

MADE IN AMERICA

ROWDY AT 40

GINKGO LEGACY

A Publication for Alumni and Friends

Fall/Winter 2020 | Volume 45, Number 1

'SOUTHERN





STUDENT MUSIC FEST

BSC students spent a Saturday afternoon in October listening to musical performances by fellow students during the 2020 Student Music Fest at Hill Amphitheatre. The event was sponsored by the Quest II Programming Board.

Letter from the President

In a place dedicated to education, we have certainly learned a lot more than expected in 2020 – a year of humility and confidence.

Lesson #1: There is no crystal ball. While it is difficult to predict the future, it is really difficult to predict the future in the middle of a pandemic. On Thursday, March 12, we announced a plan to hold classes on campus for one more week, have two weeks of spring break, and then return to classes – online rather than in person. This plan gave students about 10 days to say goodbye to friends, pack up, and take care of things before cutting short their on-campus experience.

Lesson #2: Plan for Plan B. On Friday, March 13, the Alabama Department of Public Health announced the state’s first confirmed case of COVID-19. On Sunday, March 15, we completely changed our plans. We had to accelerate our departure from campus.

Over the next 48 hours, we moved students off campus, denying seniors real closure to the end of their college experience. While we could not have changed this, we felt terrible about the abrupt end to face-to-face instruction. From that point on, we have been determined to stay ahead of this virus, and to avoid any abrupt shifts that would further disrupt the lives of our students, faculty, staff, and their families.

Lesson #3: Old dogs can learn new tricks. Once the campus was largely empty, all efforts turned to teaching, which would begin again in less than two weeks. For many of us who had not taught online (including me), we had to learn quickly. For a faculty whose mission is to teach to students in a personalized way, talking into a camera with no one else in the room was a strange experience. It lacked the student feedback that energizes us. Turning my course – Financial Markets and Institutions (Business 375) – into online lectures was a humbling experience. Due to self-inflicted technical problems, my first recorded lecture took three tries. I am in awe of our faculty, many of whom had not taught online before. They all managed to prepare a half-term of three classes each over just 10 days.

Lesson #4: We are nimble. This campus is more agile than I realized. This knowledge gave me confidence that we could create and follow protocols to minimize the risk of the spread of this virus, and return for in-person classes in August.

We began by talking to experts around the country, as well as local health authorities. On June 30, we announced our “Return to the Hilltop” plan for fall term. Over the rest of the summer, we filled in the details, identified numerous obstacles, and completed the working plan before students returned. Learn more about how we achieved a successful fall term on campus in our cover story beginning on pg. 16.

Looking ahead to E-Term and spring term, I wonder what obstacles we will face. I worry about mistakes we will make or moments when we don’t have the right answer. And then I think about the last nine months, when we made a lot of mistakes but then adapted. In fact, we have stayed ahead of this virus, providing the resources and care to keep students on campus, safe, and engaged.

So we are looking forward, not just to spring term but beyond. We will continue to communicate frequently about our thoughts and actions as we guide the College through the pandemic. There will be more bumps in the road; this pandemic will humble us again and force us to adjust. And yet, from the experience of the past nine months, I am confident that we will successfully adapt to almost anything COVID-19 brings our way.

Daniel B. Coleman
President



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Daniel B. Coleman, President
DeLynn M. Zell '86, Chair,
Board of Trustees

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Editorial Offices
10 Stockham Building
900 Arkadelphia Road
Box 549004
Birmingham, AL 35254
Phone: (205) 226-4922
E-mail: communications@bsc.edu

Virginia Gilbert Loftin
Vice President for Advancement and Communications

Executive Editor
Amy Bickers Abeyta
Director of Communications

Art Directors
Traci Edwards
Assistant Director of Visual Content

Patrick Bradford
Assistant Director of Visual Content

Contributing Writers
Glenny Brock '99

Jennifer Jones
Assistant Athletics Director

Virginia Gilbert Loftin
Vice President for Advancement and Communications

Elizabeth Sturgeon
Communications Coordinator

Photography
Cameron Carnes
Photographer and Videographer

Office of Alumni Engagement
Jennifer Waters '86
Director of Alumni Engagement

Hope Tucker Lyle '20
Alumni Coordinator

www.bsc.edu

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Articulation Agreements Smooth Transfer Process

In October, Birmingham-Southern College and Wallace Community College (WCCD) in Dothan, Alabama, signed an articulation agreement that will expedite the completion of a bachelor's degree at BSC for WCCD students. The contract with Wallace Community College - Dothan is BSC's twelfth articulation agreement.

"Birmingham-Southern is making the transfer process more efficient through articulation agreements. Now, students who started their education somewhere else can more easily transfer to BSC and complete their bachelors' degree in our personalized academic environment," President **Daniel B. Coleman** said.

This academic year, BSC welcomed 42 transfer students - many of whom came to BSC from a community college.

"We are grateful to President Daniel B. Coleman and his faculty and staff for their desire to partner with us and open new doors for our students," said **Dr. Linda C. Young**, Wallace Community College - Dothan President. "It creates a seamless pathway for eligible WCCD graduates who want to continue their higher education with one of Alabama's great private colleges. The partnership serves as an excellent example of the two institutions working together, keeping student success as a top priority."

In recent years, BSC has completed articulation agreements with the following two-year colleges: Beville State Community College, Calhoun Community College, Chattahoochee Valley Community College, Coastal Alabama Community College, Gadsden State Community College, Jefferson State Community College, Lawson State Community College, Northeast Alabama State Community College, Shelton State Community College, Snead State Community College, Wallace Community College - Dothan, and Wallace State Community College.



PRESERVE PAVILION

Photo: Dr. Andy Gannon and his invertebrate zoology students explore Turkey Creek during a class trip to the preserve this fall.

After years of planning and fundraising, construction for the Turkey Creek Nature Preserve classroom pavilion is well underway with support from Birmingham-Southern College and other community partners.

Southern Environmental Center Director **Roald Hazelhoff**, Turkey Creek manager **Charles Yeager '10**, and Pinson Mayor **Hoyt Sanders** offered a preview of the project during a Sept. 25 event. The pavilion will serve as an outdoor educational facility as well as a general gathering space for visitors to the preserve.

"We have been working with Birmingham-Southern, the Freshwater Land Trust, and new partners at the preserve to swap

30 acres of flood plain on Sweeney Hollow with 30 acres of land that was part of the original Turkey Creek project, on which is going a pavilion," Sanders says.

Made up of 466 acres, Turkey Creek Nature Preserve is a critical habitat for biodiversity as the home to seven protected and endangered species, including the Vermilion Darter, which lives only in Turkey Creek and nowhere else in the world. The Southern Environmental Center has co-managed the preserve for a number of years and stays involved in their events and projects, like the pavilion.

Hazelhoff is looking forward to the many uses of the new



facility, especially for field trips focused on Alabama's biodiversity. As director of the Southern Environmental Center, housed on BSC's campus, he leads many educational trips at the College and at the preserve that will make use of the new space.

Other faculty, staff, and students are also active with Turkey Creek. Professor of Biology **Dr. Andy Gannon** took his invertebrate zoology class to the preserve to "look for critters" in October, and many BSC students have the opportunity to work at Turkey Creek each summer.

During summer 2020, sophomore **Lora Dunn** and senior **Emily Wise** interned at Turkey Creek, where they worked in the greenhouse, built a shaded structure, replaced invasive species with native plants, and created social media content. Both Dunn and Wise were happy to get out of the house, continue their internships during the pandemic, and participate in various Turkey Creek restoration projects.

"I'm really glad to see Turkey Creek doing their part by remaining available for people to get outside during the pandemic but also remain as safe as possible," Wise says.

Once the project is complete, Hazelhoff also hopes to see more events held at Turkey Creek, a hidden gem of biodiversity and beautiful trails, water, and scenery.

Learn more about Turkey Creek at turkeycreeknp.com.



Dr. Linda C. Young and President Daniel B. Coleman

CAMPUS UPDATES

In 2020, Birmingham-Southern made a wide variety of campus improvements while most of our students, faculty, and staff were off campus.

Panther Perk, the new coffee and dessert shop inside Norton Campus Center was named by a poll from the student body. Located next to the "caf," the shop offers coffee, milkshakes, sundaes, pastries, and hot breakfast sandwiches, salads, and wraps.

In May, **SGA** and the **Hilltop Parent and Family Fund** provided new tables, chairs, and umbrellas around the Alumni Fountain as a gift in honor of the Class of 2020. There are also new tables along the walkway between Norton and the Academic Quad.

Repairs and installations across campus include the roof on the Sports Center, the air conditioning unit in the theatre, and the chiller in Norton. LED lighting was installed in Norton Campus

Center, BSC Library, Elton B. Stephens Science Center, Larry D. Striplin, Jr. Physical Fitness & Recreation Center, and all outdoor lighting on campus.

"The new LED light installations on campus will reduce energy usage, improve the quality of the light, and enhance safety with improved outdoor lighting," says **Lane Estes**, Vice President for Administration and Interim Chief Financial Officer.

In early October, renovations were completed on **Hanson Hall**, adding 80 single rooms. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the rooms are reserved specifically for students who need to be isolated or quarantined. (Read more about BSC's response to the pandemic on page 16.)

Barnes & Noble College is now managing the BSC Bookstore, providing students and faculty with an extensive offering of academic solutions and a vast assortment of affordable learning materials, as well as revamped retail to show off our Panther pride. Find more online at bsc.bncollege.com.



(l to r) Queenie Hawkins and Allison Brooks

WOODROW WILSON FELLOWSHIP



In April, Assistant Professor of Political Science **Dr. Desiree Melonas** was named a 2020 Career Enhancement Fellow by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.

The Career Enhancement Fellowship seeks to increase the presence of underrepresented junior and other faculty members in the arts and humanities by creating career development opportunities for selected Fellows with promising research projects. Melonas is one of ten junior faculty members from across the country to receive a 12-month fellowship and sabbatical stipend.

"I plan to use this fellowship to help prepare my book manuscript, *A Political Theory of Place*, for publication," Melonas said. "This fellowship provides the time and intellectual space to get really intimate with my work. I think it's an intimacy with and excitement for our scholarship that enables us to be better, more inspired teachers; we bring that energy – that enthusiasm for discovery and learning – with us and inject it into the classroom."

The 2020 Career Enhancement Fellows represent top institutions from across the country and work in such disciplines as African American and diaspora studies, English, LGBTQ studies, political science, sociology, and musicology.

"The fellowship is an excellent opportunity for Desiree and we're proud of her achievement," said BSC Provost **Dr. Brad Caskey**. "Prestigious awards such as this provide our faculty the chance to spend time on scholarly work and that ultimately benefits our students in the classroom."

Since joining the faculty in 2017, Melonas has become an active and beloved member of the BSC community. She is involved with the Black Women's Union, the Mortar Board, Students Demand Action, and the Diversity Committee. She also received the 2018 Bob Whetstone Faculty Development Award, given annually to a non-tenured faculty member to recognize their excellence in teaching, and created a political theory focus in the political science department. Melonas has most notably established the Distinction in Black Studies program.



Amy Cottrill OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR

At our 2020 Commencement ceremonies held in early August, **Dr. Amy Cottrill**, Denson N. Franklin Associate Professor of Religion, was named the 2020 Outstanding Educator of the Year. Cottrill has taught at the College since 2007 and, with this honor, will serve as the 2021 Commencement speaker.

"It was a great teaching year for me, despite the challenges of the pandemic in the spring," she says.

Over the 2019-2020 academic year, Cottrill taught first-year students and upper-class religion majors in a range of courses. These include her Explorations Seminar class, "Serpents, Siblings, and Sacrifice: The Book of Genesis," as well as courses on the Hebrew Bible, Abrahamic religions, and Christian scriptures in literature, art, and film.

She also travelled to the University of Rostock in Rostock, Germany, to present a paper in January. The conference, titled "Between Endurance and Wholeness: Resilience Narratives in the Old Testament," brought together an international group of Hebrew Bible scholars to discuss the text through the lens of trauma and resilience.

Cottrill's paper, "Reading the Psalms Through the Lens of Creative Resilience," examines how language of pain pairs closely with language of hope throughout the Psalms.

"In many ways, the biblical narrative is a story of resilience. The biblical authors are putting words to profound suffering, naming it, framing it, and also providing a way for their audience to connect the past to a vision of the future," she explains. "Trauma

and resilience theory helps us understand the ways that encounters with violence and disruption of other kinds disorients people and communities, undermines their sense of stability, and creates a crisis of interpretation."

Cottrill says she was honored to be a part of the conversation on effects of trauma on individuals and communities with European biblical scholars, who have been particularly interested in trauma theory. She also brought this conversation to the BSC community this summer in her mini-lecture on the Psalms and resilience, which can be viewed on the BSC Facebook page.

In the midst of an unpredictable spring term, Cottrill was impressed by her students throughout the transition to online learning, including her senior students who missed out on a normal end to their time on the Hilltop.

"I think students realized in a new way how important the interaction in the class is to their experience, but even when that was hard to maintain, they dug in and made class happen in spite of the chaos of a global pandemic. I thought that was admirable and it made me proud of our students," she says.

During the fall 2020 term, Cottrill was on sabbatical working on her writing projects and research to bring back to the classroom.

"I will be ready to go in the spring term with new ideas to discuss with students."



2020-2021 SGA OFFICERS

Elections for 2020-21 Student Government Association executive officers took place Tuesday, Sept. 8. The executive board, led by SGA President **Sutton Smith**, is the first all-female team since 2012.

Smith is a senior history and religion double major from Auburn, Ala. She is involved in Quest II, Religious Life, Greek Life, and SGA, with two years' experience as a freshman and

sophomore representative.

Through different leadership roles and involvement, Smith has made BSC her home and has been vocal about the strong community she has built on the Hilltop. In March, she wrote an essay about the experience of leaving BSC to finish the spring term remotely and her gratefulness for friends and faculty.

During her junior year, Smith served as a

ministry intern at Bluff Park United Methodist Church and as an intern on Doug Jones' Senate campaign. She was also named a finalist for the Harry S. Truman Foundation's scholarship for public service and leadership development.

