Giving Their All
Whether serving in the mission field or conquering the Appalachian Trail together, the Netteburg family doesn’t hold back | page 12
Sparkling Growth
Steven Oskins, ’08 (left), adjunct instructor in Southern’s Applied Technology program, oversees Tyler Starr, freshman auto service management major, as he practices welding. During the university’s annual Giving Day this spring, Applied Technology in the School of Business raised nearly $53,000, which in part will provide new welding equipment for these popular courses. Overall, generous contributions for Giving Day 2021 totaled $1.1 million, setting a Southern record.

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16 | Getting Outdoors
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18 | God-Centered, Student-Focused
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22 | Did You Know?
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Spring Is in the Air!

Photos by Calvin Serban, junior film production major

As winter gives way to spring and campus bursts into bloom, students gravitate outdoors to study, socialize, and soak up some sun. Clear blue skies, emerald green lawns, and abundant flowers create a restful, refreshing backdrop that brings to mind Solomon’s words: “He has made everything beautiful in its time” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

1: The green lawn in front of Wright Hall is a popular place for students such as Mariana Velasquez, junior health science major; Gabrielle Newman, sophomore music major; and Kilah Runnels, sophomore social work major, to picnic and relax in the warming weather.

2: A group of physical education majors on the soccer field work to develop performance and teaching techniques for sports during their soccer course.

3: Clusters of blooming daffodils brighten many corners of campus.

4: The commute between classes provides a refreshing moment to think and enjoy the spring breeze.

5: Emily Carvajal, junior psychology major, opts to study outside of the student center in the mild weather.

6: Light pink cherry blossoms announce the return of spring.

7: Flowering trees and a wide expanse of inviting lawn greet visitors arriving at Southern.

8: The student hosts and directors of Ignite, a School of Journalism and Communication production, interview freshman theology major Mauricio Jaldín for an episode on challenging spiritual questions.

9: Jonathan Rodney, senior music major, greets those he passes on his way to class, reflecting the season’s joy.

10: Junior nursing major Hammy Hosteter catches some rays while remaining focused on his academics.

11: New picnic tables in the Alcove are perfect for students such as Karina Genstler, senior nursing major, to transform into desk space for studying.

12: Jared Ambrosius, junior business administration major, and Jason Dubose, junior liberal arts education major, monitor their exercise under a cloudless sky at the track during Fitness for Collegiate Life.

13: A canopy of white petals frames the promenade, including the mini red library that provides convenient access to tree books as students walk to and from classes.
Ken Shaw Becomes Southern’s 27th President

The Southern Adventist University Board of Trustees voted unanimously on February 28 for Ken Shaw, EdD, to become the 27th president of the university. He assumed office on June 1. Shaw graduated from Southern in 1980 with a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics and is the university’s first alumn to return as president. In fact, his entire family graduated from Southern: his wife, Ann (Kennedy), earned her nursing degree in 1979; their daughter, Kate (Shaw) Myers, graduated from Southern in 2012. Their son, Martin, earned his pastoral care degree in 2012.

“Ann and I cherish our memories from Southern,” Shaw said. “Returning to campus is like coming home for us, and we’re delighted to be part of this institution. I really admire that Southern is still fundamentally centered on its mission and on the core values that the institution has been about for 125 years.”

For the incoming president, Shaw has served as president of Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas. Previously he worked at Florida State University for 25 years in various leadership roles, including incoming Ken Shaw, ’80, EdD, who is the first alumn to hold that position.

Student Center Nears Completion

At the start of 2021, construction work on Southern’s Blitz Center for Student Life transitioned from exterior to interior projects. This new hub of future activity on campus—fully funded by $13 million in gifts from alumni and friends of Southern—is scheduled for completion in late spring.

Employees will move into their new offices over the summer, and students will participate in a grand opening event this August as they return to campus for classes.

“My excitement is matched—exceeded, even—by our students who can’t wait for the Blitz Center to open,” said Dennis Negron, ’85, PhD, vice president for Student Development.

Anchor tenants for the three-story building located between Hickman Science Center and McKee Library include: Campus Shop, Student Development, Office of Ministry and Missions, Student Association, OCK (a new eatery), and Student Success Center. For more photos and information about the building, visit southern.edu/blitzcenter. – by Lucas Patterson

Adjusted Graduation Wraps Up School Year

Graduation is a special time for family, friends, faculty, and staff to celebrate a major milestone in students’ lives. While the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic made certain adjustments to the ceremonies necessary this year, the goal of making the time meaningful remains unchanged.

Over the weekend of May 7-9, 415 undergraduate and 90 graduate students received their degrees from Southern. The university held commencement services in line with COVID-19 restrictions.

In-person graduation ceremonies—utilizing various safety precautions—marked the end of a unique school year and celebrated the accomplishments of more than 500 graduating students.

“This is important to me, because after four long, hard years of work, I am grateful to have a day when I can celebrate my accomplishments alongside my family and peers,” said Hannah Shachchi, ‘21. “Southern has provided me with a superb education and life experiences that are applicable to my career. I feel proud of the work I have accomplished and am ready to conquer my next academic goal.”

New Adult Degree Completion Program Launches

Southern is working toward a new program designed specifically for adults who would like to complete an unfinished college degree. For individuals who have earned some college credits but not a degree, the program is an opportunity to fulfill lifelong goals and improve career opportunities.

The new Adult Degree Completion Program is set to officially launch in January 2022 and will include bachelor’s degrees in business, journalism and communication, nursing, and integrative studies. It will feature shorter semesters and more online course options, providing more flexibility.

These eight-week online courses will be customized to a specific course of study for adult learners who have busy lives, work full time, and want to complete their degrees in a shorter period of time, said Cynthia Wright, the program’s director. “We want to meet the community’s educational needs and help students meet their professional career objectives.”

