of holiday correspondence was the humble beginning for a now passionate and imaginative professor.

Ruth Williams, PhD, psychology professor at Southern, can’t remember ever wanting to pursue any career other than teaching. Her love for it was further expanded by her father’s love of reading. She craved knowledge and the growth it fostered, and she yearned to share it with others.

Williams believes that the true principles of psychology are found in the Bible. Her goal is to do the abundant life,” she said. “Psychology is one way to learn about God while learning about each other,” she said, “because God brings psychology into the full picture.”

Williams’ work is characterized by a missionary zeal, especially in Research Design and Statistics I and II, her infamous, year-long research course required for psychology and social work majors. As part of the class, students must develop an idea for an independent, scientific research project, which they conduct over the course of the year, presenting the findings on Campus Research Day.

“Every time I think I should back off on the difficulty, I get emails from students who thank me,” Williams said. “They say things like ‘Thank you so much! I hated it, and I had a love-hate relationship with you, but it was the one thing I feel has built my character and has been instrumental in forming the person I am today.’”

She explained that every things comes into perspective on Campus Research Day; once students see the culmination of all their hard work, they carry a sense of accomplishment. Williams takes joy in that. “Seeing them thrive and flourish, that’s my pay.”

“Dr. Williams is an inspiration,” said Adonjah “Nina” McCann, junior psychology major. “She pushes you to reach limits that you didn’t know you could reach. When she speaks, you listen, and you know you’ll come out a better person because of it.”

“When I think of Professor Williams, I think of power and wisdom personified,” said Dylan Gibbons, junior social work major. “When she steps into a room, the atmosphere changes. She is a motivator of enormous proportions, a challenging professor, but most of all an incredible witness of God’s wisdom and goodness.”

For All Students

Part of Williams’ fascination with people comes from their differences; she is particularly intrigued by people who think differently from her. Her openness has made her office a haven for students. For example, after the presidential election in 2016, students from all over the political spectrum sought out Williams.

“I need to care for all students,” Williams said. “If I stop caring, I shouldn’t be here … but I am here because God wants me to be. I am happy here. This diverse environment provides great opportunity for discussion. I’ve had a good experience at Southern Adventist University with faculty, with staff, and with employees. I have friends and people I love all across campus.”

Pi Day With an Astronaut

With 20 years of experience working for NASA, Don Thomas knows a thing or two about space. He flew four space shuttle missions, logging 44 days in space and orbiting the Earth nearly 700 times. To celebrate Pi Day (March 14) this spring, the Physics and Engineering Department partnered with College of Arts and Sciences to invite Thomas to campus, where he inspired a new generation to look to the stars. After the talk, Josiah Lucas, son of John, ’02, and Lora, ’03, presented Thomas with his drawing of a rocket.
As she wraps up four years at Southern, Chelsea Dancek, ‘18, plans to use the talents she cultivated here to serve God. While she was initially drawn to campus by the friendly environment and helpful professors, she quickly noticed something else: numerous opportunities to actively participate in ministry.

Realizing she was in the right place, Dancek jumped into volunteer work, joined a praise team, and eventually led out in a small group Bible study. She also helped with Southern’s annual Martin Luther King Jr. Service Day and the Feed My Starving Children event during Homecoming last fall—an initiative to pack nutritious, ready-to-eat meals for children in areas ravaged by disasters.

Proudly embracing the title of “church hopper,” Dancek spent her Sabbaths playing piano on praise teams for many different churches in the area. She found that as she dedicated time to this musical ministry, she grew in her spiritual walk.

“Music has been an excellent way for me to connect with God,” she said. As a biology major, Dancek initially planned to attend medical school after Southern, but over time she realized that was not the right fit for her. Feeling a clear call to mission work, she decided to prepare for dental school, recognizing the need for more dentists to help underprivileged children.

“Southern really pushed me academically and spiritually. It gave me the opportunity to ask questions, along with the resources to answer them,” Dancek said. “Southern is a safe place to grow.”

With her diploma in hand, Dancek plans to spend next year as a student missionary.

“I’ve always wanted to serve as a missionary,” she said. “My time here at Southern was pivotal in making that decision a reality.”

Graduation weekend is a high point in any college career. The pomp and circumstance, friends and family, and guest speakers contribute to the air of celebration. Yet Commencement is just the tip of the iceberg; it represents the culmination of hundreds of hours of lectures, mountains of papers and projects, and for many, a new clarity of purpose. Southern congratulates the 424 graduates this May! Chelsea Dancek is one of them.
Building a Stronger Southern Together

The Southern family grapples with a complex racial history, while making strides toward an inclusive, Christ-centered future.

As a campus, Southern has changed dramatically in its 126 years: location, size, buildings, professors, and demographics are all very different now than in 1892. Certain core values remain firmly rooted, such as staying centered on Christ, prioritizing service, and providing quality Adventist education. However, some of the early decisions made by school and church leadership continue to haunt Southern, such as remaining racially segregated until 1965. This year the university administration is making strides to lay that history to rest and commit to more intentional inclusion moving forward, growing together as a family—not just the Southern family, but the family of God.