In her campaign for SGA president, Smith emphasized her hope to establish a strong connection between SGA and Counseling Services, make SGA more transparent through

Zoom office hours and idea forms for students, and dedicate more funds to diversity and inclusion initiatives on campus.

The other elected executives are:

Vice President **Carol Johnson**, a junior biology major with a pre-med track from Tuscaloosa, Ala. She is on the women's soccer team and has been involved in the Panther Partnerships Mentoring Program.

Secretary **Madison Blair**, a sophomore

English major from Hoover, Ala. She is involved in Quest II, Greek Life, and the Orientation Team. She also serves as a tutor in the writing center.

Treasurer **Laura Alice Hillhouse**, a senior business administration major from Florence, Ala. She is involved in Greek Life and the Panther Partnerships Mentoring Program.

SGA RESULTS

Duke Data Internship

In summer 2020, Birmingham-Southern College began a new partnership with Duke University – one that provides important interdisciplinary research opportunities for students and faculty.

Andrew Scofield, a junior applied computer science major, and **Dr. Jessica Hines**, assistant professor of English, collaborated with students and faculty from Duke and Haverford College on a Duke Data+ research project. The Data+ program runs under the Rhodes Information Initiative at Duke, and it provides research experiences for undergraduates interested in approaching interdisciplinary topics and challenges through a focus on data.

Hines, who received her Ph.D. from Duke, previously worked with Data+ with Dr. Astrid Giugni. For this summer's project, Hines and Giugni served as project leads with five student researchers, including Scofield.

"Giugni and I are in the process of developing a long-term project examining the changing language of consumer culture across the medieval and early modern periods," Hines says. "Data+ gave us a starting point to launch that research."

Scofield first learned about the project from his advisor, Assistant Professor of Applied Computer Science **Dr. Amber Wagner**, and he was excited to get research experience. He, Hines, and their team worked on one of 29 Data+ projects and focused on the question proposed by Hines and Giugni: what types of consumerism existed in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period?

"Our team pulled 25,000 texts from a database and tried to, in some way, quantify and dimensionalize relationships between consumerism and various concepts, genders, and/or peoples," Scofield says. "We used modern natural language processing techniques like word embedding and topic modeling to analyze the 700,000,000 words at our disposal."

The medieval and modern periods, roughly from 1475-1700, contained powerful cultural change. When analyzing these changes through large amounts of text, the team looked at how the Protestant Reformation and the rise of the market economy might have impacted language regarding consumption.



"What was really innovative about our team's work is that, while word embedding models have been used to study later texts, it hasn't been really applied to earlier texts," Hines says. "Our team did great work at coming up with creative ways to get around the particular challenges that have previously made pre-1700 texts difficult to analyze."

With the interdisciplinary focus of the program, and their project's specific focus on digital humanities, Scofield saw his computer science education at BSC make a real impact.

"Oftentimes, it is hard to see the big picture of how what I have been learning is useful because I have no workplace experience to relate it to," Scofield says. "Now that I have experienced how programming languages and humanities knowledge are used in data science research, I feel a lot more confident about myself and what I have learned at BSC up to this point."

Following the team's completed research, BSC has begun a fruitful partnership with Duke and the Data+ program. This summer, the Provost's Office sponsored Scofield and the Krulak Institute supported Hines. The partners at BSC and at Duke are excited to see joint research between the two institutions.

You can read more about the team's research findings and view their presentation, "For love of greed: tracing the early history of consumer culture," at bigdata.duke.edu/projects/love-greed-tracing-early-history-consumer-culture.

Project Leads:

Astrid Giugni, Jessica Hines

Project Manager: Chris Huebner

Project Team: Donald Pepka, Andrew Scofield, Albert Sun, Daisy Zhan

"I think basing the opportunity in a partnership really strengthened the project itself, allowing us to do work that was truly interdisciplinary – merging humanistic research with data science – because of the range of backgrounds and interests the participants brought to the table," Hines says.

Hines is looking forward to seeing more students get involved in collaborative, intercollegiate research projects. Not only do opportunities like Duke Data+ allow students to deepen studies within their academic major and focus, but interdisciplinary research also challenges students to explore new ideas and develop skills they haven't been exposed to before.

"I did not know anything about programming languages, the basics of computer operation, or anything besides a few keyboard shortcuts that I thought were cool," Scofield says. "But I was able to be a part of this amazing research project and feel confident in what I was able to bring to the table."

PANTHER

PARTNERSHIPS

In November, Birmingham-Southern College announced the 68 students – selected through a competitive process – and Birmingham-area professionals who make up the 2020-2021 class of the Panther Partnerships Mentoring Program. Through this intensive, structured program, volunteer mentors help students achieve individualized goals in pursuit of their educational and career ambitions.

THE 2020-2021 PANTHER PARTNERS ARE:

- **Luis Anguiano**, a junior architectural studies major, mentored by **Ria Neill**, Architect, and **Mack Braden**, Architect and Studio Coordinator, at Christopher Architects and Interiors
- **Clarence Barr**, a senior business administration major, mentored by **Kenneth Crenshaw '95**, Senior Vice President and Community Lending Manager at IBERIABANK
- **Emma Boissel**, a sophomore psychology major, mentored by **April Jackson-MacLennan '09**, Attorney at the State of Alabama Court of Civil Appeals
- **Maddie Brook**, a junior collaborative education major, mentored by **Rebecca Posey '05**, Preschool Director at Ascension Episcopal Kindergarten
- **Rachael Brooks**, a junior biology major, mentored by **Walker Blackston, Ph.D. '15**, Researcher at Louisiana State University
- **Ryan Brown-Ezell**, a junior biology major, mentored by **Heather Fecteau '06**, Genetic Counseling Manager at NxGen MDx
- **Bethany Bryant**, a senior business administration major, mentored by **Onna Cunningham '08**, CEO and Founder of Luna
- **Victor Cardenas Perez**, a senior accounting major, mentored by **Scott Berte '94**, Managing Partner at DHG
- **Alexandra Coberly**, a senior history major, mentored by **Connie Hill '92**, CEO of Girls, Inc. of Central Alabama
- **Lance Cook**, a senior political science major, mentored by **Aalok Sharma '07**, Attorney at Stinson LLP
- **Halley Cooper**, a junior psychology major, mentored by **Rob Bare**, Ph.D., Director of Outpatient Forensics with JBS Mental Health Authority
- **Jonah Dennis**, a sophomore biology major, mentored by **Holly McCaleb M.D.**, Assistant Professor and Assistant Director of Rural Programs at University of Alabama College of Community Health Sciences
- **Maya Donaldson**, a sophomore interested in biology/health sciences and psychology, mentored by **Chelsea Brown**, Certified Child Life Specialist at Children's of Alabama
- **Keyamber Ford**, a junior business administration major, mentored by **Julie Terrell '96**, Interior Designer at Julie Terrell Interior Design
- **Bailey Gardner**, a senior political science major, mentored by **Jeanie Sleadd '09**, Attorney at Heninger Garrison Davis
- **Kaitlyn Hearn**, a junior psychology major, mentored by **David Kilmer '74**, Therapist at Pitts & Associates
- **Lorin Helfenstein**, a senior business administration major, mentored by **Will Foster '10**, Director of Brand Marketing at Royal Cup, Inc
- **Trey Hines**, a sophomore business administration major, mentored by **Caleb Schmidt**, Vice President of Corporate Partnerships at Knight Eady
- **Kalis Jones**, a senior psychology major, mentored by **Lyndsay Clark**, University Counselor and Wellness Coordinator at Samford University
- **Saydee Keith**, a senior applied computer science major, mentored by **Daniel Haden**, Prosthetist and Orthotist at BioTech Limb and Brace
- **Jackie Lamars**, a senior race and gender studies major, mentored by **JW Carpenter**, Executive Director at Birmingham Education Foundation
- **Sabel Mattingly**, a junior biology major, mentored by **Meg Cherry '04**, Dermatologist and Business Owner at Renew Dermatology
- **Warda Merchant**, a junior biology major, mentored by **Lindsay Sheets, M.D. '15**, Resident Physician at the Johns Hopkins Hospital
- **Sanky Ndhlobu**, a sophomore economics major, mentored by **Margaret Ann Pyburn '84**, Executive Vice President at Cobbs Allen
- **Alex Oswalt**, a junior accounting major, mentored by **Will Thistle '02**, Partner at Bradley Arant Boulton Cummings LLP
- **J.T. Peifer**, a junior business administration major, mentored by **Danielle Smith**, Women's Initiative Manager at Baker Donelson
- **Jamie Persall**, a junior business administration major, mentored by **Jennifer Hatchett '95**, Executive Director at YouthServe
- **Kiera Poole**, a sophomore art history major, mentored by **Katie Paul**, The Virginia and William M. Spencer III Curator of Asian Art at the Birmingham Museum of Art
- **Molly Grace Quinn**, a sophomore psychology major, mentored by **Robert M. Pitts Jr, Psy. D. '81**, Psychologist and President, Pitts & Associates
- **Riley Roberts**, a senior business administration major, mentored by **Audrey Pannell**, Vice President of Public Relations at STYLE Advertising
- **Julia Scarinci**, a sophomore architectural studies and global comparative studies major, mentored by **Emily McClellan**, Architect at KPS Group
- **John Carter Simmons**, a senior history major, mentored by **Brian Barsanti**, Executive Director at the Southern Museum of Flight
- **Sutton Smith**, a senior history and religion major, mentored by **Susan Crow '92**, Executive Director at Workshops, Inc
- **Viktoria Solfronk**, a junior health sciences major, mentored by **Cassandra Winston-Griffin**, DNP, Adult Nurse Practitioner
- **Mary Katherine Stewart**, a junior biology major, mentored by **Rupa Kitchens, M.D.**, Urologist at Urology Centers of Alabama
- **Kazia Taylor**, a senior business administration major, mentored by **Nisha Kashyap '15**, Creative Director at SociallyIn
- **Johana Villavicencio**, a sophomore business administration major, mentored by **Rayna Dyck, M.D.**, Dermatologist at Skin Wellness Dermatology
- **Anjali Vira**, a senior biology major, mentored by **Weily Soong, M.D. '95**, Managing Partner at Alabama Allergy & Asthma Center
- **Courtney Wild**, a sophomore business administration major, mentored by **Lacey Woodroof**, Owner and Founder of Basic



office hours

Dr. Lamia Benyoussef

Roots and new beginnings - a room with a view

When Dr. Lamia Benyoussef came to Birmingham-Southern five years ago, she knew the College felt like home once she saw the magnolia tree outside her office window.

"I have tried many times to plant one in my own garden, but the tree died every time," she says. "For me, trees are symbolic of roots and new beginnings, and they are a beautiful symbol of the American South. Imagine my happiness when I was assigned an office which had a lovely magnolia tree."

Benyoussef, associate professor of Arabic, sees her office space as a reflection of her identity as an Arabic instructor and a Tunisian-American who has established roots in Alabama. In the same way she notices her voice become a hybrid of French and Southern accents, her office too blends these parts of her life.

To the right of her window is her framed "Doors of Tunis," photos of traditional doors throughout Tunisia, with varying colors and architectural styles from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century. To Benyoussef, the doors represent the layering of cultural influences throughout Tunisia.

To the left is her painting of Buraq, the winged, mythical she-horse who brought Mohammed from Mecca to Jerusalem in Islamic tradition. Around Buraq, near her desk, Benyoussef keeps photos

of her two sons and photos with her advisor and colleagues from graduate school at Michigan State.

Her bookshelves are separated into different sections for teaching material, student work, and other documents. She has North African literature in French and Arabic, readings on ecological feminism and post-colonial theory, and rare documents she's collected over the years.

Though she has incorporated many parts of her Tunisian background into her office, Benyoussef also has gifts and souvenirs from students and colleagues over the years that represent the greater Arab world, from Iraqi paintings and prints to the flag of Lebanon.

Her office shows her research and scholarship, her home in Tunisia, and her home in Birmingham, where she's lived since 2001 (besides her two-year home residency at the University of Carthage and Sousse from 2002 to 2004.) While her office is filled with old student papers and her current class curriculum, it's also stocked with literature and theory she hopes to teach one day. Benyoussef is always eager to introduce Middle Eastern and North African texts in a region where they are not as familiar.

"The space reflects my personal life, my educational background, my time in Alabama. It really is who I am, and my room of one's own."



off hours



Dr. Katie McIntyre

Dr. Katie McIntyre's Ashtanga yoga practice, comprised of a fixed series of postures and synchronized breathing, results in a strong body and a calm, centered mind – two things she recognized as essential right now, especially for those teaching, studying, and working at BSC.

During the 2020 fall term, McIntyre, assistant professor of sociology, brought her off-hours expertise to the Hilltop – offering virtual and outdoor yoga classes to faculty, staff, and students.

"Yoga is what you need it to be," she says. "You just have to find what aspect works for you."

After receiving her teaching certification in 2019, McIntyre was encouraged by colleagues to start a class for faculty and staff, which led to a weekly virtual series of 30-minute sessions throughout September.

She started the sessions with breathing exercises and positions to do in a desk chair, bringing attention to a straight posture to awaken the spine and shoulders. Later into the month, McIntyre taught sun salutations, seated positions, and sematic poses, which focus on slow movement and neutral positions.

McIntyre has also held multiple Ashtanga classes on the quad for students. Just like the faculty and staff sessions, she approaches the student classes with the same goal to devote time for yourself.

When she was a graduate student, taking her first yoga classes, the practice is what pulled her out of an emotionally and mentally stressful time in her life. McIntyre attended her first yoga class in 2016 at Birmingham Yoga in Forest Park, where she completed her training last year.

"I kept going and didn't stop," she says. "I used to have a really hard time with things I had no control over, and yoga really helped me."

McIntyre ended up working at Birmingham Yoga during the week, all while taking as many classes as she could. The job paid for most of her classes and pushed her further into the community of students and teachers who walked in and out of the studio each night. Eventually, the owners asked her when she was going to start teaching and encouraged her to begin the process.

McIntyre began teaching the Monday community class – the same class she went to as a beginner – in late summer 2019. As a teacher, she became an even more active member of the yoga community and dove deeper into the philosophy of yoga, which she describes as simply showing up for yourself.