Through these and other precautions, Southern aimed to keep participants and guests as safe as possible without sacrificing the in-person graduation experience.

“The new program will allow Southern to re-establish a mission of equipping students “to embrace biblical truth, embody academic and professional excellence, and pursue Spirit-filled lives of service” to a new student population,” Hall said. “Our hope is that it gives adult learners the opportunity to accomplish their educational goals, celebrate their academic achievements, and thrive in the modern economy.”

For more information, visit southern.edu/adultdegree. – by Olivia Fisher

by the numbers

27
Presidents have served Southern, including incoming Ken Shaw, ’80, EdD, who is the first alumn to hold that position.

2,200
Cookies, homemade by First Lady Cheste Smith, have been given out to incoming students by Southern’s 26th president, David Smith, PhD, since 2016.

17
Buildings on campus are named after exceptional people, including the Blitz Center for Student Life, named for the 25th university president, Gordon Blitz, DMin.

469
University employees, many working quietly in the background, have kept Southern running smoothly during the pandemic, gladly saving the student body.

$2.96M
In COVID-19 relief funds have been distributed to Southern students, thanks to generous university donors and government aid.

1,592
Students have graduated from Southern during the pandemic, demonstrating perseverance and grit.
Students Create Inspiring Animation

Three animation majors from the School of Visual Art and Design created an animation project to reflect the current pandemic situation and express the importance of connection.

Students graduating from Southern University May have an early taste of a new tradition, with many opting to wear one of the university’s new cultural stoles as part of their graduation regalia. With an increasingly varied student population, Southern was ranked most diverse regional university in the South by U.S. News and World Report in its 2020 report, along with recognition by Fortune magazine as the most diverse regional university in the South.

Students pitch third idea during National Competition

Enactus Team Places Third in National Competition

Southern’s Enactus team placed third in the nation at the Enactus United States National Exposition. Housed in the School of Business, the student team has previously ranked second in their league several times, but this is their first year to advance through the competition to the final round, which included the top four schools in the United States.

“Throughout this project, I found myself relating to the characters in ways that I didn’t expect,” Kroll said. “What makes this project meaningful to me is the fact that I see myself and part of my journey this past year reflected in the story. It is my hope that each person who watches it can relate to ‘Knock Knock’ in some special way.”

Professors in the School of Visual Art and Design strive to teach their students a balance of artistic perspectives while firmly grounding them in their faith. “Animation is a powerful medium for communication,” said Hendel Butey, the animation professor who oversaw the project. “We encourage our students and give them the opportunity to combine excellence of craft with the higher calling of uplifting others through the talents they’ve been given. ‘Knock Knock’ is an excellent example of that vision coming to fruition in the students who made it.”

Enactus student leaders and their sponsors, Michelle Doucournou (second from left in the back), led the team in shattering the club’s previous records.

From left, student club members Soko Paongo, George Ambroise, María José Morán, Issac Abraham, and Julia Scriven model cultural stoles representing the Oceania islands, African/Black Christian Union, Latin American, Asian, and European clubs. Not pictured is the Native American stole.

“Knock Knock” is an excellent example of that vision coming to fruition in the students who made it.”

Enactus sponsor. “Each member of the team believed in the cause and has been tenacious in pursuing it.” Additionally, Enactus honored Doucournou with the 2021 Sam Walton Fellow of the Year award for her leadership, contributions to the team, and investment in students’ lives.

“Southern is a great platform for cultural development,” Guster explains that the project was heavily inspired by Revelation 7:9-10, which reminds her of how diverse God’s creation is while coming together in unity under Him. “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”

Students Introduces New Graduation Tradition

Students graduating from Southern University May have an early taste of a new tradition, with many opting to wear one of the university’s new cultural stoles as part of their graduation regalia. With an increasingly varied student population, Southern was ranked most diverse regional university in the South by U.S. News and World Report in its 2020 report, along with recognition by Fortune magazine as the most diverse regional university in the South.
From Radio to Classroom
by Trisney Bocala, senior mass communication major

For Victoria Joiner, EdD, associate professor in the School of Journalism and Communication at Southern, radio broadcasting has been part of her life for 34 years. It all began as a freshman education major at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama, when the campus radio station manager presented to her public speaking class.

“I raised my hand in the back and asked, ‘How do you work at the radio station?’” she said. “And the rest is history.”

Through the years, Joiner built a life in Huntsville. However, with a passion for Christian education, in 2019 she followed God’s call to Southern and is now inspiring students here with her expertise, stories, and faith.

The Dream Job
Coming from a family of teachers, Joiner began college as an education major before changing to communications. Soon after graduating from Oakwood, she returned to serve as program director at WJOU Praise 90.1, the same radio station where she had worked as a student.

“I always dreamed that one day I would be a radio program director. I could listen to music all day, and it would be great. And I got to do that at age 24,” Joiner said.

Shortly afterward, she became the general manager at the radio station, a position she held for 24 years.

“Miracles happened at that little beat-up college radio station,” she said. “Truck drivers on the road would call and say, ‘I heard something on your radio station, and I just wanted to tell y’all I appreciate it.’ People you would never think were listening, were listening.”

Transitioning to Education
One day, evangelist Edward Earl (E.E.) Cleveland invited Joiner to give a lecture for his religious communication class at Oakwood. He started asking her to co-teach regularly and gradually handed her the reins. Soon, Joiner was teaching a variety of communication courses.

Joiner continued to take on more responsibilities, earning her master’s degree through Regent University and beginning a doctorate degree through Fielding Graduate University. She also stepped into an administrative role at Oakwood as the assistant vice president for Advancement and Development.

Although she enjoyed the unique variety of experiences she was gaining, Joiner eventually realized she had to give something up. She stepped down from administrative work, completed her doctorate in educational leadership, and in 2013, traded her job as the radio’s general manager for being a full-time professor.