A CLOSER LOOK

As he took his place in the corner office of Wright Hall in 2016, President David Smith, PhD, recognized that something was not right. On the surface, the diverse student body seemed as happy and well integrated as any university president could hope. But Smith picked up on an undercurrent, and it concerned him. So for the next year and a half, he sought out opportunities to listen. He listened to students, parents, employees, alumni, community members, and other constituents. And over time, something became clear to Smith: a significant number of people, particularly in the black community, viewed Southern as a racist, white institution.

Many who held this view had never visited campus but had heard about the history of segregation at the school, and despite an increasingly diverse student body, the narrative persisted that Southern had not done enough to move past that history. Even black students on campus expressed a sense that Southern could do better.

Smith began planning. He met with the leadership at other universities to learn how they had addressed the issue. He pursued leadership options to re-energize Southern’s Diversity Committee and explored what it would look like to introduce an administrative position focused on unity and inclusion. And he prayed.

Then, this February, a campus visitor from the local community posted an anonymous racist message on social media during the students’ annual Black Christian Union Saturday night event, stimulating intense dialogue across campus. During one of those discussions, Smith suggested that it was time for Southern to apologize for the past and pledge to make intentional changes moving forward. The resulting video can be viewed at southern.edu/diversity.

STEPS FORWARD

One of the key advances introduced in the video was the immediate creation of a new vice president position. This individual will dedicate his or her time to serving people of all ethnic backgrounds on campus in a broad way, facilitating unity and community while celebrating the unique cultures represented at Southern.

To expedite the process of filling the position, President Smith stepped into the role of chairperson for the university’s Diversity Committee, which had been without a leader for several months. The committee is responsible for developing a job description and leading the search process for the new vice president.

The process began with a series of sharing sessions to help identify the priorities for the new position and to better understand the perspectives, concerns, and challenges students are facing. Facilitated by professional consultants, these sessions gave students the opportunity to participate and confidentially share their thoughts.

Recognizing that education is a key component of bridging divides and increasing understanding, the committee also began planning relevant educational opportunities and programming for campus. These efforts will continue into the future.

“We are not under the illusion that the steps we are taking, including the new vice president, will prevent individual problems from springing up,” Smith said. “That isn’t why we are pursuing these initiatives. But taking these steps and having this dedicated individual on our campus will help us experience better unity and harmony—and better support for our students—throughout the year, even when unfortunate incidents do happen.”
One of the grassroots campus initiatives began in early 2016, when Januwiona Nixon, PhD, and Doug Tilstra, PhD, (Southern employees at the time) saw a need for open, honest, constructive dialogue about race. They began holding monthly group discussions, welcoming any Southern employee to participate. These sessions continue, now facilitated by Stephanie Guster, MSW, assistant professor of social work, and Tom Verrill, senior vice president for Financial Administration. Below, they share a few thoughts from their experience:

**Why is it important to have these discussions?**

**Tom:** The act of talking about the issues, opening up and hearing each other’s stories and experiences, is how we grow. The interactions that we have together help us know each other better and grow in relationship, adding clarity to the conversation. I think, partly, people are afraid of discussing racial topics. But by having this dialogue, it says: “We can do this. We can have this conversation.”

**Stephanie:** The things that we fear, we usually stay away from. Like me and spiders—I don’t like them, and I definitely don’t seek them out. But we have choices. To choose to be part of something that you’re afraid of or that creates discomfort for you helps you grow to the point where that fear no longer controls the dialogue or your ability to interact with other people. I think it’s important, because we’ll never get to a place of loving each other if we don’t talk to each other. It’s Relationship 101. We’re just starting a relationship, if you will, at its basic level by coming together to talk. No pressure, no expectations, just talk and grow and learn. In each discussion session, we ask everyone to share something about themselves—nothing glamorous, but something that helps us get to know each other in a way we never would outside of this setting, like “What is your favorite dessert?”

**Tom:** Now when my wife and I come to your house, I’m expecting blueberry pie.

**Stephanie:** I know, and not just typical blueberries: wild blueberries from Maine. I learned that in one of our discussions, and I wouldn’t have known it otherwise. “What is your favorite dessert?”

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**Stephanie:** There’s a lot of fear about saying the wrong thing—using the wrong word or not knowing the most up-to-date politically correct term. And fear usually causes us to shut down. In addition to that, I think strong emotion makes it difficult; because of personal, negative experiences, sometimes people would rather not be part of anything that could trigger that strong emotion.

**Tom:** Being afraid of not knowing what to say was definitely my experience—and still is to some degree. Saying the wrong thing seems so dangerous; the fear of making a mistake and potentially offending someone leaves people very guarded. You have to be willing to take a risk, and you have to feel like it’s worth taking the risk. Some people don’t think that talking about the issue is productive, either that discussions only make things worse or that “We’re Christians. If we just treat each other as Christians, this isn’t an issue.” There’s some truth to that, actually. If we all treated everybody perfectly as Christ would, it is likely that all of the issues we deal with in society would go away. But the reality is, we’re all broken people, and I believe that part of the process of growing as Christians is to engage in the necessary dialogue and work through the issues.