"We have this idea that yoga is a tiny woman who can fold herself into a pretzel and has muscles everywhere but doesn't look like she does," McIntyre says. "But the community is made up of people from every background who needed something, and they found it in yoga. Maybe they ended up in a bad mental health space, or they just wanted to find more exercise, but it is way more obtainable than what we are currently sold."



2020 has thrown all of us more than a few curveballs. We're proud to say that our student-athletes, coaches, and staff have handled this season with generosity, understanding, and unity. **Our Panthers are resilient and ready to be back in action.**

We've spent the fall term preparing for every scenario, and have safely participated in small group practices and team scrimmages. We have high hopes that our student-athletes, who have missed competing, will soon return to the field, pool, court, and track.

Thanks to the effort of our coaches, student-athletes, alumni, and parents, we set a record in fall fundraising. This accomplishment allows new opportunities and supports our need for flexibility while implementing new safety protocols during an unconventional spring term.

Our coaches and staff have selflessly given their time to support our greater Birmingham-Southern community. They have delivered meals to students

in quarantine, assisted with regular COVID-19 testing, and planned quarantine-related activities, which they designed to benefit the emotional and physical well-being of our students. This act of kindness should not go unrecognized, as it has undoubtedly shaped the experience of many students during this time. We are always proud of our coaches and staff, but have been especially grateful for their commitment to BSC and their willingness to serve this fall term.

We're honestly in awe of the way our student-athletes have positively responded under such adversity. None of us could have predicted that our students' college experience would be altered so dramatically. They have handled every bump in the road with maturity and with others in mind. For this, we are so proud of them.

In the true spirit of teamwork, our student-athletes committed to following numerous new rules and guidelines without any hesitation. Multiple campus leaders have stepped up for their fellow students over the last few months. **Carol Johnson**, class of 2022, of women's soccer, created and coordinated a wellness week on campus. And one of our alumnae, **Markia Robinson '16**, led online fitness classes for students, allowing them to focus on wellness from their residence halls. Too many individuals to name have encouraged their peers to keep moving and stay positive, and together have demonstrated what being a BSC Panther is about.

Looking forward, we anticipate the ability to participate in athletic competition in the coming term; due in large part to the very hard work of our student-athletes, coaches, athletic trainers, and the leadership and determination of President Daniel B. Coleman. We will have a testing regimen for all student-athletes and coaches, as well as robust contact tracing. With an ever-changing environment, there are still many protocols to be determined, including whether or not we will be able to participate in competition with fans in the stands. Your support for our student-athletes, whether from near or far, is always appreciated. We are grateful for the determination of our administration and the hope that we have to return to the athletic arena.

In all times, but especially now, Forward, Ever!

Kyndall Waters

Kyndall Waters '05
Athletic Director



SWIMMING & DIVING

"A powerful group or family that maintains its position for a considerable time."

That's how Merriam-Webster defines a dynasty. And at four consecutive years of sweeping both the men's and women's Southern Athletic Association championship titles, Birmingham-Southern swimming and diving is well on its way.

This past year, the Panthers capped off the programs' collective 11th conference title since beginning just eight years ago. BSC has flourished under head coach Toby Wilcox. Panthers have made the trip to the NCAA Division III Swimming and Diving Championships every year since 2014 and own the conference record in all but three of the league's 20 events.

BIRMINGHAM-SOUTHERN SWIMMING AND DIVING BY THE NUMBERS

	NATIONAL RUNNERS-UP	ALL-AMERICA	NATIONAL QUALIFIERS	SAA TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS	SAA ATHLETES OF THE YEAR	SAA EVENT CHAMPIONSHIPS	SAA ALL-CONFERENCE	SCHOLAR ALL-AMERICANS
MEN		17	22	6	17	83	87	7
WOMEN	1	19	23	5	9	45	76	9

BSC AWARDS

The Birmingham-Southern athletics department announced the winners of its annual awards on social media via a series of videos featuring athletic administration staff and select head coaches. **Austin Lewter '20** of football and **Rebecca Erwin '20** of volleyball and swimming were named BSC Man and Woman of the Year, respectively. **Robert Shufford** of football earned male athlete of the year, while Erwin claimed female athlete of the year. The Ben Sinclair Teammates of the Year were **Ivan Villageois '20** of football and **Rachel Fahad** of women's lacrosse. **Bailey Murphy '20** of softball and **Rachael Motamed '20** of women's soccer were named the Johnny Johnson Most Inspirational Seniors. And swimming and diving swept the newcomer of the year awards with **Chase Bolding** on the men's side, and **Mary Miller Goldberg** on the women's.

Sigma Alpha Alpha honors graduating seniors who have achieved above a 3.5 GPA over the course of their time at BSC and have represented their programs on either the first or second all-conference teams. This year BSC had seven new inductees: **Emilee Olsen '20** (women's basketball), **Julia Denby** (volleyball), **Ryan Emili** (swimming and diving), **Rebecca Erwin '20**, **Austin Lewter '20**, **Marjorie Head '20** (cross country), and **Bailey Murphy '20**. Watch the award presentations on the Birmingham-Southern Athletics YouTube channel.

unanimous First-Team All-American as voted on by the American Football Coaches Association and the Associated Press. Erwin joined **Anna Jordan Luth**, **Mary Beth Ronne**, and **Mary Katherine Stewart** as women's swimming All-Americans. **Emma Phillips** was named an All-American by the Women's Golf Coaches Association. And **Jordan Jones** earned All-America honors from the U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association.

Shufford was also named *D3football.com* regional athlete of the year, as well as, first-team all-south region. **Austin Lewter '20** and **Mike Benning** also earned all-region honors in football. **Marjorie Head '20** earned all-region honors from her performance at the regional cross country championships. And **Emilee Olsen '20** of women's basketball was named all-region by *D3hoops.com*.

BSC racked up over 60 Southern Athletic Association athlete of the week awards, seven *D3sports.com* weekly honors, and two national athlete of the week awards. But the Panthers success extended beyond competition and into the classroom. Between the fall and the spring semesters, Panthers earned over 360 Dean's List honors, the department boasted at 3.25 cumulative GPA for the spring, and 236 student-athletes earned SAA Academic Honor Roll.

Erwin was named an Academic All-American by the College Sports Information Directors of America, while Lewter and **Abby Kay Choate** of women's soccer earned all-district honors.

Willie Williams, Jr. '18

For Willie Williams, Jr., the dream to open his own art gallery wasn't something that waited until after graduation. The idea took form in 2015 and became a tangible gallery space by summer 2016, when he held a 10-artist opening show. At that point, Williams was only a junior at Birmingham-Southern, dedicating his summers to art shows and other programs as the owner of Studio 2500.

Located at 2500 26th Ave. North, Studio 2500 is housed in an old car garage that Williams and his father own in North Birmingham. Williams first opened the space to showcase his own work and the work of fellow artists and high school friends, and he's now seen the gallery develop into a center for young and diverse creatives and a home for discussions across generations and backgrounds.

"The studio has grown into an art and cultural venue," Williams says. "It's infused with visual art, music, poetry and spoken word, and dialogues."

Williams found his passion for art early – at four years old, he was drawing in church bulletins every Sunday. His father taught him different techniques as he explored drawing and watercolor, eventually leading him to enter the Alabama School of Fine Arts in eighth grade. During his senior year of high school and years at BSC, he focused on sculpture.

"I can go from very complex to sleek and contemporary," Williams says. "I work with sculptural silhouettes, headpieces, and stylized faces on a smaller scale, but I also do organic large-scale sculpture with a modern architecture feel."

While managing the gallery space and events, Williams still makes time to focus on his own work, and 2020 has been a big year for him. His carbon steel sculpture "Trinity" was one of 20 pieces selected for Chicago Sculpture International's Sculpture in the Parks exhibition, which rotates pieces throughout the Chicago Park District over the course of one year.

Williams has also planned his own travelling installation, "The Arc of Justice," that will carry into 2021. The installation is made up of multiple different outdoor metal sculptures that will be placed across the globe, together representing an international focus on the principles of justice and equality.

"This installation will bring unity and justice and humanity into global awareness, especially with the social unrest brought to the forefront right now," Williams says. "This is something people can look at for years to come but is also representative of our point in time right now."

While national recognition has allowed him to travel with his art, Williams remains focused on how his art and gallery can benefit Birmingham. The gallery plays an important role in its North Birmingham neighborhood, and Williams hopes to bring more beauty and light to the community – even as he expands his reach around the world.

Are you a graduate of the last decade? Tell us what you're doing next! Email communications@bsc.edu.



Mom's Basement

Launching a new restaurant in the middle of a pandemic was not on the 2020 bingo card for Mom's Basement. But for the owners of the Avondale bar – Payne Baker '04, Rae Forrest Baker '04, Wes Frazer '02, and Patrick Nelson – the idea helped them support their employees throughout COVID-19 restrictions.

"Initially, we had to close for the state order," says Rae Baker. "Then, we started offering curbside service and had the opportunity to play around with serving pizza to-go, trying to make sure everybody could continue to make a living."

Pizza was something they'd had in the works – Mom's was planning to open a pizza spot in a restaurant space across the street later in spring 2020. The pandemic gave them the opportunity to launch the pizza-making early while the bar was closed.

Now that they've reopened, Mom's has put the restaurant on

hold (for a return in the near future) to create a safe and fun environment for the bar. Their new outdoor patio and live music events with Cahaba Brewing Co. have helped them get back to what they love most about Mom's – throwing parties.

"My vision for it was my favorite bar to hang out in," Frazer says. "Our walls are all wood panel, and our furniture came from thrift stores, estate sales, and family members, like you're really in your parents' basement."

Like the coolest basements on the block, the dive bar also has arcade games and pool tables. The walls are covered with framed photos of customers' own moms.

"We all have our own full-time jobs and came together to make this work," Rae Baker says. "Now, we're working through what opening back up looks like."



Mom's Basement's first live concert – a record release show for Lady Legs – was held May 22, 2018. Photo by Wes Frazer.

Campus Life in a Time of COVID-19



In late March 2020, BSC students received a postcard in the mail with an image of a chalkboard and the words “1st Day of BSC Online.” Students took selfies with the “signs” – some on their front porches as if they were on their way somewhere, others in their bedrooms next to their laptops – and shared them on Instagram. It was the first day in a long series of days that have often been referred to as “unprecedented.”

The postcard offered an encouraging message that BSC would continue to provide the things at its foundation: the exchange of ideas, the sharing of wisdom, the support and understanding of faculty and staff, and the challenges and rewards of learning.

Rising to the Challenge

When students were sent home on March 16, the transition to online coursework began immediately. Dr. Kate Hayden, assistant professor of chemistry, and Dr. Amber Wagner, assistant professor of creative and applied computing, collaborated with BSC’s IT department to provide training and resources for faculty. Hayden and Wagner led a series of workshops on March 18 – nearly 50 faculty members attended them in groups of ten or fewer, while others viewed a recorded presentation from home. They learned how tools like Moodle, Microsoft Teams, and Screencast-O-Matic would be vital going forward.

Other campus departments worked swiftly to move their services online, including the Library, Counseling Services, the Academic Resource Center, and the Writing Center.

As everyone prepared to return virtually after spring break, Hayden said, “Our mantra has been ‘While we are working remotely, none of us is working alone.’ I hope that is a message that resonates with our students as well.”

A Pandemic Plan

Like other professors, BSC President Daniel B. Coleman spent significant time filming his spring term lectures and meeting with students online. As president, he and senior leadership focused on the immediate administrative needs of the College, including rebating a portion of room, board, and fees of spring term.

He and members of the leadership team secured funding under the CARES Act and the Small Business Administration loan program as well as the U.S. Department of Education grants.



“Our mantra has been ‘While we are working remotely, none of us is working alone.’”

The next step: Exploring what campus life might look like in the fall. Could students, faculty, and staff safely return to the Hilltop?

Six working groups were created to examine every aspect of Birmingham-Southern life: Health Guidelines, Student Life, Academic Affairs, Human Resources, Athletics, and Finance and Operations. Each working group created new processes and protocols to mitigate risk in their focused field as well as for the greater BSC community. These protocols were shared

with seven medical experts around the country – five of whom are BSC graduates – with expertise in epidemiology, oncology, clinical pathology, infectious diseases, public health, and primary care services. The protocols formed the backbone of the Return to the Hilltop plan, shared with students, families, faculty, and staff in a series of online town hall events over the summer.

Fall term on the Hilltop would move forward with 258 (64%) courses offered in-person, 25 courses offered online only, and 64 hybrid courses.

Preparing for the Return

Before returning to campus in August, students were tested twice, viewed training videos, began participating in a daily symptom check, and signed the Panther Pledge, a commitment much like the Honor Code to follow the rules and make every effort to keep campus safe and healthy during this unusual time.

BSC partnered with Cahaba Medical Care, which now has an on-campus clinic that provides on-demand testing and COVID-19 care. Throughout the fall term, Cahaba Medical randomly tested students each week, while UAB's GuideSafe program also provided weekly sentinel testing for faculty, staff, and students. The weekly positivity rate – tracked with an online dashboard – was used to determine guidelines for gatherings and visitors.

Stocking up on school supplies had a whole new meaning in 2020. **Tim Wilding**, manager of purchasing, says preparing for students, faculty, and staff to return to campus was challenging, to say the least.

"Supply chains were in shambles this summer, and price gouging and black market-like conditions were the norm," he said. "When I started hunting for reliable, restockable, items to put on campus, it was like the Wild West of procurement. I've never seen anything like it. Lysol spray is still almost nonexistent."

But Wilding says BSC lucked out: "We got what we ordered within six weeks."

"I feel a lot of mixed emotions because things are different, but ultimately so grateful that we are here and able to experience this year together."

The Realities of Quarantine

"The last protocol we focused on was quarantining," Coleman says. "While we knew this protocol is critical to preventing the virus from spreading, we, like many others, believed that after a few days, a negative test would allow one to leave quarantine."

Unfortunately, a conversation with the Jefferson County Department of Health made clear that exposure to the virus meant 14 days of quarantine with no exceptions.

