Whitewater Excitement in Downtown Columbus
Welcoming Our Olympians

The fall opening of school has been filled with an incredible array of moving, powerful and important events that emphasize the dynamic and global nature of our university. A series of exciting events characterize the pulse and levels of activities at Columbus State University.

For instance, at our welcome back meeting in the much-enhanced University Hall auditorium, I was proud to display pictures from London, capturing Jon Hall, our own Turner College of Business student and former NCAA national rifle champion, and our Rifle Team Assistant Coach Jamie Gray, who were both on the U.S. Olympic Shooting Team this summer. And then, I welcomed Jamie to the stage. I was so proud to recognize her in front of more than 1,000 cheering faculty and staff who wanted to help celebrate her winning the gold medal in the women’s 50-meter three-position event, shooting an Olympic record 691.9. Jamie had the gold medal draped around her neck, and it was the greatest of honors to present this wonderful colleague with a bouquet of roses and to join in the thunderous ovation for this record-breaking feat. (Story, Page 8)

The following week, we celebrated our fourth annual Day of Service, partnering with United Way, and we welcomed to campus Maj. Gen. H.R. McMaster, commanding general at Fort Benning’s Maneuver Center of Excellence, who gave the keynote address at our Freshman Convocation.

This summer was filled with other activities and events that reinforce the reach and beat of our university:

• Our Whiddon Chair of Piano, Professor Alex Kobrin, received a most favorable review in the New York Times for his incredible performance at the Mannes Music Festival in New York.

• Tom Dolan, chair of our political science department, realized a lifelong dream and traveled to North Korea. Dr. Dolan, formerly a U.S. Naval intelligence officer, has researched and written about Korean unification for years, but he has had neither the opportunity to travel to nor interact with citizens in North Korea in their own country. This truly reflects the reach of our university and the commitment to continuing our global efforts.

• Shawn Cruzen and team at our Coca-Cola Space Science Center traveled to the Marshall Space Center in Huntsville, Ala. and retrieved a $15 million nozzle from the NASA Space Shuttle program. This nozzle, part of $19 million in space equipment that will call CSU home, will help transform our Coca-Cola Space Science Center from a hands-on education facility to a true museum. (Photo, Page 7)

• We expanded our residential life footprint in Uptown Columbus at our RiverPark campus and continue to see great gentrification progress in this area of the city that will complete its transformation with the opening of the 2.5-mile whitewater run on the Chattahoochee River sometime in 2013. (Story, Pages 4, 10)

• A fantastic revitalization of our main library has truly created a contemporary study-research environment for our university. The library now remains open until 2 a.m., and our campus shuttle buses run until 3 a.m., reflective of our response to student requests.

As always, I invite you to visit the main or RiverPark campuses to share in this excitement and enhancement of the university. We are truly becoming a first choice for so many students, and I want you to share in the growth and development of Columbus State University.

President Tim Mescon welcomes CSU Rifle Team Assistant Coach Jamie Gray, who won a gold medal at the Summer Olympics, during an Aug. 8 welcome back event for faculty and staff. (Story, photos, Page 8-9)
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Chad Day, CSU’s aquatics coordinator, grimaces as he navigates the Chattahoochee River’s new whitewater rapids while training his lifeguards in July. (Photo by Roger Hart)

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CSU Flexes Economic Impact Muscle

Columbus State’s economic impact on the Chattahoochee Valley is almost $236 million, up from $226.8 in fiscal year 2010.

Overall, a recently released study shows, the impact the University System of Georgia’s 35 institutions have on their host communities reached $13.2 billion in fiscal year 2011. That’s up 5 percent from $12.6 billion reported for fiscal 2010.

The 2011 fiscal year study found that Georgia’s public university system generated nearly 132,000 jobs. In Columbus, the report shows 2,657 local jobs can be attributed to Columbus State, with most of those (1,242) because of student spending.

Ten years ago, Columbus State’s economic impact was $146.2 million. A decade later, the university has a downtown campus, 2,000 more students and 125 more faculty.

“It’s clear the economic impact on this community by the university and our students is remarkable,” CSU President Tim Mescon said. “It’s great to have this kind of data to show the university’s value here, but we should not lose sight of the impact that’s also made by our students — and our faculty and staff — in other ways, such as cultural enrichment, community volunteerism and civic engagement.”

New Apartments Address Demand

Columbus State opened student apartments in three new buildings at CSU’s RiverPark campus this fall, and all 92 new beds were quickly filled.

“All of the work that’s been put into taking historical structures and repurposing them is extremely impressive to me,” said Jonathan Lucia, Columbus State’s new Residence Life director.

Fontaine Hall, on West 11th Street, is the centerpiece of new RiverPark housing, resulting from a management agreement between Columbus State and the W.C. Bradley Company, which developed the three-story, 117-year-old building as a part of a joint venture. W.C. Bradley leases the building to Residence Life, which manages it as student housing. Extensive renovation of the architecturally significant building resulted in 18 apartments to house 37 students.

Thirty-one students moved into 15 new studio apartments on the ground floor of CSU’s Yancey Center at One Arsenal Place, already the Front Street home of faculty offices, classrooms, computer labs and more. Another two dozen students are now housed in similar new studio

Volleyball Coach Named

A former assistant coach at UNC-Charlotte will become Columbus State’s first volleyball coach since 1982.

“I am not only excited about this opportunity but humbled as well to be entrusted to lead this team,” Claire Cornett said at a May news conference.

CSU had a volleyball program for 17 years before discontinuing the sport.

Cornett said she would emphasize to players academics and community service, in addition to athleticism.

During three years at UNC Charlotte, Cornett helped recruit and develop five All-Conference players. The 49ers made the conference tournament two of her three seasons there. Off the court, her teams carried a 3.4 grade point average and raised over $30,000 for cancer awareness.

Cornett, a 2006 biology graduate of Wheeling Jesuit University, was a four-year starter at middle blocker, helping the Cardinals amass a 139-32 record during those years.
CSU, Painter to Create Center Downtown Devoted to his Art

Columbus State and noted American painter Bo Bartlett have been successfully recruiting patrons for two boards that will help develop a center bearing Bartlett’s name for CSU’s College of the Arts.

“I believe The Bo Bartlett Center will be a milestone in the history of this university,” Columbus State President Tim Mescon said at an April announcement.

The interactive learning center and gallery will overlook the Chattahoochee River from the second floor of CSU’s Corn Center for the Visual Arts and house more than $10 million in artwork, representing the world’s largest collection of paintings by the Columbus-born artist.

Columbus native Shannon Illeges Candler of Atlanta will chair both the center’s regional Board of Advisers and a national Board of Visitors. Seed money from Candler, Otis and Sandy Scarborough, Jimmy and Ruth Yancey, and the Norman and Emmy Lou Illeges Foundation will allow the university to hire an executive director for the center and begin planning. Architect Tom Kundig of Seattle will work with Columbus architects Hecht Burdeshaw to design an 18,425-square foot interactive gallery.