**Stephanie:** It reminds me of when I studied Spanish. I made so many mistakes and embarrassed myself all the time—use the wrong word or intonation and it’s a completely different meaning. That happened once when I was baking cookies. The word for flour is very similar to the word for sand, and I asked for sand. These dialogues are almost like learning to speak another language, learning to understand how someone else communicates, how they’ve received messages, and what’s important to them. And like learning another language, we have to give ourselves permission to not do it perfectly but to keep trying.

**Can you share some tips for how to approach such a sensitive topic?**

**Tom:** First, acknowledge the fear and apprehension of the topic and the words. I’ve found that people are very gracious and understanding if you can be real with them. In the first conversation Stephanie and I had, I told her I wasn’t sure of the right word to use—should I say black? Or African-American? I didn’t know. Just acknowledging those things helps disarm the situation and allows us to talk. Another tip would be to start with less controversial topics and let the dialogue and people grow through the process, rather than getting into difficult topics that put people on edge right from the beginning.

**Stephanie:** Additionally, it helps to realize that all of us are on a different point in the journey. My perspective may be different from that of someone who’s coming to the dialogue for the first time; everybody has a different stance on the last point, the church moved to having segregated meetings and schools in the South in order to more effectively reach both groups.

**Doug Tilstra:** On-campus and off-campus members of the Adventist Church faced three hurdles in reaching all races in the South in the 1870s-1880s. Due to strong resistance on the part of the Ku Klux Klan, which was monitoring the church, the church moved to having segregated meetings and schools in the South in order to more effectively reach both groups.

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DEEP DIALOGUES

I am motivated by my 19-month-old son, Joshua. Stephanie: how engaged in this process? On a personal level, what inspires you to be motivated of minority groups. employment of women and members of minority groups. affirmative action policy for the 1973 Union). Beta Kappa Tau (now Black Christian Union) Black History Week, and students formed clubs and organizations to help bring awareness to different issues. 1970s – Students elected Gale Jones Murphy, ‘76, as Student Association president, becoming the first female and the first black person to hold the office.

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1976 – Students elected Gale Jones Murphy, ‘76, as Student Association president, becoming the first female and the first black person to hold the office.

1988 – Of Southern’s 1,443 students that year, 18 percent represented minority groups. International students attended from 29 different countries.

1990s – The two most active clubs on campus were the International Club and Beta Kappa Tau. Asian Club nights also developed into a highlight of the school year.

1997 – Gordon Bietz, then president of Southern, and Darrell Baker, then president of Oakwood College (now Oakwood University), initiated the Diversity Education Exchange Program (DEEP), which has allowed leaders and students from both campuses to fellowship and learn from one another.

1999 – Of Southern’s 1,443 students that year, 18 percent represented minority groups. International students attended from 29 different countries.

1973 – The school adopted an affirmative action policy for the employment of women and members of minority groups.

1970s – Southern began celebrating Black History Week, and students formed Beta Kappa Tau (now Black Christian Union).

On a personal level, what inspires you to be engaged in this process? Stephanie: I am motivated by my 19-month-old son, Joshua. When I think of the type of world and church and school setting that I want for him, I want it to be a place that is so loving and doesn’t see his skin color but sees who God has created him to be. Since there’s so much racialized tension right now in our nation and around us, the only way that I can think of to create a better world for him is to be involved.

How have you personally grown through this experience? Stephanie: It actually goes back to everybody being at a different point in the journey. Sometimes when Tom and I sit down to plan for our group discussions, I’m ready to be at mile marker 10, and Tom has to remind me: “Let’s come back a little bit. That’s for three months down the line. It’s not for right now.” I’ve grown in my ability to be patient with the process. It’s not a sprint. It’s more of a marathon.

Tom: One of my deeply held core beliefs is that God has chosen to draw to Himself a dying, sin-filled world by revealing His character and glory through the church and, by extension, our educational system. The way I see it, how we relate to each other and work together is the means He has chosen for showing people who He is. If there’s racial disharmony or unaddressed hurts, we can’t effectively do that.

It actually goes back to everybody being at a different point in the journey. Sometimes when Tom and I sit down to plan for our group discussions, I’m ready to be at mile marker 10, and Tom has to remind me: “Let’s come back a little bit. That’s for three months down the line. It’s not for right now.” I’ve grown in my ability to be patient with the process. It’s not a sprint. It’s more of a marathon.

Tom: For me, probably more than for Stephanie, learning the tools to have a meaningful dialogue about race has been valuable. Knowing the terminologies and the issues—plus gaining a better sense of what other people’s experiences and history have been—gives you the opportunity to feel a little more comfortable in the dialogue and feel that you can engage in it more effectively. When you hear the personal stories of colleagues and friends, it provides a face and a name to these issues. It causes you to reconsider how you think about things, your perspective and how you act, how intentional you are in addressing issues and making things better.

During one of the discussion groups, a black employee shared a story about his two sons. They are close to my age and had lived in the same Northern town where I went to school and worked for many years. He told how as teenagers driving around my hometown, his sons were stopped 17 times by police in one year alone. They weren’t doing anything wrong, and they didn’t get any tickets; they were just stopped, and often searched.