"As soon as we made this our protocol, we knew that we would have two problems," Coleman says. "There was no way we would not have to quarantine a lot of students, and this would mean we might run out of space."

Students who were isolated still needed access to classes, meaning faculty had to teach students in person and in quarantine at the same time. BSC faculty tackled this challenge with swift determination. One professor put a laptop with a webcam in the front row, treating the quarantined student as another student in the class. Many recorded their classes, making it easier for quarantined students to catch up.

But with isolation and quarantine numbers in the first few weeks exceeding spare bed capacity, fast action was needed. With a grant from the state of Alabama, BSC's operations team – led by director **Randy Johnson** – renovated 31 rooms in Hanson Hall in

seven days, thanks to round-the-clock tag teams of painters, carpenters, flooring installers, and plumbers. The full renovation of 80 rooms was completed over the following three weeks.

Campus Life

As protocols were enacted and having a cotton swab swirled up one's nose became all too familiar, departments across campus worked to keep the BSC experience alive and well.

Hand sanitizer stands and signs to direct traffic flow and social distancing popped up across campus. To improve and control air quality, air ionization technology was added in classroom buildings, the library, Norton Student Center, Striplin Fitness and Recreation Center, Bill Battle Coliseum, and the Student Services building.

"Research indicated that coronavirus might float in tiny aerosols for long periods of time in the air," says **Lane Estes**, Vice President for Administration and Interim Chief Financial Officer. "While there was no firm data at the time, we decided it was worth it to add the air purification technology and possibly minimize the risk of this virus and others spreading through the air. The air is cleaner and more pleasant to breath."

The music department ordered specially-made singing masks for the choir. Sororities and fraternities held virtual recruitment. Student Development offered opportunities to gather for outdoor activities: a fall festival with a petting zoo and a mechanical bull; an ice cream truck; the Heavenly Donut truck; a "scream it out" moment on the academic quad. On what would have been Homecoming weekend, a "Friday at the Fountain" cupcake party celebrated the 40th birthday of Rowdy the Panther. For Halloween, student organizations decorated car trunks for a drive-through "trunk or treat."

The SGA sponsored free virtual fitness classes led by **Markia Robinson '16** on Instagram; kickboxing classes were offered over Zoom. **Dr. Katie McIntyre** offered yoga classes on the quad (read more about her on page 11).

In October, NBC affiliate WVTM 13 visited campus to interview students about college life during a pandemic. Junior **Laura Alice Hillhouse** of Florence, Ala., says, "Every single week you don't know what's promised for the next. I feel a lot of mixed emotions because things are different, but ultimately so grateful that we are here and able to experience this year together."

Sophomore **Sloan Miles** of Memphis told WVTM 13, "The factor of enjoying school life hasn't gone down. When we look back on it we'll be able to prove to a lot of people that we were one of the few schools in the nation to actually pull this off."

For more information about BSC's ongoing response to COVID-19, visit www.bsc.edu/covid19.

THE COVID-19 JOURNAL PROJECT

During a time of social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, members of our community have shared their stories to be recorded and preserved in Birmingham-Southern history.

The BSC Archives has collected journals since April to document the day-to-day "normal" of the pandemic. The journals document the emotions and moments that individuals experience so those details are not lost.

"This is the social distancing way to collect an oral history. As a college, this is how we can document what happened," says **G.K. Armstrong '92**, assistant professor of the Library, digital initiatives librarian, and BSC archivist.

Students, faculty, staff, and alumni contributed journal entries of all forms, including short thoughts, longer essays, poems, and photos. Each entry will be preserved for future digital collections, research, and exhibitions. Armstrong asked the Krulak Institute to serve as a partner to encourage and guide students through the journaling process.

Writers were encouraged to focus on noting honest thoughts, feelings, reflections, and day-to-day details rather than creating formal or polished writing. The journal submissions record small moments of joy, painful experiences, accounts of daily routines, or favorite binge-worthy shows.

"This is how seniors can tell their stories of their last term," Armstrong says. "This is the way those who've had trauma during their time at BSC can talk about that. Faculty have had a monumental challenge – this is an opportunity to process that."

They've collected work from **Professor Pam Venz's** upper-level photography students, first-person narratives of experiences during the pandemic – including from a graduate on the Diamond Princess cruise ship quarantined in Japan in February – and songs written and performed for one of **Professor Melinda Thompson's** courses.

Armstrong has kept the project open as experiences during the pandemic continue, creating a digital archive with journals and other submissions that will soon be open to the public. They're encouraging people from all parts of the BSC community to participate in order to record a full history of the experience.

"When an archive, through inaction or specific action, doesn't collect someone's story, that results in an erasure. If we don't have the full picture of what's happening, we're missing out on a huge part," Armstrong says.

PREP WORK

Stocking up on school supplies had a whole new meaning in 2020.

3,000
CLOTH
MASKS



1,200
DIGITAL
Thermometers

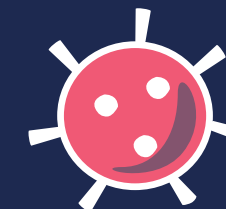
1,000
Disposable
MASKS



100+
HAND
SANITIZER
STATIONS

50
THERMAL
SCANNERS

5,820+
COVID-19 TESTS



5,000+
BOTTLES OF
DISINFECTANT
AND DRY WIPES

2,063
"SIT HERE"
STICKERS

343
Ice Cream
TREATS

80+
WEBCAMS



300
DOUGHNUTS

1 MECHANICAL BULL



Birmingham-Southern alumni with talents in costuming, embroidery, and sewing have shown up for their communities during the onset of COVID-19. When the needs for personal protective equipment were high in the spring, numerous graduates dedicated their time to making face masks for frontline healthcare workers.

Once she hit 500 masks in May, **Kelly Horton Kean '87** stopped counting and continued to sew face coverings. Early on, she realized how great the need for masks would be – Kean herself is a retired dentist, her daughter is in medical school, and her husband is an oral surgeon.

“My husband’s office was unable to find PPE, so I knew this was going to be a huge issue for the hospitals,” she says. “I just felt this overwhelming need to do something, and making masks was an opportunity to help.”

Kean got involved in Birmingham, Mobile, and Montgomery mask collection groups, one of the largest being Birmingham Face Masks. She joined numerous other BSC alumni in the network of mask-makers, including **Tamara Harper '06**, **Anna Spruiell Kittinger '04**, **Catherine Alaina Roberts '17**, **Brenda Brazil '90**, **Rachel Gosnell '15**, **Lin Chen '08**, and **Sherry Hamner Ammons '98**.

Only weeks into the group’s formation at the end of March, Birmingham Face Masks distributed more than 10,000 masks. By July, the group had donated more than 120,000 masks to organizations in Birmingham and across the nation.

Harper, embroiderer and owner of Smallwoods Studio, encouraged contributions through her business. While making many masks herself, Harper also shared tutorials, created patterns, and informed

fellow mask-makers about the high-demand for washable masks.

As PPE became more readily available, many mask-making groups have slowed down collections, and now, mask-makers have started focusing on more innovative and creative designs.

Matthew Torbett '20, a musical theatre graduate, began making masks in the spring of his senior year, alongside others in BSC’s theatre department including Costumer **Patti Manning** and Costume Supervisor **Megan Pecot '18**. Though Matthew Torbett Design was once just a place for Torbett’s digital art, the Etsy shop is now dominated by face masks.

“My philosophy has become ‘Why not have fun with it?’” Torbett says. “Masks are now becoming a fashion accessory, so why don’t we play around with fringe hanging off of our face?”

Fringe, denim, and lace overlays have all found a place in his shop as he channels his passion for design and costuming into essential face coverings. The masks showcase Torbett’s experience in designing and making costumes, which he first studied at BSC for theatre productions and his own research projects.

“Shifting from theatrical costuming, I miss being a part of something bigger and collaborating with others,” he says. “But this is for something even bigger – for public health, to help society get back to a new normal. I saw that the skill that I had could help my community.”

We’re so grateful for those around Alabama and beyond who have dedicated their time, services, and talents to those critically affected by the pandemic. Let us know of other alumni who are helping their communities at communications@bsc.edu.



ALUMS on the Front Line

“I never imagined I would see a pandemic of this magnitude in my lifetime, or directly experience its resulting pressures and responsibility. But as a researcher and public health expert, I am professionally and ethically bound to provide factual, scientific information and advise others on best practices, including elected officials, health system administrators, and universities. This has been one of the most challenging, exhausting, and isolating periods of my life – fighting an invisible enemy, presenting consistently discouraging data, struggling to protect the health of many who simply don’t want to be protected – but it has also been immensely rewarding to see my passion and purpose actualized and to make a difference however I am able.”

Casey Daniel '07, PhD, MPH
Director of Epidemiology and Public Health
Assistant Professor of Family Medicine, University of South Alabama College of Medicine
University of South Alabama Mitchell Cancer Institute
Chair, Alabama Comprehensive Cancer Coalition
BSC Outstanding Young Alumni Award Recipient, 2020

“As an active member of the global health community where the mission of our team is capacity-building for cancer diagnostics to reach every patient around the world, COVID-19 eliminated my ability to travel domestically and internationally. Rather than let this stop what we can do, our team refocused on the virtual tools of communication that we had already been using for many years with renewed approaches to providing training, securing equipment, and getting multiple sites online with our member volunteers. Working closely with the WHO, CDC, and our own member experts, we spent much of our time during the pandemic connecting the correct information about testing and testing strategies to laboratories domestically and around the world.”

Dan Milner, Jr. '95, MD, MSc(Epi)
Chief Medical Officer, American Society of Clinical Pathology

“COVID-19 has forced us to be flexible in thought and execution, and we have gotten very good at rapid cycle change as it relates to our regular business processes and activities. Improving communication with staff as well as our patients and families through the use of social media, Zoom, and telemedicine has been key. And improving and expanding our supply chain around personal protective equipment and other supplies has been crucial in allowing us to continue to safely provide needed patient care.”

Sandra Barker Thurmond '84, MSHA, FACHE, CMPE
Vice President of Primary Care, Children’s of Alabama
Member, BSC Board of Trustees
BSC Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient, 2019

“Having served Butler County, Ohio – population 380,000 – for 43 years as its Commissioner of Health and Medical Director, and having had experience with handling every pandemic since Swine Influenza in 1975, it was natural that I emerge from retirement. So I returned to work as consultant to the Butler County Health Department when news broke out that SARS-COVID-19 was declared culpable for causing what has turned out to be the worst pandemic since the Spanish Influenza of 1918. I have provided guidance on COVID-19 to them since February, as well as advising the Ohio House State representative for my district, our representative in Congress, and even Gov. Mike DeWine, who follows my daily blogs. But none of those important activities compares with the honor of serving BSC as part of an advisory scientific panel assembled by President Coleman, to assist on opening the College this fall, and keeping students, faculty, and staff safe.”

Robert Lerer '66, MD, FAAP
Associate Clinical Professor, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine
BSC Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient, 2016



Casey Daniel



Dan Milner, Jr.



Sandra Barker Thurmond



Robert Lerer



“Today my world is ...”

Broadway may be closed, theaters worldwide may be empty, but the stage lights came up in October for Birmingham-Southern College Theatre’s fall production, “Made in America.”

“Made in America,” the BSC Theatre Department’s brainchild, is a work born out of passion, anger, fear, and vulnerability that provided students the opportunity to speak out. Under the guidelines of creating a five-minute monologue using the prompt “Today my world is ...,” the students delivered.

Bygone are the days of escapism entertainment – “Made in America” is a raw look into the lived experiences of today’s collegians.

“My piece is titled ‘Like This Before.’ I titled it this because I have never seen a revolution happen right outside my window,” says first-year student **Hannah Jackson**. “I grew up reading stories about young people rising for the good of all, but I never thought that I would experience it. My whole reality, perspective, everything feels chaotic during this time.”

Instead of walking around in another character’s shoes, this work provided an opportunity for students to walk around in their own for a bit and process the events of the past six months through a medium they love.

“It’s easier to play a character I identify with,” senior **Brianne Kendall** says. “But now it’s just me.”

Producing the live theatre performance was not easy. Within the careful parameters of health and safety, rehearsals were carried out via Zoom and in person interaction was limited to tech week.

Despite the uniqueness of the times, BSC junior **Rose Simpson** reflects on her piece’s impact with hopefulness.

..... “

I want to bring joy, positivity, and love to the audience. I want them to remember what it’s like to be human, and how we are all trying to make it in this world.

..... ”



(l to r) Brianne Kendall, Hannah Jackson, and Rose Simpson

“I want to bring joy, positivity, and love to the audience. I want them to remember what it’s like to be human, and how we are all trying to make it in this world. I want them to go out and love each other again, and I want to inspire acts of service in others. So that, maybe with a domino effect, we can spread love, and joy, while taking care of others in our world.”

It is no secret that everyone has been affected by the last six months’ events. In honoring the student voice through a work like this, the audience is invited to acknowledge today’s climate as well as the inherent “worthiness” in continuing to fight for a better world, Kendall says. She calls for freedom and discourse, while acknowledging that the person she presents on stage is not the Brianne most people will come into contact with on a given day.

The same rings true for all members of the ensemble. Each has held three online one-on-one rehearsals and a week of fine tuning, so very different from the many face-to-face hours usually spent on building, blocking, and memorizing.

Instead of orchestration, sets, and costumes, the simplicity speaks to Hannah Jackson’s belief that this show is, “a way of showing that it is OK to feel the way we do. That through each piece the audience will feel a burden being lifted knowing that they are not the only ones struggling, but that we are all in this together.”

It may not be a fairytale, but it is our story.

– Written by Cosette Bolt, BSC Class of 2021

Watch the Oct. 25 performance of “Made in America” online at bsc.edu/theatrechannel.





GINKGOES IN BIRMINGHAM

Fall at Birmingham-Southern is not complete without the ginkgo trees turning gold and dropping their leaves on the ground near Munger Hall and Stockham Building. It's an iconic campus scene, yet some alumni have found a way to take that experience home.

When Professor Emeritus **Dr. Bob Whetstone '55** retired in 2001, he decided to collect a few ginkgo seedlings as a retirement gift. From his time as a student to his service as an education professor and associate dean, Whetstone remembers passing around stories about the ginkgo and seeing faculty pin the fallen leaves to their lapels.