“I’ve seen over the years that education is a reciprocal learning experience,” Joiner said. “As a professor, I’m growing with my students. It’s exciting to be so influential in young people’s lives, and it warms my heart to see my students build careers in broadcasting.”

Joining Southern’s Team
Joiner’s former Oakwood colleague, Rachel Williams-Smith, PhD, now serves as dean of Southern’s School of Journalism and Communication and invited her to teach at Southern. After serving nearly 30 years in Huntsville, near her family and alma mater, Joiner became part of Southern’s faculty in Fall 2019. Her students quickly recognized her passion and expertise.

“Dr. Joiner is so enthusiastic,” said Julia Scriven, junior public relations major. “It’s impossible not to be captivated by what she’s saying. Her passion is contagious, and she has a way of making her students feel heard and appreciated. I look forward to any class I have with her.”

No matter what challenges come her way, Joiner praises God for His hand in her life.

“I talk, I write, I teach, and I love doing so many things,” Joiner said. “I used to worry about being too scattered because of this, but God will make room in your life for all the gifts He has given you. Almost everything that I’ve dreamed of doing, I’ve been able to do. It has really been an amazing career.”

Professional Preparation
Students interested in entering a field of research or medicine will need to master professional lab techniques, and Southern’s Ecotoxicology class helps them do just that. This semester, students such as Daniel Woo, who graduated this May with a Bachelor of Science in Biology, studied the effects of various toxins on fruit flies. This upper-division, hands-on lab course builds a strong portfolio, which has landed students full graduate scholarships even before they take final exams.

From her days as a college student starting out in radio work to her current efforts preparing the next generation of communicators, Victoria Joiner has felt God’s guidance at every step.
Giving Their All

Danae (Bland) Netteburg, ’02, MD, and her husband, Olen—also a medical doctor—have never made it their goal to earn praise or set records. Instead, dedicated to following God’s path for their lives, they have an internal drive to give their all, no matter if they are serving in the mission field or hiking the Appalachian Trail. Olen’s father, Kermit Netteburg, shares their story.

As a biology major at Southern, trekking across campus to get to her science classes, Danae never dreamed she’d hike the entire Appalachian Trail. But last year, that’s exactly what she did, accompanied by her husband, Olen, and their children Lyol (11), Zane (9), Addison (7), and Juniper (4).

In fact, 4-year-old Juniper hiked every step of the trail on her own, becoming the youngest person ever to hike the entire trail, finishing it at the age of 4 years, 340 days.

For some perspective, the elevation gain/loss of hiking the trail is the equivalent of climbing Mount Everest 16 times. It was quite a feat for the family’s feet, which went through three or four pairs of shoes each.

It’s a tradition that people who hike the full Appalachian Trail get trail names, and Juniper earned hers—“The Beast”—on one of the first big climbs. Danae took Juniper’s backpack to make it easier for the child, but no more than 100 yards up the trail, Danae found her crying.

“Uh-oh,” she thought. “Juniper can’t make it.” But the truth came out when Juniper whimpered that she wanted to carry her own backpack, and “The Beast” was born!

However, the hike wasn’t really about getting into the record books. It was about filling the family’s emotional and spiritual energy tanks so they could return to mission work at Béré Adventist Hospital in Chad, Africa.

From Student to Mission Doctor

Danae’s passion to be a missionary physician developed during her year as a student missionary in Zambia while she was attending Southern.

“Working at Riverside Farm Institute, where we often went into the bush to provide medical care, I realized that women rarely saw a doctor,” she says. “That year convinced me that I’d return to Africa as a missionary doctor.”

The next few years were a flurry of finishing college, medical school, and residency. Along the way, she married another medical student who’d spent time as a student missionary in Africa and wanted to return. (Not by coincidence, their first date was a group camping trip during medical school. Danae knew Olen was a “keeper” when he loaned her his warmer sleeping bag and used her lightweight one.)

In December 2010, the doctor couple arrived at Béré Adventist Hospital. Béré has no electrical grid or water/sewer system, and oxcarts outnumber cars. As the only two physicians for a service area of 200,000 people, Danae and Olen got busy right away.

While Danae is an OB/GYN and Olen is an emergency physician, “in Béré, you’re a little bit of everything,” Olen explains. It pushed the couple out of their comfort zones.

“We learned that God asked us to fill a need, and He supplied the skills to meet the need.” Danae adds.

In the mission field, every day presents new challenges. It might be a child who fell out of a mango tree and suffered a depressed skull fracture (Danae—the OB/GYN—did cranial surgery, and he lived), or a pregnant woman who had been in labor for days but couldn’t afford to come for care (Danae sees dozens of such women every year). And of course, they treat endless cases of malaria, malaria, and more malaria.

“We see stuff in Chad that physicians don’t in America,” Olen says. For example, Danae has fixed more than 70 fistulas in the past three years, a higher number than virtually any American OB/GYN would see in a lifetime.

A Bigger Calling

Danae’s training at Southern gave her a strong sense of God’s leading, and the couple felt impressed that medical work was not their only calling.

“We are missionaries, not merely physicians,” Danae says.
So, every Sabbath the Netrebkos pack the kids into the truck—along with a group of Chadians—and drive out into the bush. They find a mango tree, park the car, spread plastic mats on the ground, and soon village children show up and sit on the mats. Olen tells them Bible stories. Danae tells a Bible story. Someone talks about how to pray. Adults hang around the edges, in the shade of the tree, and soon the group is 50, 60, or 100 people. After a few weeks, it’s a church.

The missionaries have started more than a dozen of these bush churches, and most now have Chadian leadership. Some of the churches have survived, some haven’t.

“No matter what, two things have happened,” Olen says. “People have heard about Jesus, and we’ve had a genuine Sabbath rest.”