Born in Columbus in 1955, Bartlett is a contemporary realist, educated at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. His work, lauded by the likes of artist Andrew Wyeth, has been showcased at galleries across the globe. The center bearing Bartlett’s name will house more than 300 paintings and drawings, as well as the complete archive of sketch books, correspondence, journals, recordings, photographs, artistic notes, memorabilia, objects and objets d’art relevant to Bartlett’s work.

A rotating exhibitions gallery will feature the work of artists of national and international acclaim. These artists will also teach master classes in the center’s studios, in addition to Bo Bartlett’s annual Holistic Painting Master Class.

“I’m at a point in my life where I want to give back to this community,” Bartlett said in April. “I’d also like to share the wonders of my hometown with the larger art world. I want national artists and art lovers to be able to experience the beauty of this region. And I would like to provide the opportunity for young people in central southwest Georgia who want to learn the skills necessary to become an artist, to stay right here, at home.”

Columbus State Plays Major Role in Inaugural Artbeat of Columbus

Earlier this year, hundreds of Columbus residents and visitors were treated to a series of cultural events during the inaugural Artbeat of Columbus.

The festival brought together the city’s arts groups to provide more than 40 cultural events from March 17-April 1. Columbus State departments sponsored more than half the events.

One highlight was the introduction of 12 new pieces along Uptown Columbus’ Sculpture Walk. Marleen DeBode Olivé, a member of CSU’s Friends of Art and chair of the Sculpture Walk and Artbeat festival, cited the walk as a perfect example of public art because each work becomes a conversation piece.

Columbus State departments staged concerts, plays, exhibits and arts workshops throughout the festival, including two special concerts co-sponsored with Israel’s consulate general to the Southeast. The first concert featured singer-songwriter Aya Korem, a former Israeli Artist of the Year and U.S.-based Michael Ochs. The second concert featured an Israeli indie pop band, acollective, which rocked the RiverCenter as they jammed with Columbus State’s Popular Music Ensemble.

“Artbeat of Columbus exceeded our greatest expectations in both number of events featured and the quality of experiences afforded Columbus residents,” said organizer Richard Baxter, dean of CSU’s College of the Arts. “The contribution made by the faculty and students in the College of the Arts was incredible and raised our profile in the public as we had envisioned when planning the concerts, exhibitions and performances that we would offer. It was also very valuable to create partnerships with other arts organizations and supporters.”

Plans are under way for a second Artbeat of Columbus in 2013. Visit www.ArtbeatColumbus.org for updates.
Passages: Carson McCullers’ Biographer
Virginia Spencer Carr, 82

Published in 1975, Carr’s The Lonely Hunter was the first in-depth look at the Columbus-born novelist, whose troubled life has been compared to that of characters she created in such books as The Heart is a Lonely Hunter and Ballad of the Sad Café.

Carr also published literary biographies of authors John Dos Passos and Paul Bowles.

Carr spent the first six years of her English teaching career at what’s now Armstrong Atlantic University. After moving to Columbus, where she taught from 1969-1984, Carr spent the final years of her career at Georgia State before retiring in 2003.

Private Giving to CSU Up Despite Economy

Despite a struggling economy, Columbus State finished the fiscal year with more $5.4 million in private gifts to support the institution and its students and faculty.

Of that amount, $2.9 million was raised through the Annual Fund, representing another record-breaking total for that drive, which raised $2.07 million the previous year.

“As we continue to deal with budget cuts, private giving has become even more critical for us to sustain our path toward excellence,” President Tim Mescon said.

“Learning we raised more than $5.4 million last year is a bit humbling because it clearly shows how much our supporters care about this university and believe in the impact we are making.”

The total raised by the CSU Foundation during the fiscal year that ended July 30 was an increase over the $5.04 million a year earlier.

Money raised went to a variety of academic efforts, student scholarships, program endowments and faculty assistance directives. Seven new endowments were created, five of which will support student scholarships, and 21 existing endowments received additional gifts.

“I think that people over time have become more and more impressed with what’s happening at Columbus State University and the progress we’ve made even in bad economic times — the growth in enrollment and the overall great reputation,” said George Jeter, a retired Aflac executive who chaired the development committee last year as a member of the CSU Foundation Board of Trustees.

Among the more noteworthy gifts last year was a planned gift from the J. Barnett Woodruff foundation and an investment in downtown from the Mildred Miller Fort Foundation. The Fort Foundation gift will allow the university to build three new apartments in the Broadway Crossing student apartment building that will serve as residences for visiting faculty who are in Columbus to teach a semester or two at CSU. Such designated living arrangements make CSU even more attractive as its leaders look to bring in visiting scholars from around the world to spend time with local students.

Non-credit Enrollment Rises 9%

Continuing Education at Columbus State enjoyed a healthy surge during 2011-2012, with enrollment in 800-plus camps, courses and programs rising 9 percent.

In all, 7,397 people registered in 816 Continuing Education classes during the year ending June 30. The non-credit classes focusing on personal and professional development range from children’s summer camps to certification programs in career areas such as paralegal studies. Enrollment in professional certificate programs rose nearly 10 percent.

“Many people are either unemployed or under-employed and need to update their skills without investing an enormous amount of time.” said Susan Wirt, CSU’s executive director of Continuing Education. “Professional certificate programs are an affordable and efficient way to gain credentials to be ready for the job market or get a better job.”

Summer camp enrollment for kids 4 and up has risen 43 percent since Activ8 camps began in 2008.

In 2011, CSU Continuing Education established the Empowered Youth of Columbus program, an arts-based, after-school program for at-risk youth. Initially funded by CSU and Columbus’ Crime Prevention Board, EYC will expand dramatically over the next five years, thanks to a $2.25 million Georgia Department of Education grant announced in mid-July. The grant will allow Continuing Education to hire more “teaching artists” to use the arts to help children with core subjects such as math and science.

“We know that it will change the lives of at-risk children throughout Columbus,” Wirt said.

Learn more at http://ColumbusState.edu/continuinged.

Sterling Kalnins participates in a summer camp called “Doll’s Life: Sewing a Trip to Paris” in July.
CSU Works to Boost Graduation Rate

Columbus State will use more than $1 million from the state Board of Regents this year to address priorities designed to close the gap between the number of Georgians who have some type of college degree and what the state's workforce needs in 2020. That gap is being addressed statewide as part of Gov. Nathan Deal's Complete College Georgia initiative. CSU is taking part by increasing the number of science, technology, engineering and math educators in Georgia; by revamping the university's retention processes; by increased military educational programs and research partnerships; and by better tracking all these efforts.

“Columbus State University has been working for several years already to develop the kinds of partnerships that are behind the Complete College Georgia initiative,” said Tom Hackett, CSU's provost and vice president for academic affairs.