"As a going-away present, I went ahead and picked up about eight of those very smelly seeds and took them home and planted them in pots," Whetstone says. "I did that as a memorial of the College."

That winter, he left the seeds out to freeze on his back porch, and all of them sprouted. Whetstone kept some for himself and his wife, **Jenelle Henley Whetstone '74**, and gave one plant to each of his three children, **LuAnn Whetstone Hodges '82**, **Mari Whetstone Newton '89**, and **Robert Denton Whetstone '91**, all graduates of the College.

After planting three trees in his yard in Hoover, Ala., and eventually having to dig up two, one ginkgo tree still stands at least 30 feet tall. He says not even the ginkgoes that line Hoover's municipal drive are as tall as his 20-year-old offspring of the campus ginkgoes. Each of his three children also planted their trees, though only Newton still lives in the same home as her tree in Vestavia Hills.

These trees symbolize the impact BSC has had on Whetstone and his family over the past 70 years.

"They look ancient, but they're actually the same age as me," **Greer Real Tirrill '79** said about the trees, which were planted the year she was born.

The male and female ginkgo trees on campus were a gift from **Mary Griffin Johns Doster '52** in memory of Tirrill's mother, **Frances Sensabaugh Real '55**, who passed away in 1957 at the age of 23. The trees stand as a physical reminder of the family's legacy – Tirrill says that, in the 1952 Southern Accent yearbook alone, you can see her grandfather, **Dr. Leon F. Sensabaugh**, as chair of the social sciences department, her grandmother, **Mary Holmes Sensabaugh**, as the dean of women, and both her mother and father, **Dr. Jack D. Real '53**, as students.

"The trees have become a symbol of legacy and a symbol of giving to a school that means so much to so many of us," Tirrill said.

Have you planted a seed from the BSC ginkgo trees, or know someone who has? We'd love to hear your story and find other ginkgo siblings around Birmingham. Email communications@bsc.edu.

LEADING LIVES OF SIGNIFICANCE



Surfing the **WAVES**

Birmingham-Southern graduates shape their careers through dedicated leadership and service in their communities – especially during a time like no other. Even within a global pandemic, alumni announced new publications and groundbreaking organizations, raised millions for city-wide reform, and helped make public protests and events more inclusive spaces for everyone. Keep reading to get a glimpse at what members of the BSC family are doing all over the country.

Renée Brown '83 met Harvey Harmon '82 on the Hilltop – though, as she says, they didn't actually meet, because at BSC you just know everybody. The pre-med majors married after their first year in medical school, completed residencies together in Charleston, and then returned to Birmingham to open a family practice together.

Together: working, living, raising two daughters and a series of dogs, engaging in church life, taking adventurous family vacations, all on a detailed plan that allowed each to play an equal role at home and in the office. As their girls moved toward the teen years, Renée and Harvey began thinking about what might come next: Downsizing, yes; retiring at 65, yes; relocating, maybe; traveling, for sure.

Life was smooth sailing with Renée and Harvey together at the helm.

But in 2010, at age 50, Harvey was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's Disease – a particularly cruel form of the group of disorders that cause dementia because it strikes in the prime of life. Only five to six percent of people diagnosed with Alzheimer's show symptoms before age 65. And while some medications are thought to slow the progression of Alzheimer's, no research has yet revealed enough of the why to develop a cure.

Smooth sailing gave way to what Renée ultimately chose as the title of her

book, "Surfing the Waves of Alzheimer's: Principles of Caring That Kept Me Upright" (Many Hats Publishing, 2020). Anyone who has experience with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia will recognize the metaphor, for there are ups and downs for both patient and caregiver, and frequent waves rough enough to knock you down and pull you under.

Renée describes her book as a "teaching memoir," combining how-tos with how-I-did-its to produce a moving and highly personal account of the nine years between Harvey's diagnosis and his death.

Although she remembers telling her medical school interviewer that one of her three life goals was to write a book (the second was to fly a plane, and she can't recall the third now), she didn't think "Surfing" would be that book.

"Since talking about emotions wasn't Harvey's thing, I had found it enormously helpful to use journals to capture what was happening and express what I was feeling, even cry out my sorrow and anger," she says. "Then I was invited to give a 45-minute talk at a conference on Alzheimer's, and as I began to organize my thoughts, I drew from those journals. And after a while I realized I had enough material for a book that could really help people."

Each chapter focuses on a principle of caregiving that emerged for Renée, Harvey,

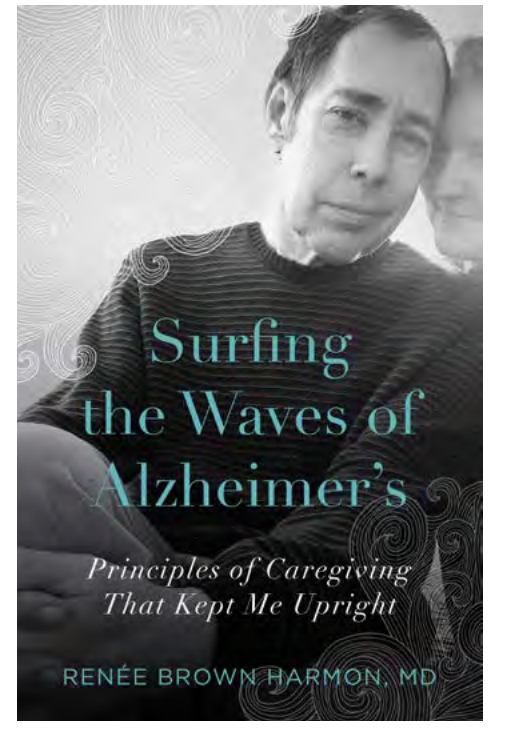
daughters Elena and Christina '18, and their extended families, including Renée's sister Andrea Brown Hubbert '88. A network of friends did for the Harmons what was needed, at the right time, often without being asked: food, of course, but also companionship, dog-walking, sitting with Harvey so Renée could play keyboards at church, giving her time away when she needed it most, even getting Harvey to Elena's wedding despite his advanced decline.

"I'm not very good at asking for help, especially specific help, but every time I expressed a concern, it was met by our friends, our family, and our church family," she says. "That taught me to recognize moments of true grace, and to let those moments lift me when I needed it."

Each chapter ends with a set of practices for caregivers – the "teaching" part of this teaching memoir. The prompts can guide journaling and may help families talk about what is happening – which can be hard – and remember better times.

"If I felt that I was sinking, swamped by my emotions and the never-ending list of things that needed to be done, I would metaphorically drag myself out of the ocean and lie down on my surfboard for a bit – taking a walk, playing the piano, reading a poem," Renée writes in the introduction. "It is my hope that by reading these stories, you, too, can ride the waves of whatever ocean you find yourself in."

"Surfing the Waves of Alzheimer's" is available on Amazon. Follow her blog at www.reneeharmon.com





HOPE HAPPENS

About three years ago, when Greg King '96 was selected to lead the 2020 United Way of Central Alabama Campaign, he knew their fundraising strategy would look different during an election year. However, he had no idea that he and his team would drastically change their plans to persist throughout a global pandemic – and still support the Birmingham community.

The 2020 annual campaign theme was “Because of You Hope Happens,” and King and his team worked hard to share how Birmingham area companies and organizations can help inspire hope throughout the community. The United Way of Central Alabama (UWCA) supports more than 80 agencies that provide services like quality healthcare, education, and financial development, and their campaign each year is crucial to funding these services.

“I wanted to build a veteran team of folks who have a passion for the organization and who’ve held leadership roles in the past,” King says. “That strategy has served us well with the onset of the pandemic and as we do things dramatically different.”

Before chairing the annual campaign, King has served the UWCA for years, first as a donor. He then served on the board of Pathways, a United Way agency for women and children experiencing homelessness in Birmingham, and joined the United Way board. He led the Pacesetter Campaign in 2013 and served on numerous committees, leading to his role as campaign chair in 2020.

“The reach and the efficiency that the United Way has throughout our community maximizes impact through each of their organizations,” he says. “I saw this early on, and I always felt that through the dollars I was able to donate, I was able to touch a lot of need throughout the community.”

By the end of March 2020, King and his team were preparing for visits to Birmingham workplaces, but they realized that the campaign would not operate under normal circumstances. Meetings with UWCA staff and volunteers that would have taken place over the summer and fall all went virtual.

“We’ve had to completely rewrite the playbook,” King says. “But the community has been resilient. Birmingham, for a long time, has run a very robust United Way campaign, and people have really stepped up in 2020.”

King, executive vice president and Alabama regional president at First Horizon Bank, has enjoyed collaborating with campaign leaders and volunteers on creative ways to share their message virtually. For the virtual kickoff, the team partnered with meteorologist James Spann and several community partners to create the Hope Happens Network, their imitation news channel that captured more than 450 social media participants.

During the campaign, the needs of the Birmingham community increased due to high unemployment rates and food shortages. King’s team saw an incredible turnout in support in response. At the end of August, the United Way wrapped their pacesetter campaign and saw an increase of nearly \$500,000 in funds raised from last year’s total. By November, the team surpassed their goal of \$34.5 million.

“Birmingham is such a generous community and always has been,” he says. “I’ve been so proud of the team and honored to be a part of it as the needs in the community have never been greater.”

Advocating for **Mental Health Care Reform**

Bill Smith '96 is thinking about his mental health — and yours, too — as a matter of public policy. In May 2020, he launched Inseparable, a coalition organization with a simple but ambitious agenda — increasing access to care, advocating for research, investing in prevention and early intervention, and driving a comprehensive plan. That policy jargon comes out of an essential idea that mental health care is health care.

“The name Inseparable comes out of a two-fold idea,” Smith says. “One is that the health of our mind is inseparable from our body. Two is that if we come together and create a political force to create a movement for change, we’re inseparable.”

Smith grew up in Eufaula, Ala., in a BSC legacy family. “My older brother Jack went to Birmingham-Southern and my father was a Methodist delegate to the board,” he says. His niece Sutton Smith is BSC’s 2020-21 Student Government Association president.

If BSC has awarded a few hundred degrees in political science in the last 30 years, dozens of those former poli-sci majors became lawyers and judges, or zigzagged into careers unrelated to politics or science. Smith did none of those things.

“I used to joke with Natalie Davis that I’m one of the few people with a political science major who actually does politics,” Smith says. “I went straight into campaigns and elections right after school.”

His first job was on a multimillion-dollar Alabama Supreme Court campaign that he described as “a baptism by fire into politics.” Campaigns are, inevitably, partisan, but as his career advanced, Smith discovered that the work that meant the most to him centered on policy.

“I figured out that I cared about issues a lot more than I cared about politicians,” he says. “Not that there aren’t some good politicians. I wouldn’t be working in the system if I didn’t believe there were. But it’s a lot more rewarding to work for causes than to work for candidates.”

Smith started out working for Republicans, became an independent, and then ultimately a Democrat. In 2004, he became the political director of the Gill Foundation, a funding organization that works to secure full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

“I spent years and years taking the skills I’d learned from the campaign and election world and applying them to the fight for marriage equality,” he says.

The effort demanded a combination of philosophical commitment and practical action. Smith, who describes himself as “a social justice Methodist,” attributes a lot of his drive for such work to his time on the Hilltop.

“The idea of service to causes bigger than yourself — that was fairly well planted in me at Birmingham-Southern,” he says. “We put together the hearts-and-minds work that we needed to do to move the needle on marriage equality, but we also put together the political power that we needed to win a public policy battle.”

Mental health is his second front, but his background as a strategist accounts for only part of his purpose. Two years ago, Smith’s brother Abb Jackson “Jack” Smith II '93 died by suicide.

“It was devastating for my entire family,” he says, “but the thing is, there are millions of families that are devastated by this.”

In his grief he reflected on what it took to build a political movement.

“When we were starting Inseparable, what we saw and wanted to tap into is that we really need a mental health care system that allows us to all take better care of each other,” he says.

The hands-on tactics to create such a system expanded access through parity, integration, and workforce development. In other words, mental health care should be affordable, widely available in community and clinical settings, and provided by professionals who can reach under-served populations.

At the helm of Inseparable, Smith is continuing work that his brother started. Jack was a journalist and blogger who wrote hundreds of stories about depression and mental health.

“He was somebody who believed that you can make a difference in the world,” Smith says. “I’m confident that he would be very happy with me doing the work that I’m doing.”



A GROWING COALITION

In addition to Bill Smith, Inseparable’s leadership includes co-founder Zak Williams, son of the late actor and comedian Robin Williams, who died by suicide in 2014, and a broad and diverse advisory board — medical practitioners, recovering addicts, people with personal or family experience of mental illness. “As we built out the board, it was intentionally a diverse group of people who are grounded not just in the science and policy, but also in the reality that everyday people face around mental health,” Smith says.

Learn more at inseparable.us.



A Hilltop TRIBUTE



In 2017, Abe Fawal donated more than 200 volumes to the BSC Library. These rare and highly specialized volumes have been invaluable for BSC students' research, especially in the field of Arabic Studies.

Natural teacher, lifelong learner, masterful storyteller, and loving father — BSC alum and retired professor **Ibrahim "Abe" Salem Fawal '54** fulfilled many roles in his 87 years.

Born to Salem Mansour Fawal and Fareedeh Ankar Fawal on July 29, 1933, in Ramallah, Palestine, Fawal immigrated to the United States in 1951, where he graduated from BSC with a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre in 1954. After BSC, Fawal went on to earn his Master of Arts in Film at UCLA before working as first assistant director on the classic film "Lawrence of Arabia."

After marrying in Ramallah in 1961, Fawal and his wife, Rose Rahib, settled in Birmingham, where they raised four children: Salem, **Gina '86**, **Freeda '89**, and **Rima '90**.

"Dad was always teaching us — enriching our vocabulary, perfecting our grammar, explaining history and world affairs, encouraging us to think critically and creatively, introducing us to new ideas, and most importantly, teaching us by his own example the importance of diligence and resilience in pursuit of a goal," says **Freeda Fawal-Farah '89**.