How do they keep up the pace, with six days a week in the hospital and then the seventh out under the mango trees planting churches? The work is exhausting, and the couple knew they couldn’t keep it up indefinitely. Thus, they came up with the idea of a nine-month sabbatical to hike the Appalachian Trail, trading one hectic pace with its constant routine for a totally different pace and new challenges.

Danae and Olen planned the trip three years ago, but it didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time. We didn’t work out. Then, in early 2020 they realized: “We have an exceptional staff at the hospital. We’ve got time.

The family completed the hike between March and October of 2020, trekking through snow, sleet, rain, biting winds, thick fog, clouds, and summer heat. Addison figured out the best way to dry wet clothes: “I just sleep in them, and they get dry.”

“March 19 was the day the trail was four days after that. "We were eating Ramen noodles by headlamps, and nobody was complaining. Instead, the kids were practicing their ‘Kabaddi’ poses—how they’d mug for a camera at the northern terminus of the trail!” Olen remembers. That night he smiled to himself, figuring they had a chance to complete the trail.

On the Trail

"It was amazing to watch the kids hike—30 miles one day and more than 25 miles on several days—without any complaint,” Olen says. “We would stop for nature lessons and to watch the wild animals. And occasionally for ice cream or pizza.”

Days started to close. We had hiked only 44 miles of the trail to that point. I bought fresh supplies, which made each pack heavy, and then we hiked 8.2 miles to the hut where we had planned to stay—our longest hike so far. However, when we arrived, the shelter had a sign that said ‘Closed for Coronavirus.’"

The next place to stay was 3 miles away, and they’d be pushing dark to get there—something they’d never done before. The family decided to go for broke and made it to camp just as the daylight was fading.

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Renewed Peace

The Appalachian Trail stretches approximately 2,200 miles from Georgia to Maine, and most people hiking the entire trail end at the northernmost point, Mt. Katahdin. However, because the pandemic forced the family to jump around and hike sections of trail out of sequence, their last segment was Springer Mountain in Georgia.

“We wanted to be very respectful and obey health regulations,” Olen says, although it wasn’t easy. Throughout the trip, they carefully documented their progress to make sure they completed every male of the trail. In the end, the family hiked for 177 days and took 54 days off to drive between trail segments. “It was hard, but it was worth it.”

On top of Springer Mountain, after eight months of adventure, the family celebrated their completion of the final section of the trail by creating the number 2,193 with marshmallows, representing the total number of miles hiked.

“I thought I might be overwhelmed with emotions,” Olen said. “But I wasn’t. I simply felt pride and joy. My kids had accomplished something no four kids that young had ever done. We just celebrated the moment as a family.”

Now the Netrebkos are off the trail and back at the hospital in Chad, bringing medical care and the gospel to the bush country of Africa.

“Being out on the trail for that long helped me rediscover a sense of peace,” Danae says. “Living in Chad, we deal with a lot of illness and death. You start to carry that weight around. This trip was God’s way of getting us ready for more service in Chad.”

In 2019, Danae was recognized as Southern’s Alumnus of the Year.

Discovering Creation
Through SOAP

by Madison Reinschmidt, junior mass communication major

Throughout the school year, students at Southern have the opportunity to go on their own mini-adventures through Southern Outdoor Adventure Programming (SOAP). Run by the university’s Outdoor Leadership team in the School of Physical Education, Health, and Wellness, SOAP was created in 2009 with the goal of instilling in students the desire to spend time in God’s creation and introducing them to recreational activities that they can continue long past their college experience.

In a typical year, SOAP offers 20 trips, including activities such as backpacking, rock climbing, whitewater rafting, sailing, and more.

“I thoroughly enjoy offering SOAP trips and giving students opportunities to go on exciting, safe, and Christ-centered adventures,” said Mike Harris, adventure programming director and Outdoor Leadership professor.

“The SOAP trips have taught me so much about teamwork and have given me opportunities to enjoy activities I would not otherwise have experienced otherwise, such as caving,” said Destini Hulon, senior nursing major. “My favorite memories come from a camping trip where my friends and I got to canoe on the lake at night, which was super fun and adventurous. I especially enjoyed the worship and conversation we had around the campfire. It was a refreshing experience to reconnect with my friends and God. I love that SOAP anchors me to God through nature and gives me opportunities to encourage others and bond with people I may not know well.”
GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

Once said, “Reading about nature is fine, but if a person walks in the woods and listens carefully, he can learn more than what is in books, for they speak with the voice of God.”

STUDENTS AT SOUTHERN GET AMPLE OPPORTUNITIES TO BENEFIT FROM NATURE, FINDING PEACE, FUN, CONNECTION, AND A BREAK FROM ROUTINE AS THEY EXPLORE THE GREAT OUTDOORS.

DEVIN VAUDREUIL

Senior outdoor leadership major

“Often people get stressed about something if they're not in control,” said Devin Vaudreuil. “Part of de-stressing is allowing yourself to intentionally release that control, and when you get outdoors, nature just does what it's going to do. If it rains, it rains.”

He values the slower-paced, nonconforming character of the natural world, enjoying kayaking, canoeing, and any other outdoor activity where he can be around water.

“I like water because it's going to move whether you like it or not,” he said. “Rock climbing is another great activity. You can't control the rock. It's just there, and you have to figure out how to get around it.”

While doing an internship at an academy, Vaudreuil was inspired by the fact that many classes were held outdoors, regardless of the weather. Now he is pursuing an outdoor leadership career in education at Southern.

“I've learned a lot about how people learn, and the best methods aren't necessarily a quiz or PowerPoint,” Vaudreuil said. “It's important to take the time to use an experiential approach to teaching students who learn by doing. The adventure therapy courses I've taken here have helped me understand how to serve people better and meet their needs.”

Dwight Rey

Senior film production major

Growing up in Toronto, Canada, Dwight Rey made urban exploration (urbex) his hobby. However, his time at Southern has introduced him to a new kind of adventure, and he has channeled his passion into discovering nature.