Hackett pointed to recent agreements as examples of how Columbus State is working to help more Georgians earn college degrees:

- Columbus State is working with more than $2.4 million in federal grants to recruit math and science majors into a new teaching-degree program. Columbus State is using its grant, up to $1.4 million over four years, to establish UTeach Columbus, modeled after a highly successful program started at the University of Texas at Austin in 1997.
- For Fort Benning soldiers, Columbus State now offers nine credit hours toward two master's degrees — Master of Public Administration (Government Track) and a Master of Education in educational leadership — for completion of the Maneuver Captains Career Course. CSU also now offers a Bachelor of Arts in liberal arts with tracks in military and in global issues.
- Columbus State University and Columbus Technical College announced in June a partnership to offer nursing students a seamless transition from Columbus Tech's associate degree in nursing program to Columbus State's RN-BSN online degree program.
- Columbus State finalized another agreement recently allowing students who successfully complete Associate of Science degrees in business or general studies at West Georgia Technical College to count much of their coursework toward bachelor's degrees at Columbus State.

Professor Wins Statewide Teaching Award

Susan Hrach, an associate professor of English at Columbus State, has been notified she's the sole recipient of the 2012-2013 University System of Georgia Regents' Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Award.

“I am really proud to represent CSU because of the culture of teaching that exists here,” Hrach said. “I am nurtured all the time by my colleagues.”

Hrach, recently named director of CSU's Faculty Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, began teaching at CSU in 1999 after finishing a Ph.D. in English at the University of Washington in Seattle. She earned an M.A. in English from the University of Alabama and a B.A. from the University of Notre Dame, where she studied German and spent a year abroad at the Universität Innsbruck in Austria.

Her research interests include Renaissance women writers, manuscript texts and translation studies. The courses she teaches most often are World Literature and Renaissance Literature, including Shakespeare. She taught for CSU in Italy this summer, and she's also taught and conducted research several times at the university's Spencer house in Oxford, England.

“The committee was most impressed by the strong letters of support that accompanied your portfolio,” noted the award letter from the USG selection committee. “Your ability to use your discipline content as a means to teach critical thinking, and analysis skills, was clearly demonstrated ... Your ability to accurately assess a student's culture shock prior to travel and then ask them to address those issues prior to travel was a most innovative technique.”

A ceremony was held at CSU’s Coca-Cola Space Science Center July 20 to greet the NASA space shuttle main engine nozzle that will eventually be on display at the center. The $15 million nozzle, which has been into space nine times, is one of several artifacts that NASA is donating to the center.
he situation felt all too familiar for Jamie Gray, Columbus State's assistant rifle coach.

As in Beijing at the 2008 Summer Olympics, Gray needed a near-perfect performance on the final shot in the 50-meter three-position event to earn a medal. But this time, in London, she delivered.

Gray, 28, became on Aug. 4 the first-ever Olympic medalist affiliated with the university when she finished first in the women's 50-meter three-position event at the 2012 Summer Olympic Games, winning a gold medal and setting two Olympic records.

Jonathan Hall, a senior business major and former national air rifle champion at CSU, also competed in the London Olympics, finishing ahead of his U.S. colleagues in the qualification round of the men's 10-meter air rifle — but not good enough to advance to the finals. Like Gray, he's now focused on competing in the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

"I am more humble for the experience and more determined for the future," Hall wrote after being eliminated in London. "For me, practice for 2016 starts now."

Gray was still reveling in her London win less than a week later, when hundreds of her Columbus State colleagues greeted her with a standing ovation at a welcome back event for faculty and staff.

"I don't think words can describe what it feels like standing up there, hearing your national anthem being played, seeing your flag being raised," Gray said, recalling the medal ceremony in London. "All emotions rolled into one. All you can think about is all the people who helped you get there."

Gray is quick to acknowledge the support she received. "It's not just my medal," she said. "It's the USA, it's my parents, my husband, my family and friends, the United States Army Marksmanship Unit (at Fort Benning, where her husband, Army Staff Sgt. Hank Gray, works) where I've been training, Columbus State which supports me so much, my community back in Lebanon, Pa. — all those people."

Competing in her second Olympics, Gray posted a 592 out of a possible 600 in the qualifying round before shooting a 99.9 in the finals to wind up with a total score of 691.9. It was the first time since 1992 that the United States had won gold in the event, and it's Gray's first gold medal.

The previous Olympic record was a 690.3 set by China's Du Li at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Gray remembers it well. Competing there in the same event, Gray needed a solid score just to earn a bronze. A last-shot mistake cost her as she scored an 8.7 out of a possible 10.9, putting her out of medal consideration in fifth place. She also finished fourth in air rifle at Beijing.

"I didn't want to repeat that experience," Gray said. "I've lived the past four years trying to get through that last shot, and I've trained really hard taking that last shot every day of my life. Come the last shot, I was thinking I'm not going to do this again."

Relaxation and patience helped make the difference in London.

"I said I'm going to run the process, shoot a good shot," she said. "That's really what matters. And that's exactly what I did. I took a little extra time in the process, relaxed a little more and it was a great shot."

In the finals, Gray had 10 or more points in seven of her 10 shots. Her final round score of 99.9 surpassed seven other opponents.

Gray Gets the First CSU-Affiliated Olympian

In the qualification round, Gray also took down a record that has been standing since the 1996 Atlanta Games by posting a 592, which broke the previous Olympic qualification round record of 589 set by Renata Mauer-Rozanska of Poland in 1996 and tied by Du Li of China in 2008.

"I didn't even know until they announced it on the range because I was so focused on getting into the Olympic finals," Gray said. "The match isn't over yet. You still have 10 shots to go, and so many of us forget that. I really just focused on taking those last 10 shots one shot at a time, and that's really what it takes."

Starting in the prone position, Gray shot a 98 in series one and then followed with a perfect 100 in the second series. She then separated herself from most of the field by shooting back-to-back 99's in the standing position.

Gray entered the kneeling position needing a perfect score in each of two series to break the world qualification record of 594. Midway through the first 10 shots, Gray was on pace, but two shots went wide, resulting in a 98 in the first series. Gray fired another 98 in the final round, completing her record-breaking performance.

"To be able to take that last shot and have it be a 10.8, I was so ecstatic," Gray said. "To be able to come back from that, knowing that in my last shot in Beijing I went from third to fifth. And here I was able to shoot that last shot, and it was awesome."

Gray, who was part of NCAA national rifle championship teams at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks in 2003, 2004 and 2006, is now looking ahead to coaching this year's Cougar rifle team, a group of male and female shooters who just may be a little more attentive to her coaching.

"I hope so," Gray said. "Maybe they'll listen a little better. I'm just looking forward to a great season for Columbus State University. We have a lot of great freshmen coming in, great returning seniors. We'll see what the season brings. Hopefully we can go to a national championship. Who knows what will happen?"
Gray Gets the Gold!

First CSU-Affiliated Olympian Shines in London

By Tim Turner

Jamie Gray follows the lead of several other Olympians — mostly at the urging of photographers — in biting her gold medal after it was presented in London.

Gold!
Shines in London

By Tim Turner
ick Cravens had the kayaks. He just needed a few students to help test his hunch.