Back in Birmingham, Fawal continued his work in the film industry. After becoming a U.S. citizen in 1967, he spent the 1970s establishing the first Alabama-based film studio, Interlock Film Studio. Through Interlock, Fawal produced a variety of award-winning documentaries and eventually co-founded the Birmingham International Educational Film Festival, where he served as chair.

Even while he was away, BSC remained a major influence for Fawal.

"Dad was the first in our family to attend BSC, paving the way for nearly a dozen more family members. He valued the college's academic rigor and liberal arts environment, and he took pride in having such a fine institution in Birmingham," says **Gina Fawal Jaber '86**.

His youngest daughter, **Rima Fawal Hartman '90**, adds, "Dad enjoyed remaining connected to BSC long after he graduated, not just by sending us there, but also by joining the faculty to teach literature, writing, and film, and by being a founder, chair, and 26-year advisory board member of BSC's Writing Today Conference. Dad felt a strong bond of loyalty to BSC throughout his life."

Salem Fawal says, "Dad was intellectually curious and never stopped learning new things. He surrounded himself with books, many of which he later donated to the BSC library."

In 1998, after decades of dedication and toil, Fawal's journey as a storyteller and advocate for the Palestinian people culminated in the publication of his first novel, "On the Hills of God," a work of historical fiction set in 1948 Palestine, as three lifelong friends (one Muslim, one Jewish, and one Christian) seek to defy religious labels and politics and stay bound to one another in friendship. Described by his children as "Dad's loving tribute to his homeland and his proudest professional achievement," "On the Hills of God" won the prestigious PEN Oakland Award for Excellence in Literature. Its sequel, "The Disinherited," describes the experiences of the Palestinians after their diaspora.

At the age of 63, Fawal enrolled at the University of Oxford, where he earned his doctorate examining Arab culture through the lens of the Egyptian filmmaker Youssef Chahine. He compiled his research into a book, "Youssef Chahine," which was published by the British Film Institute in 2001.

On August 11, 2020, Abe Fawal passed away in his home, surrounded by family. A member of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, he is remembered as an intellectual leader and a charming and humorous man who added a spark of creativity to everything he touched. His legacy of pursuing peace and justice lives on in the hearts of his friends and family, and his influence on BSC and beyond has made him an everlasting pillar in the history of the College.

Signs of CHANGE



Kenton Myers '11 believes that the only way to achieve positive change is if everyone has the opportunity to learn and understand.

After graduating from BSC, Myers became a full-time freelance Spanish interpreter. He soon found that he had trouble communicating with deaf consumers at a facility he frequently served. His frustration inspired him to volunteer at a center for deaf services, where he learned American Sign Language (ASL) and eventually became a certified ASL interpreter.

Now one of only four Black certified ASL interpreters in Alabama, Myers uses his skills to communicate with the deaf and hard-of-hearing community during local protests against racism and police brutality.

"I am faced with racism in my everyday life and even within the interpreting community. I, personally, feel compelled to interpret these events," Myers says. "I want the painful stories and testimonies to come off of black and brown hands."

As a seasoned Spanish and ASL interpreter used to one-on-one communication, Myers must take a different approach when interpreting during protests.

"Challenges for interpreting protests include large crowds with

highly emotional people and hypervigilant police officers already on the defense to 'control' the situation, potentially being harmed by white antagonists, vicarious trauma ... the list goes on. When interpreting these protests in a time when everything is on social media, the world is watching."

In light of mask-wearing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Myers' role is more vital than ever.

"Sign language is a visual language," Myers says. "It uses face and body movements as part of its grammar. For example, as hearing people, we can hear tone and voice inflection and determine emotions or temperament. That is what facial expressions do for sign language. A mask takes away a high percentage of that communication."

While masks are a necessary safety precaution, they can lengthen the divide between hearing and deaf communities in a time when unity is essential to survival. Myers seeks to bridge this gap.

"Though it is extremely challenging emotionally, I feel a responsibility to get up there every time and give it everything I have for the cause."

Virtual Book Clubs: A D

In June, the Office of Alumni Engagement launched BSC's first-ever Summer Virtual Book Clubs, inviting alumni, faculty, staff, and the larger community to connect online during social distancing and explore critical elements of American society, history, and culture.

Earlier that month, President Daniel B. Coleman had released a statement regarding societal unrest and protests, and shortly afterward the virtual clubs were born.

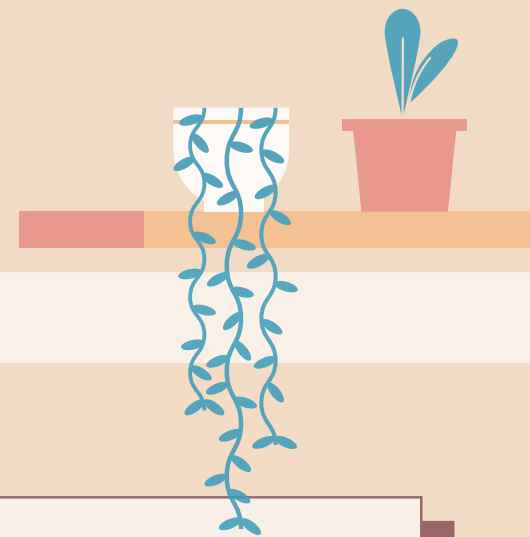
"As an institution of higher learning focused on the liberal arts, we believe in the power of education, and we encourage all to seek out knowledge of the issues that challenge our country and our society," Coleman wrote. "There are many ways to do that, including listening to the voices speaking out during this time of unrest, reading the works of African American writers, seeking out works by African American visual and performing artists, and examining the history of our own institutions and hometowns."

Putting knowledge-seeking into action, the summer book clubs focused on inspiring a deeper understanding of race, racism, and equal justice through five books, each chosen for its Birmingham connection or context. BSC alumni and members of the Birmingham community served as facilitators and each club was limited to 12 participants.

Sherry Brundidge '92 participated in the book club for "Four Spirits" by **Sena Jeter Naslund '63**.

"I am always interested in reading and discussing books. When I first received correspondence about the book club, I saw that a member of my sorority Delta Sigma Theta would be a facilitator," she says. "I had not spoken with her in a while, so I was happy about the opportunity to reconnect with her."

Brundidge also chose "Four Spirits" because the author attended BSC, and the novel takes place in Birmingham. The story follows Stella Silver, an idealistic white college student in Birmingham sent reeling off her



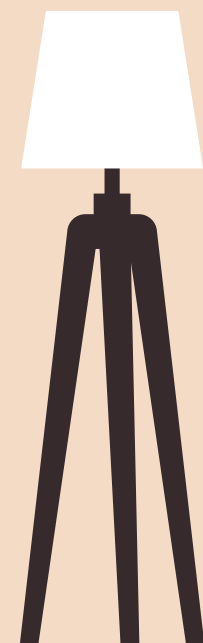
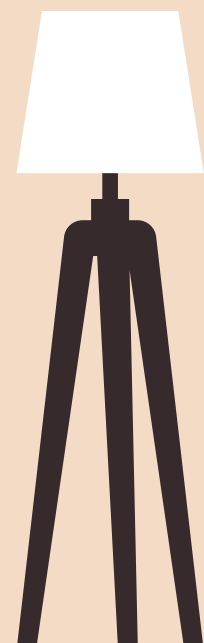
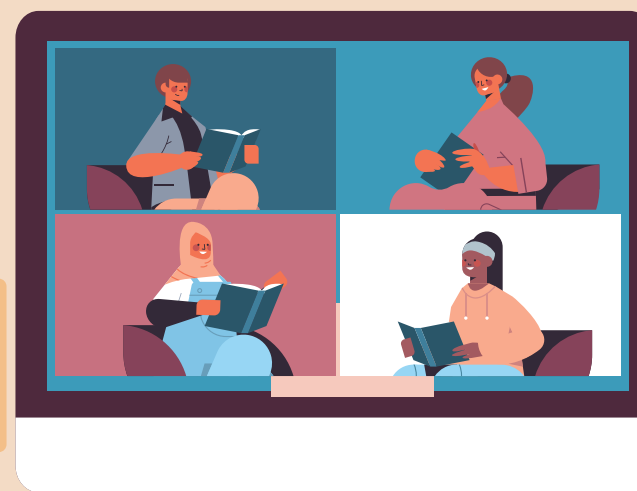
RECOMMENDED READING

- "The Color of Law" by Richard Rothstein
- "The End of October" by Lawrence Wright
- "Four Spirits" by Sena Jeter Naslund
- "Homegoing" by Yaa Gyasi
- "How to Be an Antiracist" by Ibram X. Kendi
- "Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption" by Bryan Stevenson
- "Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How It Changed the World" by Laura Spinney
- "The Pull of the Stars" by Emma Donoghue
- "Some of My Best Friends Are Black: The Strange Story of Integration in America" by Tanner Colby
- "Station Eleven" by Emily St. John Mandel
- "Year of Wonders" by Geraldine Brooks



INTERESTED?

Interested in participating in a future virtual book club? Contact us at alumni@bsc.edu.



“THOSE BOYS FROM BIRMINGHAM LOOK LIKE A PACK OF PANTHERS.”

This year, we're celebrating 40 years of beloved panther and Birmingham-Southern mascot, Rowdy. Yes, the panther has been a part of the College for much longer, but it took a "Name the Panther" contest and a promising cash reward to finally identify our fearless feline.

Flashback to 1980, during basketball season: **David Rikard** was in his second year at BSC and remembers walking through the student center, seeing a contest entry box for naming the mascot, and entering on a whim.

"I was perpetually broke at that point, and I wasn't going to pass up an opportunity to make a little money," Rikard says.

As he sorted through possible options to submit, he thought about college swimmer (and future Olympic gold medalist) Ambrose "Rowdy" Gaines, paired with a cheer he remembered from Vestavia Hills High School about "getting rowdy."

Not too long after he submitted his idea, a friend shouted at Rikard across the quad and told him he'd just won the "Name the Panther" contest, which was announced at that night's basketball game. Rowdy was officially named, beginning a 40-year legacy at the College.

Rikard transferred from BSC later that academic year, but he has always treasured the community and memories he made on the Hilltop. His three terms at the College were filled with great friendships, especially among his Sigma Alpha Epsilon brothers, as well as academic challenges.

"I was the first person in my family to go to college, and everything was brand new and overwhelming," Rikard says. "I remember a level of consideration, compassion, and empathy from my professors that went beyond the standard. I gained a confidence to trust myself."

He ended up graduating from the University of Alabama and, after moving away for years, eventually returned to Birmingham. When he moved back, he met up with fraternity brother **Rev. Keith Thompson '83**, who at that time was the pastor of First United Methodist Church (he is currently the pastor at Canterbury United Methodist Church).

Thompson encouraged Rikard to join the First United Methodist community, where he's still an active member and has reconnected with quite a few BSC connections from his time on the Hilltop, forming a meaningful and lasting community.

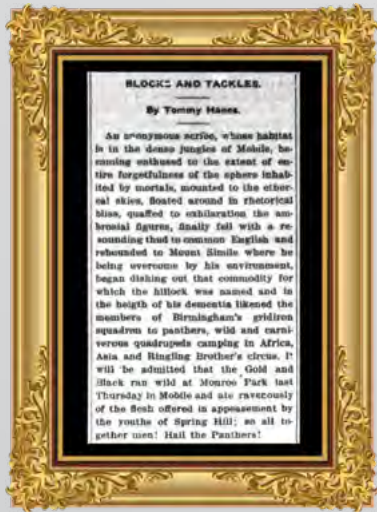
"None of that would have ever happened without those three terms at Birmingham-Southern," he says. "At that time in my life, it was the family that I needed. It was a real privilege to make those connections."

And along with these friendships, Rikard never forgot about Rowdy. A few years ago, he did some research to see if BSC still used the Rowdy name and was delighted to see that it has stuck over the years.

"It's become something I'm proud of – that I left a little bit of a mark, he says. "And now, if I ever meet somebody who's from BSC, I always let them know that I named the panther."



David Rikard



ROWDY, REFRESHED

Rowdy has a new lease on life, thanks to an updated mascot suit and a closet full of BSC gear, formal wear, and seasonal accessories. The new look was funded by a gift from AT&T, thanks to BSC Trustee **Joelle James Phillips '89**, president of AT&T Tennessee, and **Wayne Hutchens MPPM '89**, president of AT&T Alabama.



2020

DISTINGUISHED

ALUMNI AWARDS

ADVICE

“Consider the following time-tested axioms: Learn how to listen, to learn, and to cope with change. Seek the truth – firsthand or from dependable sources. Follow ‘The Golden Rule’ doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. Help others – particularly those less fortunate than you. Believe in yourself and have confidence in yourself. You can – and will – make a difference. Maintain a positive attitude and enjoy life!”

Distinguished Alumnus

DR. LAWRENCE DURHAM '63

While recalling his beginnings on the Hilltop, **Dr. Lawrence Durham** envisions a blue book signed by his freshman English professor with the following inscription: “Mr. Durham, you can write more and say less than any student I’ve ever had. F.”

While Durham accompanies this story with a generous eye-roll, he must admit that the comment still impacts him today.

“There’s no telling how many times he employed that same tactic over his career,” Durham says. “And, there’s no telling how many times I’ve remembered it over my career.”

Not one to let his failures prevent future success or (thanks to his professor) waste words that are not backed by action, Durham occupied a variety of roles throughout his illustrious career. In explaining his career path, Durham reflects back to advice from broadcaster and author Art Linkletter at a Munger Auditorium convocation: “He advised us to change jobs whenever we ceased to enjoy them ... His advice often came to mind as varying professional opportunities arose.”

After holding faculty and staff positions at BSC – as director of development – and the University of Alabama and two management positions in the nuclear power industry, Durham decided in 1997 to branch out into business consulting as founder and president of Sterling Learning Services, Inc. Before his 2007 retirement, Durham served 60 organizations in 30 different countries.

Holding postdoctoral degrees and certifications in multiple fields, Durham credits his time at BSC for fostering his lifelong love of learning and equipping him with tools to explore within the realm of his natural curiosities. He says that, while many of the courses he took at BSC taught him his limits, some, like Music Appreciation – which he says “enriched my life more than any other single course” – added new dimensions to his identity, both as a person and a professional.