“Coming to Southern showed me more ideas for exploring,” Rey said. “For example, getting to rappel in vertical caving piqued my interest; we don't have that stuff in the city. The closest thing in urbex is sewer exploration, which is also fun and exciting, but it's not the same.”

Rey got involved with the university's Outdoor Leadership adventure programs and has taken a variety of courses, such as whitewater rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and more. He even carried his film equipment on some backpacking, caving, and mountaineering trips to incorporate his love for outdoor exploration into his senior film project.

“I like that every day is different, depending on the weather,” he said. “Nature is a nice change of scenery, and when you're doing activities such as hiking or biking, you're actually aware of where you are.”

KIRSTEN LORELLE CLARK

Senior marketing major

Kirsten Lorelle Clark calls the Pacific Northwest her home and has always loved the outdoors. Besides camping, hiking, and rollerblading, she particularly enjoys practicing landscape photography.

Clark's father encouraged this hobby over the years. As a photographer himself, whenever he updated his camera gear, he gave his older equipment to his kids. The family would go out together, and while Clark's parents and siblings focused on birding and photographing wildlife, she captured the beauty and variety found in landscapes.

Southern has been a good fit for Clark. She enjoys hiking on the weekends and fondly remembers camping with her friends the first week after arriving on campus.

“When they invited me, I was pretty excited because I knew there were cool places to go around here,” she said. “It just cheers me up to be outside hearing the birds sing, doing something completely separate from electronics, homework, or other stressful responsibilities.”

VICTOR O’DALA

Senior mass communication major

One of the factors that influenced Victor O'Dala's decision to attend Southern was its vicinity to a variety of beautiful places where he can get outside and spend time in nature. His favorite activity is rock climbing, but he also seize on any opportunity to go backpacking or hiking.

O'Dala has always prioritized spending time outside, but in college it has taken on even more importance for him. On the weekends, nature becomes his refuge from the routine academic pressures of his Monday-through-Friday schedule.

"Getting outdoors lets me de-stress from the chaos in my life," he said. “Nature is a place to get away from all of the stuff that makes me anxious. There I can reconnect with myself and with friends.”

MARÍA JOSÉ MORÁN

Senior mass communication major

As a city girl growing up in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, María José Morán didn't begin spending time outside regularly until she came to Southern.

"Because I was unfamiliar with being around nature and didn't have access to it before, I felt like I needed to get outdoors here," Morán said. “I like that every day is different, depending on the weather. It personalizes who God is for me and reminds me that 'intangible' God is still physically close.”

In addition to running, Morán enjoys sitting outside to paint or journal. She also values nature for its impact on her spiritual life.

“Nature helps me reflect on God's power,” she said. "It personalizes who God is for me and reminds me that 'intangible' God is still physically close.”
Joseph Khabbaz: As you look back over 22 years at Southern, what is your favorite memory?

David Smith: I have two favorite collective memories. The first is teaching in the classroom at Southern. I got to do that for 17 years, and I loved every minute of it, having such an amazing experience with students. It was so fun to walk into a room and together create a world and live in it. That’s what we did year after year as we became part of each other’s lives. My heart is filled with memories and really powerful, positive emotions whenever I think about Southern students and the fun we had learning together, growing together, and helping each other.

The other memory is having students pray with me. Both when I was a teacher and since I’ve become president, periodically students have come by for the express purpose of asking, “Can we pray with you?” That has always deeply moved me.

One time when I was teaching, a student stopped by and said: “You look tired. Can I pray for you?” I happened to be exhausted that day, and after that student prayed, wow, I was filled with energy! Life was good. I think the prayers of students for those of us who are here to serve them mean so much more than they could ever know.

JK: With your background as an English professor and pastor, I know words are important to you. Can you share a word that you particularly associate with Southern, and why?

DS: The word that comes to mind is “life.” When I began teaching college, I discovered that this is when students make their biggest decisions. This is when they set the course that many of them will be on for the rest of their lives. Southern is about living life for God. It’s about God shaping a life that He’s had a plan for from before that person was born, and guiding it in a way that has brought that student to this place. And He has moved on those of us employed here to work with that student as partners with God and the Spirit, to let that life become what it’s supposed to be. It just doesn’t get any better than being part of that process.

JK: As you have lived life with the students and employees here for more than two decades, what is your favorite meal at the Dining Hall?

DS: My answer will disappoint probably all of the careful eaters around me, but it is Worthington Skallops. When they serve Skallops, I’m just one really happy person. I couldn’t tell you why. It’s probably not good for me, but I love the taste of them. So when the cafe has them, I try to show up.
I had only one goal when I started, and I have only one at this point: to do whatever it is that God wants me to do, whenever He calls me to do it.

From the beginning, I sensed the importance of building on Southern’s strong spiritual vision. The outcomes in this area are probably my most pleasant surprise during my time as president. I see the campus coalescing around things absolutely centered institutionally, on the love of God and its power to transform not only our lives but also the lives of those we serve as God works through us.

To the degree that we pursue that goal, to the degree we experience it, and to the degree we pass it on to future generations, I believe to that same degree, Southern will be all that God intended it to be. And I couldn’t be more pleased with that prospect.

As you retire from Southern and your wife, Cherie, retire from her pastoral work at the Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists, what do you most look forward to? And what do you anticipate missing?

From the beginning, I sensed the importance of building on Southern’s strong spiritual vision.

I pray every day that God would prepare our hearts and our lives for what He has in store for us from before He created the world. I’ve allowed my imagination to run freely enough to try to visualize what a world done God’s way would be like, compared to the world I’m living in right this moment. And it makes me so eager, so eager for Heaven.

As much as I value human relationships and human love and a lot of really positive, wonderful things in my life here at Southern, I can’t think of anything greater than to see you, my family, all those I’ve known here, to see you all in Heaven. And having the realization: “You know what? There’s no time, there’s no clock. We’ve got forever to enjoy a perfect world.” I say, let’s get at it and let’s do it.
Did You Know?