Cravens, Columbus State’s Campus Recreation director, was certain the proposed 2.5-mile whitewater course on the Chattahoochee River would be a major asset for CSU’s RiverPark campus. To that end, he and Chad Day, aquatics coordinator at CSU’s Student Recreation Center, started whitewater kayaking and rafting training, anticipating student interest. Shortly after getting CSU’s first kayaks last spring, he announced to students a “Come Try Out the Kayaks” event and confirmed his hunch.

“We had 25 people show up,” he said. “That was very, very surprising. There are a lot of people interested in what is going on. We think there will be a number of students who want to get into it once they see everything that is happening.”

Once workers finish clearing out the debris and reshaping the riverbed and the Eagle and Phenix and City Mills dams are demolished, returning the river to its natural state in mid-2013, the fun will begin. The whitewater course will run from just south of the North Highlands dam, around 35th Street, and end south of what was the Eagle and Phenix dam, near 11th Street, making it the world’s longest urban whitewater course.

A Columbus State study projects it will create 700 new jobs — in hospitality and service industries, plus retail — and pump $42 million a year into the local economy from residents and tourists visiting Uptown Columbus. About 188,000 visitors are expected at the river annually, including 144,000 from beyond the Chattahoochee Valley, bringing in $300,000 in lodging taxes and $1.7 million in city sales taxes.

“(The whitewater project) will be three blocks from campus, sometimes right next door with our green space,” said study author Mike Daniels, professor at CSU’s Turner College of Business. “The people who will be coming will be younger …. Ultimately, this will be a great marketing tool for the university.”

It’s also expected to be a great opportunity for students seeking temporary employment.

“A lot of these will not be career-oriented jobs,” Daniels said. “It will be a chance for them to work while in school. Just the operation of the whitewater venue alone will have 185 jobs, and it’s right there next to campus.”

Cravens and Day took a weeklong course at the Nantahala Whitewater Rafting operation in North Carolina last March. And they’ve taken small groups out to test their strokes on rapids created after the first dam demolition.

“We plan to buy some rafts once we see the rapids,” Cravens said. “How big they are, how small — will determine what size raft we need. Do we need a raft that’s really big if the water’s really big? Or something a little bit smaller, swift, so we can maneuver through the rapids, around rocks, things like that?”

Cravens said that could make a big difference in terms of what’s needed and expectations.

“Nantahala is willing to come down to Columbus to help us select the rafts we need,” Cravens said. “(They would) help us read the river and find the best routes through the river. We’re excited about having those folks come down, probably next winter to help us make those decisions so we get the best raft for our students, to give them the best ride.”

Columbus State stands to get a good ride as well. More whitewater enthusiasts coming to the city means more people checking out the RiverPark campus.

“It will be excellent exposure,” Cravens said. “There will be thousands and thousands of people through there
every week during the summertime when that thing opens. Once we start doing our trips, it will open it up. CSU will have a whitewater rafting service where you can go down the river.”

Cravens believes it will cost CSU whitewater rafters less than others. He estimated that one business downtown would probably charge $25-$30 per person per excursion. He said CSU hopes to charge $5-$10 per person to cover fuel costs.

Cravens said he’s spoken with representatives of The Outside World in Uptown Columbus about collaborating with CSU on whitewater trips and classes. CSU Continuing Education already offers kayaking classes to the public in the university’s recreation center.

“We plan to do things like that exclusively for our students and at no charge to our students,” Cravens said. “In a kayak, it’s very easy to flip over. Once you flip over you have to learn how to put yourself back upright in moving water. We want to teach them the best methods out there.”

To ensure the people they train are armed with the best information and taught the latest skills, Cravens and Day continue to expand their knowledge. Their goal is to help students make informed decisions.

“Rafting and kayaking are vastly different,” Cravens said. “We will see once that course is open if our students will want to learn how to kayak or if they want to rent out equipment and try (other) whitewater sports. We’re trying to get prepared for anything that is going to happen. We anticipate a lot will happen.”

Whatever transpires, Cravens expects a lot of interest.

“I think (Uptown Columbus) will be the place to be,” he said. “More restaurants, more services for the people who come rafting, more outdoors-y stuff. I think the Riverwalk will grow and get more use. People will be on it watching people raft and kayak. It is a great time to be at CSU.”
CSU student Kate Lodder took individual images of Venus traversing the sun with a solar telescope from Bryce Canyon in Utah, where she was a GeoCorps America intern. CSU student Cameron McCarty edited the images into this composite.
In the middle of Mongolia’s Gobi Desert, the annual rainfall is measured in millimeters. Yet, after traveling more than 7,000 miles, rigging a power supply that would pass zero electrical codes, setting up thousands of dollars in telescopes and buying satellite time to record a once-in-a-lifetime astronomical event, staffers from Columbus State’s Coca-Cola Space Science Center saw clouds begin covering the sky as a storm moved in.

About 4,800 miles to the southeast, another center team also was setting up telescopes. Partnering with NASA, they were at a school in Alice Springs, Australia, trying to get the best possible images of Venus passing between the Earth and the sun. And then the Internet connection in Australia suddenly went down. Reports from all over the country started coming in, saying a road worker in the northern territory cut a cable that provided service to half the island nation.

A third team — a Columbus State student in Utah — was recording Venus with a camera hooked up to a telescope, using her camera to send back images to Georgia. And then her camera battery started dying.

But wait, there’s more.

Back home in Columbus, another team was setting up telescopes and computers on the roof of a downtown parking garage, and when they plugged everything in to a building next door, the circuit breaker blew. And then it clouded over.

But this is not a story of futility or frustration. Despite these challenges and many more, researchers from Columbus State’s space science center who spread out across the world ultimately were successful in their quest to photograph, video and webcast Venus as it moved across the face of the sun in June, a celestial event called the Transit of Venus that won’t occur again for another 105 years.

The stunning images they captured, and the lengths they went to capture them, attracted worldwide attention for a CSU educational outreach center in downtown Columbus that strives to inspire “ongoing exploration and discovery as the region’s premier location for hands-on, inquiry-based STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education by providing accessible, innovative and dynamic experiences to schoolchildren, university students and the general public.”

According to Google, Columbus State’s Coca-Cola Space Science Center was mentioned in more than 3,400 media reports around the globe during the week of the Transit of Venus. And the images they recorded and put online for the center’s Transit of Venus webcast attracted more than 1.4 million unique visitors.

“It was an amazing achievement,” said Shawn Cruzen, executive director of CSU’s Coca-Cola Space Science Center and a Columbus State astronomy professor. “There’s no way I would have jumped into this without the team we have here. I think we did CSU proud.”

Road Trips

Planning for these simultaneous efforts began more than a year ago. The 2012 Transit of Venus would last for about seven hours on June 5-6, providing extraordinary viewing opportunities. Unfortunately, audiences in the continental U.S. would only see a portion of the transit as the sun sets in the west, so space center staff started thinking about where they could go to capture the transit. They needed locations where the transit could be viewed for several hours and places most likely to have clear skies.