From teaching mathematics at the U.S. Nuclear Power School during the Vietnam Era to working as a Process Control Engineer for Monsanto, Durham points to the liberal arts mindset in preparing him to take on the task at hand. He says, “In each of those situations, other liberal arts courses came to bear: from English to French; psychology to philosophy; history to economics; physics to chemistry; sociology to political science. When I created my own consulting firm, I did so with confidence that I was ready. BSC had equipped this Eagle Scout well to live up to the Boy Scout Motto: ‘Be Prepared.’” Durham is married to **Anne Stimson Durham '65**.

ADVICE

“BSC students, faculty, and alumni should know their College’s history... A good starting place is to read Dr. Bill Nicholas’ Alabama Review article, ‘The Dilemma of the Genteel Tradition: Birmingham-Southern College in the Civil Rights Era, 1957-1965.’ It should be a required reading for everyone on campus.”

Distinguished Alumna

DR. TONDRA LODER-JACKSON '89

Although choosing BSC meant staying close to her Birmingham family, **Dr. Tondra Loder-Jackson** wanted to find a home on the Hilltop. Through the Black Student Union (BSU) and her sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, she was able to do just that.

“One of my proudest moments was joining ranks with the BSU to advocate for racial diversity in the SGA,” Loder-Jackson says. “Our advocacy resulted in two BSU representatives being named to the SGA. Being part of the Panhellenic Council enlightened me to racial and cultural tensions in campus Greek life.”

Advocating for on-campus equal representation was just the beginning. Loder-Jackson is now a professor in UAB’s Educational Foundations and African American Studies programs and the founder and former director of the UAB Center for Urban Education. She has published extensively on Birmingham’s civil rights and education history, African American education, and urban education. Published in 2015, her most notable work, “Schoolhouse Activists: African American Education and the Long Birmingham Civil Rights Movement,” explores the power that educators in the 1960s and today have as activists in a system that grapples for educational justice.

She credits professors such as **Drs. Edward Lamonte, Jane Archer, Bill Nicholas, William Ramsey, and Charles Moore** in shaping her academic and professional trajectory. One Honors Program course, “The Urban Experience,” further influenced her by showing her the interconnectedness of urban culture and politics.

“We traveled to the New Orleans Jazz Festival and learned about the diversity of urban history, politics, and policy across the United States.”

A strong believer in knowing one’s history, Loder-Jackson challenges the BSC community – alumni, faculty, and students alike – to learn more about the College’s role in the Civil Rights Movement. She calls BSC’s 2019 establishment of a Distinction in Black Studies program “a watershed moment in the history of BSC” that she hopes will evolve into a major and its own department of multicultural studies.

“Every BSC student should know the pantheon of BSC civil rights trailblazers: former President **Henry King Stanford, Marti Turnipseed, Skip Bennett,** and, more recently, **Bernard Mays, Jr.** As students learn this history, they can determine where they fit within BSC’s trajectory of making a difference in Birmingham and beyond.”



ADVICE

“Because life is short, I think students should use all their energy and facilities at their command to develop and focus on a passion and purpose for the betterment of their life and community. There is no other way to achieve your goals than hard work, for, as they say, ‘Nothing comes to a sleeper but a dream.’”

DR. MICHAEL CALLAHAN '67

Even before coming to BSC at just 16 years old, **Dr. Michael Callahan** was influenced by his father to pursue science and art.

Callahan's first exposure to his twin passions happened in his childhood living room, surrounded by his five siblings with the lights turned off and sheets covering the living room windows to block out the light.

“Our father was a physician and exposed us to the medical field by showing movies of his operations at home on weekends,” he says. “On Sunday afternoons, these movies were often followed by photographic slide lectures series he obtained from museums, like ‘Great Masterpieces of the Louvre.’”

Callahan's passions then flourished on the Hilltop, where small classes and relationships with professors felt just like he was at home.

“Small is better than big, especially for a 16-year-old freshman entering college,” Callahan says. “At BSC, I was able to grow as an individual in many ways by participating in an inspiring community and having a deep and memorable relationship with professors who became my mentors.”

Now Callahan is a professor of ophthalmology at the University of Alabama and president of the International Retinal Research Foundation, and has provided care to patients in underprivileged areas in the U.S. and around the world. He still points to his BSC professors — notably **Dr. Ken Ford**, **Paul Bailey**, and **Dan Holliman** — and the way they interacted with others on a personal level as a major influence on his own life.

“Whatever success I have in this life, I owe to their confidence in me. In my role at a teaching hospital, as well as in the international missions I have participated in over my career, I try to teach and mentor in the same manner.”

To honor both the sacrifice of their parents and the influence of BSC on their education, Callahan and his siblings — now physicians, businessmen, lawyers, and actors — have established the **Eivor and Alston Callahan Scholarship**, which benefits a BSC pre-med or performing arts student. Although, to many, this may seem like an odd combination, Dr. Callahan recognizes the benefit of BSC's liberal arts mindset in allowing students to explore seemingly contrasting interests in finding their calling.

“Personally, I developed a passion for ocular plastic surgery: a perfect melding of medicine and art,” he says. “This would not have happened without my exposure to the arts at BSC.”

Distinguished Alumnus



CASEY DANIEL '07

Outstanding Young Alumna

On September 10, 2002, a life was changed forever in Margaret Cullen Daniel Residence Hall. Surrounded by family and friends, BSC freshman **Casey Daniel** was celebrating her 17th birthday in an unusual but triumphant way: by giving herself her final chemo injection to beat stage III melanoma.

BSC has long been an integral part of her family history, beginning with her parents' marriage at Yeilding Chapel in 1977. In 2001, as a rising high school senior, Daniel was attending the Summer Scholars program at BSC when she was diagnosed with cancer.

“That program was an amazing experience for me and really helped me through some of the most difficult first parts of my cancer experience,” Daniel says. “Since I was still undergoing treatment and monitoring when I graduated high school, BSC was a perfect opportunity for my next step. I knew I loved it, and I could still be close to home and my medical team.”

An English major with a lifelong interest in the medical field, Daniel credits Professor **Jeannette Runquist** with introducing her to Public Health. While receiving her master's and doctoral degrees at UAB, she discovered an unlimited potential to impact the health and lives of people, including cancer survivors like her, on a global level.

“Behavioral science, epidemiology... it opened up a world I never knew existed,” she says. “And honestly, I was surprised to find that graduate school frequently paled in comparison to the educational rigors of BSC. It was incredibly rewarding to find that my efforts there had prepared me better than I could have imagined.”

After completing postdoctoral training in cancer prevention and control at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Dana-Farber Cancer



RISING STAR

Hannah Byrne begins each workday at one of the most prestigious institutions for history, with coffee and a call with her advisor, the Smithsonian historian.

Shortly after receiving her master's in public history from American University, Byrne joined the Smithsonian Institution Archives as a program assistant.

“One of the reasons I pursued a career in public history is for the variety of tasks I would get to do in my work,” she says.

In her role, Byrne responds to reference requests, processes interviews for the oral history collection, and conducts original research on the history of the Smithsonian Institution. She also helps put together public exhibits and other specific research projects.

Her work with the Smithsonian's Open Access Initiative, which holds more than three million digital items from the collections, stands out as one of her favorite experiences so far. In February 2020, as part of the initiative, Byrne worked with students from Portland, Oregon, who were writing songs on early Smithsonian history alongside artists like The Decemberists' Chris Funk.

These students used material from the Open Access collection to create the songs, and Byrne provided them with a lesson on Smithsonian history to spark some inspiration for their songwriting.

Prior to her current position, Byrne worked in archives and historical education at the White House Historical Association, the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and the Birmingham Public Library.

“I always knew that I loved history, and I loved museums and historic sites, but it wasn't until my sophomore year at BSC that I could figure out how to connect those two and identify a career,” she says.

Byrne recognizes how her history professors at BSC prepared her for graduate school and hands-on historical experience. As a student, she held three different internships, which helped her find her path in public history.

“BSC showed me what a career with a history degree could mean outside of teaching or attending law school,” she says. “I see a direct through-line from my time at BSC to my current career.”

Institute, Daniel was recruited to work at the University of South Alabama (USA) in Mobile. At USA, she is now the Director of Epidemiology and Public Health, as well as an Assistant Professor of Oncologic Sciences at the USA Mitchell Cancer Institute and faculty member in the USA College of Medicine's Department of Family Medicine.

A firm believer that “being able to write well is essential in virtually all fields,” Daniel draws from the influence of BSC English professors like **Dr. Sandra Sprayberry** in fostering her medical students' writing skills to give them a competitive edge in their research.

While her work in building infrastructure for public health education at USA was steady but slow at first, the outbreak of COVID-19 put Daniel's expertise in high demand. From helping to develop contact tracing and campus return protocols, to designing a COVID screening tool for those returning to campus and tracking and reporting weekly statistics, Daniel has been an invaluable asset to her campus community in the face of the unknown.

Although the sudden increase in her responsibilities was stressful at first, she says, “It was amazing to be able to put my training into action and demonstrate the previously underestimated value of public health as a field.”

ADVICE:

“Attending Birmingham-Southern remains one of the best decisions I have ever made. It is a unique experience that creates a marked bond among all alumni, regardless of age. Appreciate your time at BSC; live it to the fullest. Your time there is a privilege; treasure it always.”

Outstanding Young Alumnus

BERNARD MAYS, JR. '04

In his senior year at BSC, **Bernard Mays, Jr.** made a decision that would leave a lasting legacy on the Hilltop: he ran for SGA President.

Despite being active on campus as a successful accounting major, Mays was not the typical face of the SGA that BSC had come to expect. Unlike any SGA President in BSC's history, Mays was African American.

"It was and is one of the most humbling experiences of my life," Mays says. "I was unsure about running at first. I was thinking, 'Why would you do this?' But I had enough cheerleaders saying, 'Why not?'"

Mays' successful election made him BSC's first Black SGA President, a victory that has impacted the trajectory of his life. After earning his master's degree in accounting from the University of Virginia in 2005 and becoming a CPA in 2006, Mays went on to become a community leader with an impressive career of administering executive financial operations across the natural gas, coal, and retail industries. He now works at UAB as assistant vice president and controller.

Mays credits BSC's liberal arts mindset with giving him an innovative edge in his field.

"My liberal arts education challenged me to get comfortable with creative thinking as well as critical thinking. In general, accountants are linear thinkers," he says. "Our goal is to get from point A to B as efficiently as possible. That analytical mindset has some advantages, but being able to analyze issues through a more creative lens is also helpful."

He points to the servant leadership emphasis cultivated at BSC as vital to his success as well. "It influences my communication style, how I manage teams, and how I prioritize tasks. Most of my 'soft skills' were sharpened because of my service learning experiences."

A bold dreamer whose wife, **Stephanie Houston Mays '04**, says "wakes up every day with Oprah dreams," Mays is encouraged by the strides BSC has made toward diversity and inclusion since his graduation, including expanding the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion and establishing a Diversity Enrichment Team.

"From my perspective, I believe the College has demonstrated a willingness to have difficult conversations around diversity and inclusion," he says. "I recently participated in a BSC Alumni virtual book club discussion about the book 'Some of My Best Friends Are Black' and was inspired, challenged, and encouraged by the engaging dialogue."

Mays is especially pleased to see student-led initiatives from organizations like the Black Student Union, Black Men's and Women's Unions, and Cross Cultural Committee.

"My hope for this generation of minority students is that they will be bold in their ambition, confident in their worth, and tenacious in all things," he says. Addressing current minority students at BSC, he adds, "My hope is that you have a legacy mindset. A legacy mindset will impact the stewardship of your gifts and talents, the consistency of your character, and the lasting mark of your contributions to your community."

ADVICE:

"Be intentional about building meaningful relationships. We all need people who inspire us, care for us, and hold us accountable."

2019 Distinguished Alumnus

RUSSELL LEVENSON '84

Rev. Dr. Russell Levenson Jr. has carried the lessons he learned at Birmingham-Southern, and specifically from BSC President Emeritus **Dr. Neal Berte**, into his work as the fourth rector at St. Martin's, the largest Episcopal church in the United States.

"Things I brought to the table that I learned at BSC were the importance of relationships," Levenson says. "When I graduated from Birmingham-Southern, Dr. Berte awarded me with the President's Student Service Award, one of my greatest honors to be quite honest. Dr. Berte was an incredible mentor and continues to be to this day. I've often said if I didn't feel called to the ministry, I'd still be working at Birmingham-Southern."

After graduating cum laude from BSC, he earned a master of divinity degree from Virginia Theological Seminary in 1992, and a doctor of ministry degree from Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham in 1997. Before arriving at St. Martin's, Levenson served parishes in Alabama, Virginia, Tennessee, Louisiana and Florida. He is the author of four devotional books: "Bits of Heaven," "A Place of Shelter," "Preparing Room," and "A Path to Wholeness."

Levenson has served at St. Martin's since 2007. He co-officiated and offered a homily at the state funeral of **President George H. W. Bush** in Washington, D.C. and in Houston. Levenson also officiated the funeral of **First Lady Barbara Bush** in Houston. Levenson contributed to "Pearls of Wisdom: Little Pieces of Advice" by Barbara Bush, published in March 2020.

On October 2, 2017, Levenson returned to the Hilltop to deliver the homily at an interfaith ceremony held in honor of the 50th anniversary rededication of Yeilding Chapel. As a student at BSC, he met his wife in Yeilding Chapel during a presentation given by **Chaplain Rev. Stewart Jackson**.

"If it weren't for Birmingham-Southern College, I would not have met my wife, had my children," Levenson says. He and **Laura Norton Levenson**, who attended BSC for two years before transferring to Auburn, have three children and two grandchildren.

Chosen in 2019 as a Distinguished Alumnus, Levenson wasn't able to attend the celebratory event on campus. Unfortunately the plan to honor him on campus along with our 2020 recipients was canceled due to COVID-19. We look forward to honoring him alongside the 2020 and 2021 honorees in fall 2021.