As Christians, what is our responsibility? What unites us? Stephanie: I believe what unites us at Southern is the reality that all of us want to look at the face of Jesus and please Him. That’s the Christian aspect. I think the human aspect is that every parent wants something better for their children than they had growing up. I think that desire unites us, regardless of what it looks like in your world or what your experience has been.

Tom: As we look to the Bible, we’re called to do two things to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. I don’t believe you can do that if barriers or prejudice stand between you and your brother or sister. When we acknowledge that we are all sons and daughters of God, created in His image, all part of the same family looking forward to going home to the same heavenly Father, whatever greater reason could there be for unity? I think that as we draw close to Jesus, breaking down walls becomes a natural part of what we do. But it’s a journey.

In the same timeframe, on the same roads, at about the same age, I didn’t get stopped at all. The only conclusion I could draw is that they were being treated differently because of skin color. I had been totally oblivious to any issues there, and gaining that understanding and knowledge changed my thought process about race in society. This was not something that happened only in certain big cities around the country. This was in my little rural hometown, and it was very real to hear the pain of that story. It has had a profound effect on how I look at things.
Stephanie: Our responsibility as Christians is to literally look into the faces of those around us and to recognize and remember that they were created in the image of God. If that step is absent from the dialogue, then it would be very easy for this to become a regular conversation where we’re measuring people based on our own human interpretation and not on their eternal value for the kingdom of God. There will forever be only one Tom Verrill, and so if I interact and engage with Tom as that very unique creation by God’s own hand, then how I engage with him should be completely different.

Tom: That reminds me of a saying that the ground is level at the foot of the cross.

Stephanie: Our responsibility as Christians is to literally look, at the foot of the cross. We’re all equal. We’re all made in God’s image, so the distinctions that we make and the categorizations or the values we put on various people disappear at the foot of the cross.

Stephanie: I know that might be easier for Tom to say as a white male. What has your experience been?

Stephanie: My experience at Southern has been almost entirely positive, but I have to recognize that my experience has not been everyone’s experience. What would our campus be if every single person’s experience had been exclusively positive? Knowing that hasn’t been the case is what keeps me engaged. I’ve heard people say, “We’re going to have these race issues until Jesus comes.” That might be true, but maybe OUR campus will become a model for racial harmony. By God’s grace, I hope that’s what we will become known for.

Phillip Warfield, Student Association president and senior history major, set a high goal for himself: to redefine how people view Southern’s culture.

“I’ve been here for four years and realized that we have a really unique opportunity, because of where we are and the mix of people that make up Southern—so many people from all over the world and across the country.” Warfield said. “Unfortunately, some people still look at us as this old, racist, white institution that doesn’t care about any other culture. But that’s not true today. I want to showcase what Southern’s culture looks like today.”

With the theme “This Is Us,” Warfield initiated tangible ways to celebrate the unique cultures represented on campus, showing how together they unite to create Southern culture. In addition to collaborating with McKee Library to create cultural media lists and initiating cultural dialogues, he partnered with the university to create banners displayed throughout campus. The first set of banners, which were hung in February, featured significant African Americans who made contributions both to the country and to Southern’s campus. A similar set of banners was created in April to celebrate Asian/Pacific American history, and in the fall a third set of banners will celebrate Latin American culture. (To see each of the individuals and a short description of their achievements, visit southern.edu/celebrates.)

Warfield’s efforts culminated in “This Is Us: Multicultural Performance Night.” Historically the three cultural clubs on campus—Asian Club, Black Christian Union, and Latin American Club—each have a Saturday night event celebrating their culture; but to close out this school year, Warfield wanted an all-encompassing celebration. Through music, choreography, and a thought-provoking play, his hope was for people to “come together and see the true, whole culture of Southern. I want people to take a piece of Southern culture with them wherever they go, and that culture is made up of so many different people groups.”
Let Your Light Shine

Southern’s mission of fostering an uplifting, spiritual environment on campus goes deeper than the many corporate worship opportunities available. This atmosphere is shaped in large part by students who are so full of God’s love that it overflows to those around them, brightening the entire campus and inspiring others. Meet a few of these shining lights.

Gabrielle Williams: Vespers Coordinator

Every Friday, hundreds of students gather at the Crotos, senior clinical Church of Seventh-day Adventists to take part in vespers, bringing in the Sabbath. In addition to a speaker, the program usually includes musical selections, prayer, and announcements, which all require planning and coordination behind the scenes. That’s where Gabrielle Williams, a sophomore psychology major, comes in. “As vespers coordinator, my role is making sure the Friday program is a time when people can encounter God and have a celebration of the Sabbath,” Williams said. “I think it maintains a sense of family, all coming together as a way to unite.”

According to Assistant Chaplain Marc-Anthony Pierre, ’17, Williams is more than an asset to the Campus Ministries team. “Gabrielle makes an effort to encourage our team to be the best we can be,” Pierre said. “She is an amazing young lady who helps those around her grow spiritually. Her devotion to the spiritual lives of others extends beyond her work with vespers. In her personal life, Williams tries to make sure that others can see God working through the way she carries herself; she believes that cultivating a relationship with God is important for every situation that a person faces in life.”