“We had initially discussed Alaska and Hawaii as potential sites, but NASA was already organizing a strong team for Hawaii; so, we started looking at other ideal viewing locations that would provide diverse coverage of the event,” said Mary Johnson, assistant director of CSU’s Coca-Cola Space Science Center. “In December, we decided on Alice Springs, Australia, and began reaching out to potential educational partners in the area. Then, in February, during a visit with representatives from the International Space School Education Trust, we learned about an incredible opportunity to join their leadership adventure to the Gobi Desert in Mongolia.”

During their plans to make the transit more accessible to the public, the team also forged a partnership with NASA to provide images. So Columbus State would not only be providing their own multi-continent webcast of the 2012 Transit of Venus, the space science center would be the only university-affiliated institution partnering with NASA to provide images from remote locations for NASA’s webcast.

As planning for these transcontinental road trips started coming together, the teams’ to-do lists were plagued by questions:

• How do you safely deliver delicate cameras, computers and telescopes (not to mention people) to the Gobi Desert?
• How can you send images from Australia and Mongolia back to Georgia, and also to NASA?
• How do all the team members on different continents communicate with each other?
• How can the center and CSU make the most out of the trips to these different countries?
• How do you get power to a computer while in a tent city in the sand?
• How do you handle the extra hits on websites from people logging in to watch the transit?
Obviously, a lot of the issues were technology-related. But once again, the to-do list of problems turned into a string of accomplishments. Corporate technology partners Hewlett Packard, General Dynamics Itronix, SHI and AT&T signed on to successfully augment the computer know-how of the space center’s team and the university’s IT department.

Because of those connections, at one point or another for about eight hours that night, the space center’s website was showing images of the transit, either from Utah, Columbus, Australia or Mongolia. Additionally, a crowd of spectators at the space center in downtown Columbus was able to see some of the transit by themselves through telescopes.

CSU students also were involved, from the computer science majors who were helping with the computers and imagery at the center, to Kate Lodder, a senior who sent images from Bryce Canyon in Utah, where she was on a prestigious internship with GeoCorps America to help with educational programming in geology and astronomy.

It was a worldwide example of the center’s efforts to engage people “in a way that their experience ignites a fire of curiosity — a spark — that opens a door to further scientific exploration and discovery,” Johnson said.

If no such impression was made on the 1.4 million visitors who watched the transit online, the space center’s team certainly made an impact on a former space shuttle commander who was part of the team that led the Mongolia expedition.

“He told me, ‘From the middle of nowhere, what I just saw a team of 10 people accomplish — I know teams of 40 to 50 people that could not have pulled that off,’” Johnson said. “This is a man who has been to the International Space Station, and he was floored with what we were able to accomplish.”

Teamwork Triumph

Johnson, Cruzen and Scott Norman, director of the space center’s Challenger Learning Center, were on the Mongolia trip, which was a leadership and team-building training exercise, as well as an astronomical adventure. The group spent days traveling desert paths — not roads — and stayed in makeshift tent cities.

“If you broke down out there, you would just die. You could literally go for hundreds of kilometers and not see anything,” said Norman, comparing the landscapes to images from Mars.

As Cruzen put it, “We chose the most difficult location on planet Earth to pull this off.”

In Australia, life was more civilized for Lance Tankersley, the center’s Omnisphere Theater director, and Michael Johnson, its coordinator of external programming, who were working with a school in Alice Springs. By the end of their trip, they were being treated as celebrities.

Not only did they teach lessons on astronomy at the school for two days, they were interviewed by a national television network and were asked to make a presentation to the whole town when the transit was completed. The event was standing-room only.

“At the end of the community event, almost everyone stuck around to ask questions, and a few of them wanted our autographs,” Tankersley said.

The service interruption that stopped the team from transmitting images was not a cut cable (a rumor that even prompted an inquiry from CNN), but rather a computer glitch at the school that Johnson was able to quickly fix in plenty of time for his live appearance on NASA TV with a crowd of Australian schoolchildren behind him. Johnson and Tankersley made such an impression on the school, they were given Australian flags as mementos from their visit. Students and faculty signed the flags before they left.

As the team gathered in mid-June, together again for the first time in the comfortable confines of the space science center, there was a lot of laughter as they recapped the trips and swapped stories of their adventures. And there were a few wet eyes in the room as they thanked each other for the work that each did to pull all the pieces together.

“In spite of everything that happened, there is not one single goal that we did not accomplish,” Mary Johnson said.

“It went beyond the transit,” said Chris Johnson, the center’s graphic artist and technology guru, who coordinated most of the efforts from Columbus. “It really did. The transit was awesome, but everything that happened as a result was awesome too.”

CSU’s Shawn Cruzen, Scott Norman and Mary Johnson were part of this larger group sharing a leadership and team-building exercise in the Gobi Desert, where they tracked the Transit of Venus. Camel-riding was one of the group’s activities.
Joseph Lunsford has learned one thing after working in nations from South America to Africa to the Mideast, it’s that “people are people.”

“If you respect their culture, you can have a very easy transition,” the former Columbus State student said.

He’s now facing one of his greatest cultural challenges as socioeconomic manager for ExxonMobil’s operations in Iraq. In that role, he consults with the corporation’s stakeholders there, working to develop and implement community engagement projects.

“It is imperative that we respect and value cultural heritage, customs and diversity among our workforce and in the communities in which we operate,” he said. “I see this as a cornerstone of our operations, regardless of which country I’m working in.”

He sees the new job as “an opportunity to really make a difference in the lives of the Iraqi people, who have endured years of suffering and turmoil — an opportunity to be truly a servant leader in a demanding environment.”

Such lessons came early for Lunsford, the sixth of 10 children, whose parents, the late Walter and Sally Lunsford, operated a service station near downtown Columbus and ran three cab companies.

“My parents were always advocates for making a difference in the community, no matter what,” he said. “They challenged us to always exceed expectations.”

(One sister, Columbus Tax Commissioner Lula Huff, recently joined the CSU Foundation’s Board of Trustees.)

Lunsford got his first exposure to higher education through an early admissions program that allowed him to enroll at Columbus College as a Pacelli High School senior, before graduating in 1973. Encouraged by family, he took the advice of a well-placed mentor, U.S. Rep. Jack Brinkley, and won admission to West Point.

He graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1977 with a general engineering degree and headed to Columbus — not to home but to Fort Benning, where he completed Airborne, Ranger, Pathfinder and other advanced training. After command postings at Fort Benning and working in Fort Meade, Md., he found his military occupation niche when he was selected for the Foreign Area Officer program.

Along the way, he learned Spanish and Portuguese, spending time representing U.S. interests in Latin America. He also completed a master’s in political science at the University of Florida, focusing on the politics of Brazil, which he visited, meeting his future wife. He went on to become an intern at the United Nations.

In 1987, the Army had him return to West Point to teach political science. By 1988, he had reached the rank of major, and his military future appeared bright.

Then tragedy struck on a Thanksgiving 1988 visit to Georgia, when a drunken driver steered her northbound car into the southbound lanes of Interstate 85, near the North Druid Hills exit in Atlanta. The resulting head-on collision with Lunsford’s car seriously injured him, his wife and a sister. His femur snapped, protruding from his leg, and both feet and his left arm were broken. Yet Lunsford concludes he was “very blessed.”