GENEROUS SUPPORT IN A TIME OF NEED

While the course of COVID-19 has changed the needs of the College, we are lucky to have a strong and supportive community that has been there for our students. BSC has provided additional financial support and numerous resources to our current campus community as they adjust to a new normal.

The COVID-19 Student Emergency Fund has focused support specifically on student needs as they arise. Gifts help students and families who have been hit hard by the pandemic due to layoffs, furloughs, and the loss of hourly jobs and off-campus internships.

Gifts have also supported the Panther Pantry, a resource developed by the Office of Student Development in fall 2019 that became especially important during the pandemic. Located in Norton Campus Center, the Panther Pantry provides fresh groceries and dry goods at no cost to students facing food insecurity.

When remote learning and work began, some students remained in campus residence halls, including international students. The Panther Pantry gave 57 students access to groceries without leaving campus during the shutdown.

A small group of students, who were unable to return home after the spring term, also stayed on campus over the summer. BSC received a Rapid Response Grant from the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, underwriting the cost of this emergency housing for students.

To those who have supported the College throughout this time, thank you for investing in our current students. To learn more about making a gift to BSC, visit www.bsc.edu/advancement.

Dr. Brandon Brown, associate dean of students, and other Student Development staff packed bags from the Panther Pantry for students who were still on campus in March.



ROOM FOR REFLECTION

In the fall, Birmingham-Southern received a \$5,000 grant to establish a campus mindfulness program, made possible by a partnership with the Trust for the Meditation Process, a charitable foundation encouraging meditation, mindfulness, and contemplative prayer.

The grant helped establish two programming components: the creation of a dedicated meditation space on campus, and mindfulness instruction and training held in the space. The Trust helps provide these programs to schools, churches, and other organizations and institutions.

"The program is designed to bring a dedicated mindfulness space to campus and to provide formal instruction in mindfulness techniques from a licensed teacher," says **Dr. Joe Chandler '03**, associate professor of psychology and director of grants and special projects at BSC. "After that, we intend the space to be supported by a student-staff-faculty partnership, adapting to the contemplative needs of the BSC community."

Chandler and Assistant Professor of Religion **Dr. Keely Sutton** serve as the project's principal investigators, and they are working with certified mindfulness meditation instructor **Cathy Wright**, mother of **Elizabeth Hall '19**, who will lead the training programs. While BSC has seen students, faculty, and staff create short-term mindfulness studies and opportunities,

this grant will centralize these efforts for long-lasting impact.

"We hope that this grant marks the beginning of a mindfulness program that will be developed through the combined efforts of students, staff, alumni, and faculty," Sutton says. "The first eight-week session in the spring will be virtual, and we are sure it will prove useful during this stressful time."

Mindfulness meditation comes with many benefits, but students often do not have access to the quality of programs that our partnership with the Trust will bring. Through incorporating this kind of instruction on campus, BSC can further exemplify our commitment to students' well-being and education on the Hilltop.

Director of Counseling Services **Cara Blakes**, Director of Student Diversity and Inclusion **Dr. Kristie Williams**, and SGA are also dedicated to the project and plan to contribute helpful resources and guidance as it grows. The meditation space will be open to the entire BSC community, not just residential students.

"These last months have highlighted the need for resilience, and we believe this grant will help our campus community continue to adapt to the COVID crisis while building a long-term habit of collective mindfulness," Chandler says.

A DAY OF COMMUNITY AND CARING

Forward Ever Day 2020 brought the entire Birmingham-Southern community together across the country and world, resulting in a record-breaking day of support for current students.

During a time of uncertainty last spring, we recognized Forward Ever Day as a Day of Community on April 2, 2020. While we focused on the event's impact on campus and student life, we also celebrated our broader BSC network of alumni and friends who were caring for their own communities during the onset of COVID-19.

"Forward Ever Day is always about our community, but our 2020 celebration was especially meaningful," says **Sarah-Kate Masters Roberts '11**, director of annual giving. "We saw members of the BSC family give back in whatever way they could. Your support allowed us to be flexible when our students needed you most."

The Forward Ever Day grand total was \$325,433, making 2020 the first year to ever pass \$300,000 in total gifts. The majority of gifts funded student scholarships, but the Forward Ever Fund also awarded \$88,925 in additional support to students whose financial needs were affected by COVID-19.

Both in spring and fall 2020, Forward Ever Day gifts provided financial assistance for students, technology for online and hybrid classes, and equipment for maintaining a safe environment for in-person classes.

Forward Ever Day 2020 also marked a strong showing of support for our alumni. Members of our community supported small businesses with BSC connections, took time to share old photos and call college friends, and read stories about what fellow graduates are doing in their communities.

Throughout the day, we featured alumni who cared for others in times of crisis. **Corbin Burns '14** worked hard to provide COVID-19 tests as the sole provider for Trussville Urgent Care, which was the first privately owned clinic to offer drive-thru testing in the greater Birmingham area. **John Boone '06** and **Hunter Renfroe '08**, owners of Orchestra Partners, offered a comprehensive rent holiday to their small, local business tenants in Birmingham. More than 20 alumni like **Kelly Horton Kean '87** and **Tamara Harper '06** made masks to donate to essential workers. (Read more about them in our cover story.)

These alumni, among many others, demonstrated the commitment the BSC family has to the College and to their communities beyond the Hilltop. We're grateful to those who gave in so many different ways to take part in our celebration.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

This Forward Ever Day – April 1, 2021 – we're keeping the spirit of care and community. Stay tuned to hear more details on how you can join us this year.

DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS *Make Giving Easy*

Emily Kyzer Browne '00 graduated from Birmingham-Southern with a degree in biology and a desire to give back.

Browne grew up in Birmingham with multiple family members who also graduated from BSC – including her mother, **Kathy Evins Kyzer '68**; aunt, former Trustee **Anne Evins Adams '65**; and grandfather, **John Evins '33**.

"I have been blessed with many opportunities from BSC in particular," says Browne. "I grew up knowing it was such an important institution and gained a tremendous amount of knowledge from my time there."

Browne's family instilled the concept of giving back early in her life.

"It's not a choice. It's what we are and who we are and what we do," says Browne.

In the nearly 20 years since Browne left the Hilltop, she has attended graduate school at Vanderbilt, worked as a nurse practitioner at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital during her post-graduate fellowship, and is now the Director of the Transition Oncology Program at St. Jude. In 2011, Browne was recognized by BSC as an Outstanding Young Alumna.

While living in Memphis, Tennessee, Emily met her husband **Michael Browne**. They both already had established careers and did not need the pots and pans that are typically found on a wedding registry, so in lieu of



traditional gifts, they requested donations to a charitable foundation.

They set up a Donor Advised Fund (DAF) through the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, which greatly eased the process of giving.

The funds that were donated as their wedding gifts, as well as their continued annual gifts, are all processed in one place.

"It simplifies everything, and is a really nice way to limit the amount of paperwork required to make a gift," says Browne. "It's just click, click, click, and you're done."

The ease of having digital access to the funds means that the balance, history of giving, and the ability to redirect the funds is available online.

It also assists with long-term financial planning, as you can write a gift to the DAF in your will, and then can change charities through the DAF without going through the long legal process of changing your will.

"Giving to BSC is something that has been a habit – an annual thing for me," says Browne. "It is important to me that we make sure the institution is around for another 100, 200 years, and that the opportunities I experienced still exist."

Switching her annual giving to a DAF, through a foundation such as the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, still allows Browne flexibility in giving to the College, whether she wants to give to the annual fund, general operations, or endowed funds.

To make a gift or learn more, call (205) 226-4909 or email advancement@bsc.edu.

There are more than 750 Community Foundations across the U.S. that create DAFs, all with the goal of keeping a proportion of charitable funds in the community – although almost any charity or non-profit can be designated through the DAFs.

Visit www.cof.org/community-foundation-locator to find your closest Community Foundation. The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham serves Blount, Jefferson, St. Clair, Shelby, and Walker counties.

DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

With a Birmingham-Southern car tag, you share your BSC pride on the road and support students on the Hilltop.

The Driven to Succeed program provides scholarships for Alabama residents, funded by proceeds from sales and renewals of BSC specialty license plates. For the 2019-20 academic year, nearly \$45,000 was awarded to five students through Driven to Succeed scholarships.

Each car tag purchase contributes \$48.75 to the College for the education of deserving students like **Thornton Muncher**, a junior English major from Sumiton, Ala., who received a Driven to Succeed scholarship last year.

"Scholarships have completely changed my experience at Birmingham-Southern and opened countless doors," says Muncher. "Without scholarships, I would have never been able to study abroad in Italy, travel to present research at a national academic conference, or live in a residence hall alongside the most incredible student body."

The BSC license plates – marked with a new ginkgo design – can be purchased at your county tag office. You also have the



chance to personalize the message on your tag, which we've seen from quite a few alumni, faculty, and staff.

"Scholarships are the most direct way to impact BSC students, and buying your BSC car tag makes providing that life-changing scholarship support incredibly simple," says **Allison Hedge**, director of development at BSC. "Every dollar given towards scholarships moves a student one step closer to achieving their goals."

Learn more about the Driven to Succeed program: www.bsc.edu/advancement.

15-Minute Classroom

With the nationwide shutdown of college campuses due to COVID-19, BSC faced the challenge of keeping its community engaged and actively learning.

As history professor **Dr. Randall Law** explains, "Our faculty is full of extraordinary scholars who are leaders in their fields, but the thing that really sets our professors apart — and thus our curriculum and the College as a whole — is our enthusiasm for teaching, our skill at it, and the simple but amazing fact that all of our students, from first-years to seniors, get to work directly with those instructors."

With BSC's focus on engaged learning in mind, an idea was born: 15-Minute Classroom.

The idea was simple — on Thursdays at 6 p.m., BSC professors would log onto Facebook Live and present a mini-lecture on a topic of their choice. The results were incredible — the summer presentations have since amassed thousands of views from students, alumni, and friends of the College alike, and the overwhelming demand resulted in an equally popular fall series.

In response to this memorable year, many professors showed how historical people and events have current relevance. **Dr. Mark Schantz**, history professor and chair of the history department, addressed racial tensions in "W.E.B. DuBois: America's Most Important Intellectual; Why We Need Him Now More Than Ever." A long-time African American history scholar who proudly displays cardboard cutouts of DuBois and Frederick Douglass in his office, Schantz says, "A scholar of international repute, DuBois wrote with luminous brilliance about the experiences of people of color in our nation. Now, more than ever, we need to resurrect his commitment to historical truth as the basis for authentic racial reconciliation in the United States."

Dr. Jessica Hines, assistant professor of medieval literature and culture, brought her extensive knowledge of the bubonic plague in the Middle Ages into the 2020 world of COVID-19 in "The Black Death and Literature."

"This talk examines how literature was shaped by the Black Death, as well as the ways authors used literature to contend with grief and loss," Hines says.

Although initially worried that it might be "a little too on the nose and possibly upsetting" for viewers, she decided her topic could showcase the shaping of culture through chaos and the solace that can still be found in literature.

In the same vein of thought, **Dr. Lester Seigel '79**, Joseph Hugh Thomas Professor of Music, addressed how composers in times of disease outbreak and other forms of adversity brought the world beautiful music in spite of — and because of — the constraints of limited numbers in orchestras and choirs in his presentation, "The Economy of Means: Getting the most with the least. How has adversity and necessity influenced trends in music?"

The theme of "getting the most with the least" also speaks to what BSC's 15-Minute Classroom Series has achieved, and its popularity among alumni illustrates the spirit of joyful lifelong learning that is instilled on the Hilltop.



SUMMER 15-MINUTE CLASSROOMS

June 11: Amy Cottrill, Denson N. Franklin Associate Professor of Religion: "Creative Resilience and Listening to the Voices of the Past"

June 18: Joseph Chandler '03, Associate Professor of Psychology: "The Free Magic Pill: How Good Sleep Changes Everything"

June 25: Victoria Ott, James A. Wood Professor of History: "The Myth of the Southern Belle"

July 9: Randall Law, Professor of History: "The Dog That Didn't Bark"

July 23: Meghan Mills, Associate Professor of Sociology: "Racism and Health: A Look at COVID-19"

FALL 15-MINUTE CLASSROOMS

September 10: Mark Lester, Michael Atchison Professor of History: "What is History? Why Study It?"

September 17: Melinda Rainey Thompson, Assistant Lecturer in English: "Every Word Counts: Living, Teaching, and Publishing in the Midst of the Pandemic"

September 24: Lester Seigel '79, Joseph Hugh Thomas Professor of Music: "The Economy of Means: Getting the most with the least. How has adversity and necessity influenced trends in music?"

October 1: Rick Lester, Associate Professor of Management: "How Do Wealthy People Think?"

October 8: Mark Schantz, Professor of History and Chair of the History Department: "W.E.B. DuBois: America's Most Important Intellectual; Why We Need Him Now More Than Ever"

October 15: Richard Rector, Associate Professor of Psychology: "How to Effectively Communicate With Your Child(ren)"

October 22: Jessica Hines, Assistant Professor of Medieval Literature and Culture: "The Black Death and Literature"

October 29: Natalie Davis, Howell Heflin Professor Emerita of Political Science, Zoom presentation: "Finally, Election Day is Tuesday!"

Interested in viewing these presentations? Our 15-Minute Classrooms are still available on the Birmingham-Southern College Facebook page.

Stay in TOUCH!

It's easier than ever to keep up with news from the Hilltop!

THE BSC BLOG

At blog.bsc.edu, you'll find stories about alumni, athletics, student life, faculty achievements, and upcoming events.

CLASS NOTES

Monthly updates about BSC alumni and friends of the College are now online at blog.bsc.edu and shared each month in From the Hilltop, our e-newsletter.

Submit your own news and updates at bsc.edu/alumni/update-info.html.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

www.bsc.edu

Even though life on campus looked a bit different this fall, the Office of Student Development continued to offer fun outdoor events. In October, Friday at the Fountain turned into a fall festival with a pick-your-own-pumpkin patch, petting zoo, and a mechanical bull. Students were also treated to free doughnuts from The Heavenly Donut Truck and frozen desserts from an ice cream truck. Read more about how the Hilltop coped with COVID while keeping the BSC spirit alive and well in our cover story on pg. 16.