Founded in 1892, Southern has grown and changed significantly through the years. See how many of these facts and numbers are new to you!

Student jobs have been a mutually beneficial arrangement since Southern was founded. Today, the university employs more than 1,500 student workers and offers several work-related scholarships.

Southern’s tuition and fees are 34% lower than the national average for private colleges and universities.

More than 1,200 students participate in approximately 100 LifeGroups at Southern—an opportunity to worship and fellowship with a small community of friends each week.

Lynn Wood Hall, named in 1945 for Lynn H. Wood (Southern’s 8th and 11th president, serving 1914-1915 and 1918-1922), was completed in 1924 and is the oldest building in use on campus.

Students from all 50 states attend Southern, along with representatives from 37 countries.

In an average year, nearly 300 students serve on long-term and short-term mission trips.

In the last five years, 6,920 people have been baptized following student-led evangelistic meetings in 14 countries.

Our 1,300-Acre Campus

More than 2,500 students are enrolled at Southern, engaged in the university’s 81 undergraduate degree programs and nine graduate programs—not counting numerous concentrations.

In an average year, nearly 300 students serve on long-term and short-term mission trips.

Come See for Yourself!

Are you or someone you know interested in attending Southern? We invite you to schedule a visit to see for yourself what makes this university special. In-person and virtual visit options are available. Simply go to southern.edu/visit to get started.

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The Bietz Center for Student Life—the students’ new “living room”—will feature 42,200 square feet of space, with options for fun, worship, food, and more when it opens this fall.

Each year, students receive nearly $18,000,000 in Southern-based scholarships.

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Reaching Out to Christ
by Madison Reinschmidt, junior mass communication major

When Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists transitioned to online services in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Nathan McKee, ’14, felt inspired to get involved with outreach. While reading about God’s call in Isaiah 58 to help the less fortunate, he realized the need to assist those living in the local area without basic necessities, such as food or shelter.

According to the Chattanooga Regional Homeless Coalition, the number of unhoused individuals in the county increased by more than 80% during the pandemic. After speaking to various local organizations, McKee and his friend and fellow Southern alumn Raymond Liu, ’13 and ’16, partnered with the church to establish a small group called Isaiah 58. The group’s goal is to visit, witness, and provide goods to people living in homeless camps in the surrounding community.

In Our Backyard
McKee and Liu began visiting a camp in Ooltewah last August and have tried to return every two weeks since then, inviting family and friends to join. During each visit, the group makes note of what the inhabitants need and returns the next time with supplies, such as sleeping bags, hats, gloves, soap, hygiene products, food, and drinks.

“Every time we approach the camp, we shout ‘outreach’ to let them know that we are there to assist those living in the local area without basic necessities, such as food or shelter. They want to be prayed for and to be close to Christ. They want to be prayed for, but the clothes he was wearing. The man needed a tent, but they had nothing for him to use. This one word is so special to me, because we want them to know that we will not harm them or steal from them as others have. It has been a very cool experience to see the selflessness demonstrated in this experience and many others.

“The people living in the camp also have a desire to be close to Christ. They want to be prayed for and are often found reading their Bibles or listening to Christian radio programs. For Kris Eckenroth, ’99, associate senior pastor at the Collegedale Church, visiting the homeless camp in the woods is a peaceful and serene time to connect with God.

“When I leave after spending time there, I have a lump in my throat,” Eckenroth said. “I feel as if I have been in the presence of Christ. These people are right in our backyard. Everyone who lives in the Collegedale area probably passes by them every day. It’s easy to be unaware, but Jesus—in the form of someone who is homeless—is literally within arm’s reach. If people are looking for a real experience with Jesus, it is available.”

The Shirt Off His Back
In the course of their visits, the Isaiah 58 group has been struck by the selflessness of those living in the camps. As the group has returned regularly, the inhabitants have become excited about their visits and look for ways that they can give back.

Once, McKee noticed that a man was wearing a shirt with a Bible verse on it. To start up a conversation, McKee said, “Hey man, I love your shirt!” To his surprise, the man responded by offering it to him and starting to take the shirt off. McKee quickly stopped him but was touched by the selflessness demonstrated in this experience and many others.

“Some of the people will say: ‘I have enough stuff. Look through what I have so you can give it to others who need it more,’” Liu said. “Seeing how giving the people are has truly softened my heart.”

One day, McKee and Eckenroth encountered a man who had nothing but the clothes he was wearing. The man needed a tent, but they had nothing for him to use. This one word is so special to me, because we want them to know that we will not harm them or steal from them as others have. It has been a very cool experience to become friends with them—to understand who they are and what has brought them there.”

He is calling us, in a dark time in Earth’s history, to be light,” Eckenroth said. “Light shines in the darkness when we treat people as if we are Jesus.”

The History Nugget
“God Has Seen Us Through”
by Jamell Hallpias, ’25

In 1900, 85 students and teachers became ill from hepatitis, and the county health authorities were unable to discover its source. To stop further infection, approximately 1,000 individuals received preventative injections from the college health services team.
Alumni Notes

'50s Silas Keller, ’53, lives in Lebanon, Tennessee, and works at Southern. After graduating from Southern with a bachelor’s degree in education, he earned advanced degrees at Washington University in St. Louis and Notre Dame University in Indiana. He recently learned that his book Drug Science, Learning Life: Activities with Special People is a free resource available online through Andrews University. Keller also coordinates two college-level physics books, Electromagnetics and Mechanics.

'60s Jerry, ’69, and Linda (Ballsick) Liddle, ’69, met at Southern and have been married for 51 years. They raised three children, a girl and two boys, but lost their daughter to cancer when she was age 7. Their sons have brought them untold joy and three grandchildren.