“If God is our daily bread, we can’t just eat once a week,” Williams said. “We need to be incorporating that into our everyday lives to thrive.” —by Tierra Hayes

Vanessa Hernandez and Jamil Hairston: Founders of First Love Ministries

Vanessa Hernandez, senior elementary education major, and Jamil Hairston, senior clinical psychology major, began dating their senior year of high school. Since then, God has used them to create something bigger than either of them. Her freshman year at Southern, Hernandez found joy in LifeGroups—student-led small groups on campus—and quickly took on a leadership role. As she grew in her walk with Jesus, her motivation for leading out changed. “I used to do ministry publicly because it boosted myself,” Hernandez said. “Now, the motivation comes from a deep-rooted relationship with Jesus.”

Meanwhile, Hairston was a leader in gymnastics, and the idea of being a spiritual influence to others wasn’t high on his list of priorities. “I always liked gymnastics because I could get up front but never talk,” he said.

Eventually Hernandez encouraged Hairston to join a Life-Group. Once he let go of his fear of public speaking, Hairston joined Hernandez in ministry, and together they started First Love Ministries. Their work focuses on young adults speaking to other young adults about relationships with God and others, as well as purity.

In addition to traveling as public speakers, the couple, now married, still leads out in LifeGroups, where they are able to influence people like Hairston’s mentee, Bryan Arvelo, who joined as a freshman film major. After a year in the group, Arvelo switched his major to theology and is now a Life-Group coach himself. Arvelo describes Hairston as someone who cares for people more than anything else. “His love for ministering to others is a way of life,” Arvelo said. “God overflowed him, and it all poured out on me.”

—by Okahana Wemore

Caleb Cook: Background Influencer

You may not always see Caleb Cook, senior management and graphic design double major, up front singing or speaking, but he gives back with his willing attitude and dedication to Christian service. Some might call him a “background influencer” here at Southern. During his freshman and sophomore years, Cook was actively involved in the Eye Witness Club—a door-to-door outreach program that set the tone for the growth he experienced in his spiritual walk.

“My perspective changed; before I was doing things for myself, now I’m doing them because of my salvation,” Cook said. “God has used me despite myself,” she said. “My job opens the doors for deeper relationships. Yes, I do night check and unlock apartments, but my real job is being there for my clients. I want them to know, ‘I’m praying for you, and you can come talk to me about anything.’” —by Sheann Brandon

Claude Delille: Resident Assistant

Standing Eagle, a senior nursing major, met Claude Delille when they were both freshmen, and from day one, Delille struck her as different. “I admire Claude for her constant positivity and kindness,” Eagle said. “She is an amazing person with open arms and a willingness to serve others.”

Now a senior biology major with a biomedical emphasis, Delille continues to minister to students around her as a resident assistant (RA) in Southern Village, the on-campus apartments for upperclassmen.

“People seem to think I have it all under control, and I truly praise God—that’s Him in me!” Delille said. “I have a lot of insecurities, but I love to smile. I always ask God to give me a reason to keep smiling, and He does, but I’m working in progress.”

She describes her college experience as God working and showing Himself in every detail. She started at Southern with a four-year plan for her job, her major, and her living situation. God fulfilled and then exceeded her wishes, including her job as an RA.

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Spring 2018
string of teenage boys on mountain bikes wind their way through the woods, slightly out of breath as they reach the top of the ridge. This group of students from McCallie School in Chattanooga comes frequently to Southern Adventist University to ride the extensive wooded trail systems.

“White Oak Mountain and Fenton Forest on Bauxite Ridge are the best beginner trails in the area,” says Jake Altemus, director of Outdoor Programs at McCallie. “These trail systems are a great example of conservation, stewardship, public health, and recreation management. People come to town from all over the region to ride them.”

Altemus regularly brings his mountain bike classes out to Southern, explaining that White Oak has such variety that his school groups can bike there three or four times before they see the same trail twice. He also appreciates the trails’ technical elements, consistent maintenance, and excellent signage.

With more than 30 miles of hiking and biking trails, Southern’s outdoor areas are a valuable asset to the local community. In recent years, generous donors helped expand the system, sponsoring exciting natural enhancements to White Oak Mountain (previously known as the Biology Trails) and Fenton Forest through Southern’s Campaign for Excellence in Faith and Learning. The Sabbath Trail in particular is a unique opportunity for learning about the Bible as hikers explore a 1.5-mile loop punctuated by plaques with Bible verses and facts about the Sabbath.

“At Southern, we are blessed with a beautiful outdoor environment,” shares Carolyn Hamilton, vice president for Advancement at Southern. “Because of our deep appreciation for God’s creation, we desire to share these outdoor spaces so that our community can enjoy His handiwork and achieve better health, as well.”

Doug Coulter, owner of Scott’s Bicycle Centre in Cleveland, Tennessee, has been a fan of Southern’s trail systems for a long time, dating back to 1984 when he attended Southern and hiked the trails. In 1999 he started a trail-riding group. On Tuesday nights in the winter, he and 25-40 friends ride Southern’s trails for about 1.5 hours. These rides are made especially exciting because they are in the dark with bike headlights.