“The person who hit me was killed, and I survived,” he said. “It was a major turning point in my life.”

Initially, he was plagued by depression.

“I was on the fast track in the military,” he said. “I looked at all I had achieved and thought my life was over. I asked myself, ‘Why me, why me? How can this happen to me?’”

At some point, Lunsford had a revelation, and that was, “Why not me? What exempts me? What makes me so special that something catastrophic could not happen to me? Because of a strong Christian background, I felt like I was chosen for something.”

He remembered how he had been taught that “the real measure of a person is how they deal with obstacles. And then it started dawning on me that life is not what you have, it’s what you do with what you have.”

After grueling physical rehabilitation at Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta, he got a call inviting him to return to teaching at West Point. He took advantage of the offer and taught while he continued his recovery. He had a rod in his left leg and was partially paralyzed below the waist. Doctors told him it would take time for the nerves to grow.

“It was one of the worst times of my life, but it was during that recovery that I began contemplating my future, and that is how I got interested in ExxonMobil,” he said.

He quietly began an intense job search, focusing on the most respected firms among the 30 publicly traded corporations of the Dow Jones Industrial Average. Eventually, he decided Exxon was the best fit and medically retired from the military. He joined the oil giant as a marketing planner at its Houston headquarters in 1991, while he was still on crutches or using a cane.

After several promotions and moves, he began revisiting countries from his military career in key positions, helping oversee fuels marketing maintenance for 29 nations in the Caribbean, Central and South America. In 2004, ExxonMobil assigned him to a manager post in oil-rich Nigeria. He worked...
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Association Encouraged to Boost Engagement Among Alumni

A recent leadership evaluation has the CSU Alumni Association focusing on engagement to accomplish its mission “to support, foster and promote the aims and objectives” of the university.

“My excitement comes from gearing ourselves to think outside the box when it comes to engaging more alumni,” said Paul Holmer-Monte, AASC'S '97 and BBA '00, president of the association’s Board of Directors.

Alumni Relations Director Jennifer Joyner worked with the Leadership Institute at CSU’s Cunningham Center to evaluate board activities and how those aligned with the association’s mission.

In practical terms, boosting engagement means getting more alumni to events such as the fall Alumni Weekend (Page 18) and First Thursday social gatherings. The association’s board no longer charges membership dues, automatically counting all graduates. The board has focused in recent years on bylaws revision and board recruitment, communication and alumni events. During a May 21 meeting of the association, committees working in those areas offered reports, including:

- Proposed bylaws revisions, which were approved, that support efforts to promote diversity on the board, as well as at alumni events.
- An overview of the new online alumni community, myCSU, expected to launch this fall, offering a redesign of the alumni website, an online directory and strong e-communication capabilities.
- Details on the first printed alumni directory, completed and delivered in July.
- An overview of planned economical, family-friendly events, including Alumni Weekend, First Thursday socials that also started in 2011, CSU Alumni Day at the Atlanta Braves (2011, 2012), CSU Alumni Day at the Atlanta Falcons (upcoming), Alumni Recognition Luncheon (during Alumni Weekend) and the Emeritus Alumni Society.

“I’ve been thrilled with the efforts of the alumni association in the last couple of years, moving from more of a ‘fundraising’ entity to ‘friend-raising’ that supports the university’s mission and initiatives,” said Kat Cannella, B.A. ’04 and MBA ’12, first vice president of the association’s board. “I’m excited to see what lies ahead, as we continue to reach out and expand our impact.”

New officers of the CSU Alumni Association elected at its May 21 annual meeting are, from left, Paul Holmer-Monte, AASC'S '97 and BBA '00, president; Kimberly Scott, B.S.Ed. ’01 and M.Ed. ’02, secretary; Tashee’ Jones Singleton, BBA ’04 and MBA ’08, second vice president; R. Marie Bruner, BBA ’93, immediate past president; and Kat Cannella, B.A. ’04 and MBA ’12.

Sept. 30 Deadline for Early Booking Discounts for London, Paris Tour

Discounts are being offered to those who sign up by Sept. 30 for the spring 2013 tour of London and Paris sponsored by Columbus State’s Office of Alumni Relations.

Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, the Eiffel Tower and Arch of Triumph are among sightseeing stops on the March 14-21, 2013 tour organized by Collette Vacations.

The early-booking prices of $3,199 for double- or triple-occupancy and $3,899 for single-occupancy are available until Sept. 30. After then, rates go up $100. That includes round-trip airfare from Atlanta, lodging for six nights, 10 meals (including dinners at the Eiffel Tower and a Paris cabaret), sightseeing to a dozen destinations, a London theatre performance, a Seine River cruise and a high-speed trip by rail from London to Paris.

Excursions to Windsor Castle, the Louvre Museum and Versailles Palace are available at extra cost, and Collette also offers a four-day, three-night extension of the trip to Rome.

For more information on the tour, visit http://www.collettevacations.com/link/504012 or email Alumni Director Jennifer Joyner at Jennifer.Joyner@ColumbusState.edu.
A busy slate of events has been assembled for Columbus State’s second annual Alumni Weekend on Oct. 12-13.

CSU’s Alumni Relations director, Jennifer Joyner, said the weekend is an opportunity for alumni to “share food, fun and fellowship as you relive the past, experience the present and get a glimpse of our exciting future.” Alumni spouses and partners are also welcome.

**Schedule of Events**

**Friday, Oct. 12, 2012**  
5:30-7:30 p.m.  
**Friday Night Free for All!**  
Enjoy light refreshments and cocktails at The Loft, 1032 Broadway, one of Uptown Columbus’ most popular nightspots. After gathering with fellow alumni in The Loft’s Green Room, stay for the Uptown Columbus Broadway Series Outdoor Concert beginning at 7 p.m. in the median in front of The Loft.

**Saturday, Oct. 13, 2012**  
9 a.m.  
**Golf Outing with CSU Golf Team Members**  
Play nine holes of golf at the Columbus Country Club of Columbus, 2610 Cherokee Ave., while getting tips from CSU’s golf team members. Each participating group will be assigned a CSU golf team member. Cost covers golf fees, cart, practice balls and lunch at the Alumni Recognition Luncheon at CSU’s Coca-Cola Space Science Center. Awards from the outing will be given at the luncheon. (Registration and putting practice begins at 8 a.m.). $45 per player

10 a.m.-noon  
**Free admission to CSU’s Coca-Cola Space Science Center**, 701 Front Ave.  
Alumni will get to enjoy the outreach center’s planetarium and exhibits, including new artifacts from NASA.

Noon-2 p.m.  
**Annual Alumni Recognition Luncheon**  
Coca-Cola Space Science Center, 701 Front Ave.  
Alumni will be recognized in four categories.

6 p.m.-until  
**Evening on the Top**  
940 Front Ave. (atop CSU’s Parking Garage across from W.C. Bradley Company.)