'70s Richard and Colleen (Sest) Stanley, ’70, met their junior year at Southern in Jerome Clark’s American History class while standing up to take alphabetical. They became engaged after Richard was accepted to Loma Linda University School of Medicine in California and still celebrate 30 years of marriage in August. They have two children and three grandchildren and are happily retired in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, just a few miles from the ocean, where Richard practiced family medicine for nearly 40 years.

Linda Nelson, ’72, passed the CPA exam in 1977 and graduated from the University of Maryland at Baltimore with a master’s degree in social work in 1986. She lives in Silver Spring, Maryland, and retired from the Adult Behavioral Health Clinic at Walter Reed National Military Medical Hospital in 2017.

'80s Andrea Kincaid, ’86, owns the Sunlight Center, an online learning platform. She lives in Columbus, Texas.

Angela J. Henry (attended) is a certified public accountant with Alexea Financial Management Inc. in Atlanta, Georgia. She leads the highly respected boutique firm of accounting professionals providing financial, tax, and business advisory services to clients in the entertainment, media, and professional service industries. Angela completed her undergraduate degree in 1990 and her MBA degree with a concentration in finance in 1995 at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Ben (Bo) and Tina (Frist) Smith, ’89, met sitting side by side alphabetically. They became engaged after Richard was accepted to Loma Linda University School of Medicine in California and still celebrate 30 years of marriage in August. They have two children and three grandchildren, and the couple prays God for the grandchildren.

Stephan Lake, ’89, works as a senior physical therapist for outpatient rehabilitation in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Bo, ’90, and Tina (Frist) Smith, ’89, met on campus more than 30 years ago and now live in Austin, Texas. Tina has been part of the Marketing and University Relations teams at Southern for the past nine years, and Bo is in IT security governance at Blue Cross Blue Shield in Chattanooga. Their son, Easton, is a junior at Southern, studying math education and planning for a career in education. Easton enjoys football and spending time with friends.

Marcus, ’90, and Deana (Darbo) Dekle, ’90, and their family live in Hamburg, Pennsylvania. Their daughter, Autumn, is enrolled in the nursing program at Southern.

'90s Janet Myrick, ’90 and ’91, earned her MSN degree from Grand Canyon University in Arizona. She lives in Apache, Florida.

Tom, ’91, and Kristie (Young) Tron, ’91, are professors at Southern. Tom teaches in the School of Education and Psychology, and Kristie teaches in the School of Social Work. They have two sons: Ane (7) and Jack (3).

Daniel and Rebecca (Laurinie) Kuntz, ’92, live in Urbana, Illinois, with their two sons: Nathan (12) and Samuel (9).

Bob, ’94, and LaLoo (Cofman) Paynick, ’94, continue to serve as missionaries in Sorong, West Papua, along with their four children: Baskin (13), Luke (9), Lina (6), and Basheer, born in September 2020.

Elvis Rodriguez (attended) graduated from Antillean Adventist University with a Bachelor of a Arts in Physical Education. He lives in Puerto Rico and plans to attend medical school to specialize in sports medicine.

'10s Donna Bette, ’12, graduated from a program with a family studies major and then earned a master’s degree in human services counseling from Liberty University in Virginia in 2014. She has held positions assisting victims of crime as victims’ advocates and currently works as a certified health coach. She launched Delight in Your Health LLC in February 2020 and lives in Rosedale, North Carolina.

Caleb, ’98, and ’11, and Brenda (Monchez) Fischer, ’72 and ’73, welcomed their first daughter in May 2020. The family lives in Ooltewah, Tennessee.

Jenaelle (Looker) Edmonds, ’12, ’14, and ’17, is an AMCC board certified nurse practitioner with more than seven years of professional mental health experience. She also is the founder and director of Phoenix Health PLLC in Chattanooga. As the critical incident support specialist for Tri-Community Volunteer Fire Department, she provides support and training to members following critical events. Jenaelle serves as an adjunct professor for mental health nursing studies at Cleveland State Community College’s Associate Nursing Program. She is active with the Tennessee Disaster and Mental Health Triork Team, Blue Pill for the First Responder Suicide Prevention Task Force, and Family Behavioral Health Alliance.

Sheila (Beaton) Knight, ’75, and her husband, Ashok, live in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is a resident physician in psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Family Additions

Elissa (Holley) Ernesto (attended) and her husband, Guy, welcomed their son, Judah, on November 29, 2020. They live in Framont, New Hampshire.

Brittney (Jacobs) Thomp, ’01, and her husband, Chris, welcomed their son, Jacob, on January 21, 2021. The family lives in Laurel, Maryland.


Celebrating Southern Sweethearts

More than 3,300 married alumni couples have joined their hearts and lives! Alumni relations is excited to launch Southern Sweethearts, a new program designed to celebrate married alumni couples and their new journey together with a special gift. Visit sü.edu/sweethearts to earn to this complimentary program.

Southern is proud to recognize two alumni committees who have been friends since the 1950s. Left to right: Pierre J. Moore, ’48 (left), who turned 101 on March 12 this year was honored by his North Carolina friends; and Kenneth Baker, ’53, of Cleveland, Tennessee, passed away peacefully at home on September 15, 2020, at the age of 85. Kenneth was known for his untiring love and devotion for his Savior, family, and his many friends who remember his wit, wisdom, kindness, and ever-present royalty, including Prince Albert of Monaco. Norman is survived by children Aksel and Livana, a grandson, David, and great-grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Southern Alumni Association to benefit the University’s scholarship programs.