“I’m very thankful to the university and to the generous private donors who have helped make the trails what they are,” Coulter shares. “I know a lot of non-Adventist people who come through my shop and have a really positive impression of Adventists just from their interactions with Southern’s trail systems. These trails help us open up conversations where people want to learn what we believe and why.”
plays more than 200 objects from Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, Syria-Palestine, Greece, Cyprus, and Anatolia. Exhibits highlight include an ancient Babylonian brick stamped with Nebuchadnezzar’s name, a rare Syrian clay model of an Assyrian palace, and a model of a chariot complete with wheels, a series of Syrian toggle pins from the Middle Bronze Age, and much more. Today this museum focuses on the authentic Near East for the university and wider community. Several lectures each year feature a search from leading scholars around the world and are open to the public.

“Seventh-day Adventists are known for being involved with hands-on research. And, for me, the perfect way to put into practice what I am learning is to go to the site,” says Dr. Bob Henry of Huntsville, Alabama, who has been working there as well, and he heard that Adventists were involved with the Khirbet Qeiyafa dig and the museum’s exhibitions of its finds helped me draw pictures in my mind and imagine things more accurately. It allowed me to connect more deeply with the Bible.”

A LIFETIME LOVE OF LEARNING
Not only has Henry visited the museum multiple times, but he also comes to campus frequently to hear the archaeology lectures. When possible, his wife, Rachel, a Charismatic pastor, comes with him to gain additional perspective about biblical history. Southern actually offers a number of lecture series on a wide range of topics. For example, the E.A. Anderson Lecture Series features guest speakers who share lessons and insights from the business world. Hosted by the School of Business, the series was founded 50 years ago. Community and retired faculty member Nancy and Mitchell Thrail attend these events as often as possible and recommend them to their friends. In particular, they enjoyed a recent presentation by Ed Davis, founder of Ann’s House of Nuts. Another community member, Cindy (Grover) O’Fallon, felt the events of the bible had ever seen.

Bob Henry of Huntsville, Alabama, learned about Southern through his involvement with the Khirbet Qeiyafa dig in Israel. He heard that Adventists had been working there as well, and when he learned that they had a Colledgeale campus and an archaeological library, he wasted no time in coming to check it out.

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The Day I Met a Ray of Sunshine

by Renee Mitchell, ’18

We rarely wake up predicting that something impactful will occur on a particular day—or even recognize the moments leading up to a life-changing moment; rather, we see them in hindsight when we look back at the event itself. I vividly remember a particular Sabbath two years ago. It was a bright, spring afternoon in April, with a bit of a chill in the air—the perfect weather for sweaters and jeans.

After attending church, I recall sitting in my room and wondering what to do with the rest of my Sabbath afternoon. Then, shortly after lunch, I received a text from one of my friends inviting me to join her for the afternoon FLAG* camp outreach activity (now known as SWAG** camp). I had participated in a couple of these Campus Ministries outings before and enjoyed spending time with the kids, so I thought, “Why not? I have a free afternoon.” Little did I know that this was the first step of a new journey and a new relationship with one special little girl.

Close to Heaven

Once we arrived at the regular FLAG camp location—a low-income neighborhood on the east side of downtown Chattanooga—we followed the routine procedure of going around in groups, knocking on each door, yelling, “FLAG camp! Come out to play!” The kids knew our group and began pouring out of their homes immediately. We played soccer, hide-and-seek, tag, football, jump rope, and hopscotch. Then we handed out snacks and drinks for them while the FLAG camp directors told a Bible story.

That day I remember attracting a group of girls like iron pieces to a magnet. They followed me everywhere I went and asked me a million questions. I adored their company, but as we were about to leave, I noticed one little girl who stood off to one side with her mother. Without a second thought, I went over to them and struck up a conversation with the mom, Sherry.

They were locals, but they weren’t from that particular housing complex. The little girl, who had celebrated her birthday only a couple of days before, shyly introduced herself as Micaela and told me her age by holding up three tiny fingers. I was immediately drawn to her innocent heart and radiant, happy personality. For the last few minutes before I had to leave, we played on the monkey bars together, and her laugh was infectious.

As we were preparing to board the van and head back to Southern, I asked Sherry for her contact information and had her snap a couple pictures of Micaela and me. Now, every time I look back on those pictures, I can’t help but smile and remember a moment in time where I felt close to heaven.

The Seed of Ministry

Since then, we have created a string of wonderful memories together. I didn’t know it at the time, but on that day, God planted the seed of ministry in my heart for Micaela and her mother. I invited them to attend church with me, and they began joining me every Saturday. It filled my heart with joy to give Micaela her very first preschooler’s Bible.

Over the last couple of years, I have watched their relationship with God develop and flourish, season in and season out. I’ve had the privilege of entering this little girl’s world and creating a relationship with her by showing her a life full of Jesus. Seeing her making new friends at Sabbath school, learning the true meaning of Easter, and telling me the story of Jesus makes my heart smile. I look forward to making more memories with her as she continues to grow.