This family-friendly, picnic-style evening includes the music of The Grapevine Band. The 10-man band has a diverse repertoire, covering Motown, rhythm and blues, beach, pop, rock from the 1960s-1980s, and more. Order a pre-made CSU picnic meal for two from Aramark, CSU’s food vendor, or bring your own. A cash bar will be provided. Presented by Columbus State’s four academic colleges. $5 per person or $35 for two if pre-ordering Aramark basket** (includes admission). Basket menu: Grilled chicken on fresh baked Kaiser bread, with smoked gouda, field greens and basil aioli, fresh fruit salad, Greek pasta salad, triple chocolate brownie, bottled water, Izze drink.

Visit ColumbusState.edu/alumni to learn more about the awards and how to nominate honorees. Columbus College graduates and former students from 1958-1962 will be inducted into the Emeritus Alumni Society. $15 per person

2-3:30 p.m.  
**Emeritus Alumni Society Reunion**  
(special invitation only)  
Classes of 1958-1962, Coca-Cola Space Science Center, 701 Front Ave.

5:30 p.m.  
**Tower Society Event** (special invitation only)  
Tower Society members will have a special pre-reception for the Evening on the Top at the CSU Parking Garage. (Across from the W.C. Bradley Company on Front Avenue.)

Register for Alumni Weekend at ColumbusState.edu/alumni  
For more information, call 706-507-8956 or email Jennifer.Joyner@ColumbusState.edu

* Be one of the first 50 alumni to register for Alumni Weekend and receive a numbered CSU clock tower plate.  
** Limited number of CSU baskets available for order.
Alumni and their spouses, or partners, may now take advantage of Columbus State’s ultra-modern Student Recreation Center, thanks to a mid-summer membership expansion.

Effective July 1, changes allowing those memberships were announced by CSU as part of “our ongoing university commitment to health and wellness.”

The rates for alumni are as same as for faculty, staff and their spouses, or partners: $100 for fall or spring semesters and $40 during the summer, or $240 for a full-year commitment. Hours vary, but the center is generally open from 7 a.m.-10 p.m. on weekdays when classes are in session, with shorter hours on Saturdays and Sundays. The center is open shorter periods during holiday and semester breaks.

Membership will be on an annual or semester-long basis and will allow full access to activities and amenities in this 106,000-square-foot facility, including such group fitness classes as spinning, yoga and Zumba. The facility encompasses two basketball courts, several workout areas, two rooms for fitness classes, a free weight area, running track, cardio deck with state-of-the-art treadmills, ellipticals and stationary cycles, multipurpose court, two racquetball courts, rock wall, bouldering area, and an Aquatics Center consisting of a 25-yard lap pool, a 1-meter diving board, leisure pool, therapy pool and sauna.

Find out more about the center at http://ColumbusState.edu/rec. For a membership form, visit http://ColumbusState.edu/rec-join. Completed forms should be submitted along with payment by check, cash or major credit card at the Student Recreation Center’s main office suite. Guests, accompanied by a member, are also welcome at a per-day rate of $8 cash.

Certification Exposes Students to Computer Science

A LaGrange High School teacher for a decade, Mike Evans might not strike the casual observer as a pioneer.

But, thanks to Columbus State, a coincidence and his initiative, Evans, ’11, has become Georgia’s first teacher with a computer science endorsement — meaning he now has special expertise to share.

“I had a large population of students not being serviced that had a big interest in computer science,” he said. “You have a lot of students who are interested in artificial intelligence, mobile computing, robotics and just basic programming.”

Until 2011, high school computing classes were taught by teachers with a business certification. That’s OK for teaching Microsoft Office, but it doesn’t serve students interested in programming.

“It’s really a nationwide problem,” said Wayne Summers, director of CSU’s TSYS School of Computer Science. “We don’t have trained teachers, so their students never really learn what computer science is all about. They miss out on the excitement of computer science.”

Thus, many enter college considering a computer science major without knowing what’s expected or the importance of establishing a strong math foundation first.

Evans graduated from Columbus State in May 2011 with a Bachelor of Science in Applied Computer Science. Near the end of his coursework, Summers told Evans he only needed a couple of education courses more to meet requirements for Georgia’s new computer science teaching endorsement. Two CSU courses during summer 2011 helped meet his new goal, and the boost in his certification also improved his salary.

In fall 2011, he got his endorsement and immediately started offering an overview programming course at LaGrange High. He’s got ideas about other, more advanced courses he may offer later.

Columbus State was able to establish the foundation for its computer science teaching endorsement and launch several other initiatives as a result of a 2009 grant for $117,369 from the National Science Foundation that partnered CSU with Georgia Tech, also a proponent of the new endorsement.

Before returning to school, Evans taught mostly drafting courses at LaGrange High on the basis of his experience as an industry draftsman at Milliken Textiles. His computing interests grew as design work, once done by hand, became computer-assisted design. He taught full-time while pursuing his bachelor’s and then the endorsement.

“I’m thoroughly enjoying teaching,” he said. “My future endeavors will probably be in that realm although I might go back to CSU for another degree in educational leadership. I like dealing with kids, which is one reason I became a teacher.”
Class Notes

1972
Layton Gordy, B.S., retired in January from Interface, Inc., after 32 years with the flooring manufacturer. He served as corporate controller for 10 years and as director of internal audit for 22 years. As director, he traveled to Interface facilities in Europe, Asia and Australia. Retiring in LaGrange, he plans on playing more tennis, enjoying West Point Lake and spending more time with grandkids.

1973
Otis O. White, B.A., recently published his book The Great Project: How a Single Civic Project Changed a City. The project he profiles was the building in 2001 of Columbus’ RiverCenter for the Performing Arts. Construction of the center, which doubles as the home of CSU’s Schwob School of Music, was the turning point in a 30-year effort to rescue Columbus’ troubled downtown, White contends. He credits the center and related developments with restoring Uptown Columbus, raising Columbus State’s profile and changing citizens’ attitudes about the city and its potential. The book looks at long-running attempts to turn around the downtown area, how the performing arts center project was conceived and built, and why it transformed downtown and the city. The interactive, multimedia book, designed for the iPad, offers lessons for leaders in other cities who want to create their own “great projects.”

1978
Judith De Santis, B.S., retired in 2011 from the federal Drug Enforcement Administration as a supervisory special agent. She is currently designing and enjoying bicycle tours around the country. She earlier retired from the U.S. Army Reserve as a lieutenant colonel in 2007.

Tom Queen, B.S., of Butler was elected the 2012 chair of the Valley Partnership Joint Development Authority Board of Directors. The organization promotes Columbus-area economic and community development.

1984
J. Stuart Mitchell, MBA, has been hired as Health First’s executive vice president and chief operating officer, based in Brevard County, Fla. Among his responsibilities, Mitchell oversees operations of the Hospital Division, which includes Health First hospitals in Viera, Cape Canaveral and Palm Bay and Holmes Regional Medical Center in Melbourne, Fla. Mitchell previously was at 9,000-employee Integris Health in Oklahoma City, the largest state-owned health care corporation in Oklahoma. His duties included serving as managing director for eight regional facilities. With 35 years in health care, Mitchell’s first job in the industry was as assistant administrator of Phenix Medical Park Hospital in Phenix City, Ala. He later became CEO of Phenix, and served in other executive roles in other systems, including CEO of Baptist Memorial Hospital-Golden Triangle in Columbus, Miss. After getting his master’s at CSU, he also achieved advanced leadership in health care certification after attending the University of Michigan Business School.