Weddings

1 Richard Chesney, ’53, of Cleveland, Tennessee, passed away peacefully at home on Friday, May 22, 2020, at the age of 99 following a brief illness. Richard was born March 6, 1921, in Greeneville, Tennessee, grew up in Knoxville, and graduated from Southern in 1943 with a bachelor’s degree in chemistry. He served in the U.S. Army as a lab technician until 1945 before returning to work at the College. He was a long-time member of the Bowman Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. He was predeceased by his wife, Mary Jane (Chesney) Chesney, who passed away in 2016, and is survived by three daughters, Donna, Beth, and Helen, and six grandchildren. Richard and Mary Jane had been married for 59 years before moving to fainting to settle for a lifetime. They enjoyed the beautiful scene that the West Coast has to offer and try to visit new places whenever possible.

2 Vanessa (Duncan) Matthews, ’54, married Michael Matthews on August 9, 1957. The couple lives in Crystal, Florida, and plans to travel for a few years before moving east to start their family. They enjoy the beautiful scenery that has to offer and try to visit new places whenever possible.

3 Andrew, ’56, and Ashley (Mitchell) Aussdorff, ’55 and ’56, were married on June 28, 2014, in Mobile, Alabama. Andrew is an associate pastor at a local church, and Ashley is NICU nurse in Atlanta. The couple lives in Decatur, Alabama.

4 Benjamin, ’20, and Josica (Kerch) Lawson, ’39, were married on June 27, 2020. Their wedding was delayed due to COVID-19, but COVID-19 changed their plans, and they eloped to Roan Mountain, North Carolina, for the ceremony. The couple lives in Asheville, North Carolina.

5 Brian, ’25, and Mindy (Jumaste) Tran, ’26, were married on June 2, 2020, during a small “COVID era” wedding. They hope to celebrate with their family and friends when it is safe to gather. The couple lives in East Ridge, Tennessee, and Mindy serves as an associate professor in the School of Visual Art and Design.

Remembrance

1 John “Warren” Grefeld (attended) was born on September 8, 1928, in Ashmore, Oklahoma, and passed away on January 1, 2021, in Hinton, Oklahoma. Warren attended elementary school and graduated from Collegeville Academy. In 1945, his family moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, so Warren’s father could resume the druggist shop at Union College. He joined the Air Force and attended Mississippi State University while pursuing a degree in aeronautics. Warren later attended the University of Arkansas in 1950 for a masters in business administration. He retired from the Veterans Administration in 1989, and lived there for the remainder of his life. He opened Bernal Violins and began teaching music in 1979. He then returned to college and earned a second bachelor’s degree from the University of Missouri in 1985. Warren was a respected performing ensemble. Norman moved to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1979. He was a member of the Spartanburg Seventh-day Adventist Church. Kenneth was known for his untiring love and devotion for his Savior, family, and his many friends who remember his wit, wisdom, kindness, and ever-present royalty.

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Working to Defeat COVID-19

by Angela Baerg, ’06

From a very young age, Mark McKenzie, MD, ’91, was insatiably inquisitive. His parents, who were both teachers, encouraged his quest for knowledge and often sent him to the dictionary or encyclopedia to find his own answers. Little did McKenzie realize that one day his critical thinking skills would be needed to help fight a global pandemic.

In 1986, McKenzie enrolled at Southern as a biology major with a focus on medical technology. His adviser, the late Professor Ray Hefferlin, PhD, went above and beyond to help him conduct an independent study and find hospitals around the country where he could complete his research. Through his studies, McKenzie learned how to develop a theory, put it into practice, and gather data to evaluate his conclusions.

“I got a strong science background from Southern,” McKenzie said. “Later, when I decided to study medicine, I was quite pleased to discover how well they had prepared me for my career choice.”

McKenzie became a doctor of internal medicine and worked in private practice for 16 years. In 2009, he began to collaborate with a friend, Richard Krause, MD, at Clinsearch, an independent clinical research center in Chattanooga, Tennessee. In 2018, Krause retired from the company he had founded, and McKenzie began to run Clinsearch full time.

As COVID-19 swept across the globe, many pharmaceutical companies approached Clinsearch to test products that could potentially combat the virus. In 2020, Krause lost his life to COVID-19 complications; his memory inspired McKenzie and his team to do all they could to fight the disease.

McKenzie became one of the 100 principal investigators in the United States for the Moderna mRNA vaccine, which eventually received emergency-use authorization by the Food and Drug Administration in December 2020. Clinsearch also ran a trial for the Novavax vaccine, which had 116 North American trial locations, with McKenzie monitoring more than 750 volunteers.

Additionally, Clinsearch conducted a trial for Regeneron, an antiviral antibody treatment that can be used to treat those who have contracted the virus, or it can be used to help those who have been exposed to remain healthy and uninfected. The trial showed that the treatment reduces viral levels and improves symptoms in nonhospitalized COVID-19 patients.

McKenzie remains focused on his goal to test products that can help save lives and bring people back together with their loved ones. He particularly misses his own parents, who live in Canada, so he has not been able to see them in more than a year due to health precautions and travel restrictions.

“We are encouraged as we see things starting to turn around, as more people get vaccinated and we learn more about how to combat this virus,” says McKenzie. “As a Christian, I believe that Matthew 25 calls us to do something for those around us. It’s inspiring and humbling to know that the work we are doing is making a difference.”

Turning Clay Into Art

The School of Visual Art and Design provides numerous courses where students can explore various hands-on skills. Laiza Fuhrmann, a May 2021 fine arts graduate, sampled a wide range of creative media, deciding to specialize in bringing beauty out of “mud” as she forms works of art at the potter’s wheel. To see some of Fuhrmann’s finished work, visit southern.edu/columns.
Southern Adventist University continues to recognize the responsibility for providing a safe environment for alumni, students, employees, and the local community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the overwhelming desire is to welcome our extended Southern family back to campus, public health and safety remain the priorities. Homecoming Weekend will be hosted virtually with decisions to be made over the summer about possibilities for including some socially distanced, in-person activities with limited attendance.

View updated Homecoming Weekend information online or contact Alumni Relations directly.

- [southern.edu/homecoming](southern.edu/homecoming)
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