In so many ways, she is a typical little girl who loves My Little Pony, Chick-fil-A, strawberry milkshakes, Dots, and swings. But if you ask her why she is special, she will probably tell you, “Because Jesus loves me, and He made me beautiful.”

Sometimes, God allows a specific person to enter your life and change it to better reflect His glory. As much as I have taught Micaela about Jesus, she has taught me so much more about how to live for Him. *

*Fun Learning About God **Serve, Worship, and Glorify

Why did you start cycling?

During my sophomore year as a financial management major at Southern, I decided to purchase a road bike and began riding in the surrounding area. I found the environment to be a cyclist’s paradise. My first big ride was with a large group during the 70th birthday celebration for Gordon Bietz, former president of Southern, in which we rode 70 miles to commemorate the event. A group of my friends and I chose to ride further, and I was able to complete my first “century ride” that day.

How did you become involved in this ride across the United States?

I was about to graduate from Southern and had been looking for job opportunities. I hoped to get an internship with local company CBL & Associates Properties based at Hamilton Place; however, that didn’t work out. I decided to expand my search, looking on Craigslist in the nonprofit job section. I found a Help Wanted ad for a bike maintenance position for “Bike the US for MS.” I was torn. I felt as if I should be “furthering my career,” but I ended up taking the position and have never regretted it.

What inspired your desire to help those affected by multiple sclerosis (MS)?

For several years, I had been aware of MS due to a family friend who has the condition. My first big ride was with a large group during the 70th birthday celebration for Gordon Bietz, former president of Southern, in which we rode 70 miles to commemorate the event. A group of my friends and I chose to ride further, and I was able to complete my first “century ride” that day.

How did you prepare for life after graduation?

Southern gave me the opportunity to surround myself with peers who dared to dream and professors who were at Southern because of the mission, not the paycheck. Being around the professors at Southern shifted my focus from simply getting a job to wanting to change people’s lives. It’s not about how much money you make; it’s about how many lives you impact. Riding across America gave me time to reflect on where I want my life to go.

Jeffrey Brownlow, ’17

TransAmerica route leader and cyclist at last summer’s “Bike the US for MS,” a 62-day journey that led a team of cyclists on a 3,785-mile ride from Virginia to California

What did you take away from this experience?

Luke 16:10 says that if we are faithful in the little tasks, we will be put in charge of larger tasks. Pedaling is a very small task, but it took each stroke for me to succeed. Every day we are faced with little decisions that will either bring us closer to our goals or farther away. Last summer taught me that even though the journey may be filled with road kill or covered in trash, we can get through it as long as we keep moving. Be faithful in the little things, because they can carry you far.

Brownlow now serves as accountant at Kibidula, a nonprofit in Tanzania, Africa.

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50s
Paul Gates, ’60, passed away June 30, 2017. He attended, passed away in April 2017. Paul is in good health and living in Ladies Island, South Carolina. His family includes: his wife, Linda (Martinez), ’62, lives in Lady’s Island, South Carolina.

50s
Joy Gallimore, ’72, recog- nized as a president of the Michigan Conference of Seventh- day Adventists, and was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). She has served on several boards, taught a graduate class in education, and served as an elder in Pioneer church. She has a master’s degree in educational leadership. She and her husband, Lowell, have four children; their oldest son, Benjamin, 21, lives in Chino Valley, Arizona.

60s
Dennis Millburn, ’72, retired in December 2016. After serving seven years as interim treasurer for the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference, he was called back to active duty as interim treasurer for the Sacramento Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Dennis and his wife, Kathy (Flat), ’72, live in St. Albans, Georgia.

60s
Russell Duerksen, ’78, was named chief financial officer of the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 2017 for his 42 years of service at Adventist Missionary Ministries. He previously served as the Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 2017 for his 42 years of service at Adventist Missionary Ministries. He previously served as the Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 2017 for his 42 years of service at Adventist Missionary Ministries.

60s
Joy (Maravas) Litten, ’96, teaches high school math and recently completed her master's degree in educational leadership. She and her husband, Tim, have four children; their oldest daughter, Nikki, is a high school senior who plans to attend Southern to study nursing. They live in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

60s
Elisa Rahming, ’99, was recently voted as president of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). She has served in various leadership roles and is responsible for oversight, strategic leadership, and analytical best practices for all administered functions. She also provides strategic counsel and analysis for support related to planning, finance, technology, and other budgeting and reporting needs. She and her husband, Jonathan, ’01, have two children and live in Ooltewah, Tennessee.

60s
Cecilia Luck, ’95 and, ’96, live in the Woodland Hills area in Los Angeles, California. They serve as leaders in the Woodland Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church. They are founding members of the Woodland Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church. They are founding members of the Woodland Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church.

60s
Baron von Hunner, honored, is medically retired from the armed forces. He served in the wounded, veteran, nephrology, and forward field hospitals. He also served as a nurse in the Persian Gulf War in 1990.

60s
Russell Duerksen, ’78, is the chief financial officer for the Arizona Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. This corporation provides more than $3 million annually in medical and dental services to the Arizona Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

60s
Emilia Busta, ’99, was recently featured in a National Geographic Student News segment about “NuevRios.” Neighborhoods, Emilia learned to speak English after attending a child as a resident of the Dominican Republic by listening to the delinquent and1296.0x783.0

We live in a world of chasms. Thankfully, opportunities abound for opening these bridges between a world of broken families and loves lost. I challenge you as our Alumni Association to find a bridge that matters to you—God’s unconditional love—forever in your lives.

I also encourage you to pray, and with our students, faculty, and administration. Encourage each other to support our students and their families and bridge-building relationships that seek out opportunities to bridge barriers rather than to dig chasms. Let’s be models of God’s uniting love in every relationship, not only the obvious, but to also run across these bridges and embrace all that connects us to each other.

Our Alumni Association would love to provide tools to support your bridge-building activities! Visit www.southern.edu/alumni3, email alumni@southern.edu, or call Evonne Crook, director of Alumni Relations, at 423.236.2830.

In the columns Spring 2018

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by David Smith, PhD, president

Last summer I heard a powerful sermon by a white South African. He had recently read Born a Crime by Trevor Noah, and it profoundly impacted him—he wept through much of his sermon—so I decided to read the book. Although it has some pretty tough language, it also has some of the most amazing insights into human nature and human experience of anything that I have read.

Born into a mixed relationship in a country that prohibited the blending of races, Noah shares an account of growing up in South Africa under Apartheid.

“The genius of Apartheid,” he writes, “was convincing people who were the overwhelming majority to turn on each other. . . . You separate people into groups, and you make them hate one another so that you can run them. At the time, Black South Africans outnumbered white South Africans nearly five to one, yet we were divided into different tribes with different languages. . . . Long before Apartheid existed, these tribal factions clashed and wracked with one another. Then white rule used that animosity to divide and conquer” (page 3).

Man’s ability to divide, control, manipulate, even annihilate entire groups of people speaks to an evil power that is still active in our world today. I read an editorial in the Chattanooga Times Free Press earlier this year. It said: “The State of the Union in the United States can be summed up in one word. It wouldn’t take very long to report it: divided.”

Unfortunately we can see this even in our own church. A number of years ago my wife, Cherie, and I were asked to speak for a camp meeting in Hong Kong. But it wasn’t the main Chinese camp meeting; it was a special meeting for Filipinos, because they were not allowed to attend the main meetings. And you can see this same story repeated over and over around the world; only the specific details are different. As humans, unless we allow God’s love to fill us, we are going to be divided.

Because of this, we fight. We fight over ordination and female pastors, fundamental beliefs, lines of authority and control, lifestyle issues. Any-thing we can think of, we fight about it. To divide and conquer is one of Satan’s most effective strategies to defeat God’s church; to unify in love is God’s most effective strategy.

Jesus talked about the dangers of becoming divided. When He cast a demon out of a man, His critics accused Jesus of being in league with Satan, Jesus responded, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand” (Matthew 12:25, NIV). Jesus’ beautiful prayer in John 17 emphasizes unity. In verses 20-21, He petitioned His Father: “I pray also for those who will believe in me . . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. . . . Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

Nothing will appeal to people outside of the church as much as discovering a group of believers who are united, particularly if that unity is founded in the love of God. It is our most powerful witness to the world. This is clear in Jesus’ statement in John 13:34: “A new command I give you: Love one another.” How? Jesus said, “As I have loved you.”

Unconditional Love

I met a young man who had been a self-proclaimed all-out druggie, long-haired and filthy. One Saturday morning, he found himself in a small Seventh-day Adventist church. He was met by an elderly woman who pulled him in for a hug and told him, “I love you. God loves you, and we’re glad you’re here.” Even when his thirtieth got on her Sabbath dress, she didn’t flinch. For two years, the young man attended every Sabbath, and he told me that during that time, not a soul ever said or hinted that anything was wrong with him. They didn’t tell him to stop drinking or to get rid of his drugs. All he got was a full dose of God’s love. At the end of that time, he told the head elder, “You people have something I want,” and he was bap-tized. Today he is the pastor of his own Adventist church. He practices the same love that he found within that special congregation.

It is the nature of divine love to include and unite, not to exclude and divide. Throughout Jesus’ earthly ministry, He demonstrated that He came to save everybody who would believe in Him. His kingdom would transcend all human and political barriers and would include people from every tribe, nation, and tongue. Divine love invites people, pulls them together, and holds them together, undivided.”

Undivided

Spring 2018

Drawn to Jesus

Sophomore chemistry major Mason Clark, portraying Jesus, mingles with the crowd as he enters “Jerusalem.” Every year approximately 10,000 people come to Southern’s campus for the SonRise Resurrection Pageant, a collaboration between the university and the Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists. Volunteer actors portray key events surrounding Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, including the way people of all ages and walks of life were drawn to Jesus during His ministry on Earth.
HOMECOMING WEEKEND

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  Vespers pageant featuring international costumes and flags

• Missions Expo
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• Golden Anniversary Reunion
  Class of 1968 celebrating five decades

Visit us online to view updated Homecoming Weekend information, or contact Alumni Relations directly.

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