1987
Pat Braski, B.S., of Warner Robins was appointed in May to serve on the Flint Energies Board of Directors. Braski will represent Area VII, Post 1 – City of Warner Robins on the board of the member-owned electric cooperative. Braski is the owner and operator of two Chick-fil-A restaurants in Warner Robins.

1989
Maj. Gen. Jeffrey A. Smith, B.S., took the reins of the U.S. Army Cadet Command and Fort Knox, Ky., in April. Smith, who was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1983, is now the 10th commander of Cadet Command, the organization responsible for producing almost 80 percent of the Army’s officers each year. Smith has commanded Infantry units from company through brigade level during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Operation Joint Guardian in Kosovo and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Earlier, he was director of the U.S. Army Accessions Command Inactivation Task Force at Fort Knox. He will continue to oversee the task force in addition to his duties leading the U.S. Army Cadet Command and Fort Knox until its complete inactivation in September.

1991
Cpl. Gregory Porch, AASCJ, is serving as a deputy sheriff in Okaloosa County, Fla., assigned to the Youth Services Division as the North District supervisor and contracted to the Okaloosa County School District as a school resource officer. Porch is a certified instructor at the Northwest Florida State College’s Criminal Justice and Training Center police academy. He also instructs continuing education courses through the Criminal Justice Training Center as well as in-service training within the sheriff’s office. Porch is a member of the Florida Association of School Resource Officers and the American Criminal Justice Association. Earlier, he served as a deputy sheriff in Muscogee County from 1984-1993. He then moved to Okaloosa County (encompassing Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Crestview), joining the sheriff’s office there. He’s married to Bridgette Porch, and they live in Niceville, Fla.

1993
Jason Connally, BBA, has joined Columbus Bank and Trust as a vice president and private client services relationship manager. Connally joins CB&T after two years of banking and investment experience at Merrill Lynch. He also worked as a private wealth manager with SunTrust for 10 years and at First Union Bank before that.

1994
Larry V. Johnson, M.S., will have his first book, Will He Ever Learn?, released in October. He expects to complete his education specialist degree in community counseling in fall 2012 at Georgia Southern University.

1995
Jonie Ernst, MPA, is serving her first term as an Iowa state senator. Ernst serves on the Transportation, Local Government, Veteran Affairs, and Natural Resources and Environment committees, and the Administration and Regulation Budget Subcommittee. She’s also a lieutenant colonel in the Iowa Army National Guard and has recently assumed command of a logistics battalion at Camp Dodge, Iowa.

1996
Deborah Eakin, B.S., was recognized in April by Columbus State’s College of Letters and Sciences as its 2012 Alumni of the Year in Social Sciences. Eakin graduated summa cum laude from CSU in 1996 and went on to get her M.A. in 2000 and Ph.D. in 2004, both in cognitive psychology, from the University of Kansas in Lawrence. She is currently graduate coordinator.

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and associate professor of psychology at Mississippi State University, where she oversees the Memory and Metamemory Lab. Eakin’s current research interests include memory processes, cognitive aging and cognitive neuroscience. She has had articles published in many peer-reviewed publications and has presented her research nationally and internationally. Eakin has received MSU’s Academic Excellence Award seven times, in addition to other faculty honors.

1998
Tami W. McDonald, BBA, recently passed the certified financial planner exam. She’s a vice president and financial consultant for Columbus Bank and Trust Co. and Synovus Securities, Inc.

2000
Dr. Jason Harrison, B.S., was recognized in April by Columbus State’s College of Letters and Sciences as its 2012 Alumni of the Year in Sciences and Mathematics. Harrison graduated magna cum laude from CSU in 2000 and worked at the Columbus Regional Healthcare System’s Medical Center as a radiology technician while at CSU. During his senior year, he conducted research on blue crabs along the Georgia coast and received the Frank G. Brooks Award from the Tri-Beta Biological Honors Society for excellence in undergraduate research. Harrison credits his research experience at CSU with giving him the foundation and understanding of the process of science. He received his Ph.D. in 2005 from the University of South Alabama in Mobile, where he found his passion in cancer research. Focusing on children dying from brain cancer, he went on to get his M.D. in neurosurgery in 2009, and he’s now a resident physician in neurosurgery at Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center.

2001
Doraine Bennett, B.A. was recognized in April by Columbus State’s College of Letters and Sciences as its 2012 Alumni of the Year in Humanities. Bennett, a writer-editor in Columbus, has written 33 books for educators and children, and she’s editor of the Infantry Bugler, a quarterly magazine of the National Infantry Association. She is also a sales representative for Delany Educational Enterprises, visiting schools and assisting media and literacy specialists with finding books they need to help their students. Bennett has had articles for children or about writing for children published in several magazines, and her poetry has been featured in numerous publications. She has taught classes and workshops for children and adults on literature, grammar, creative writing, poetry and teaching writing. She also teaches Continuing Education courses at CSU on writing for the children’s market.

Kizzy Danser, B.S., has been promoted to the rank of major in the U.S. Army. Danser is currently stationed in Seoul.

Chip Whitfield, MPA, was promoted in June to the rank of lieutenant in the Dalton Police Department. Whitfield, a Dalton native, has served the department since July 1988. He has served in various roles, including most recently as operations sergeant of the department’s Criminal Investigations Division. He’s now CID division commander.

2003
Karen Harkins, Ed.S., was named assistant principal at Hilltop Elementary and Bonaire Elementary Schools in Houston County. Harkins resides in Kathleen, Ga.

Jason Patterson, B.S. and MPA ’04, is now the assistant director of Residential Services for American Work, Inc., in Columbus. The organization provides services to adults and children dealing with mental health issues and developmental disabilities. He’s also the middle school football and basketball coach for St. Anne Pacelli Catholic School.

Ebony Thornton, B.A. and M.Ed. ‘06, recently completed her education specialist degree in teaching and learning from Georgia Southern University. Thornton, who lives in Conyers, is a Spanish teacher in the Newton County School System.

2004
Rebecca G. Allen, B.S., has completed her Ph.D. in immunology at Ohio State University. Her doctoral project dealt with studying the effects of social stress on innate immune cell function. She now lives in Orlando.

Kimberly F. Hickman, BFA, is working as the assistant director for the Broadway play Clybourne Park, which won a Tony Award this year for best new play. Originally from Phenix City, Hickman now lives in New York City.

2005
Allison Aspinwall Richardson, B.S., has begun working at the Roosevelt Institute for Rehabilitation in Warm Springs as life adjustment supervisor over the $19.2 million vocational rehabilitation dorm that will be finished this fall. Richardson oversees five residential advisors. Previously, she worked with state Department of Human Services and the state Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities.


2006
Jodi Dunn, B.S., graduated from the police academy in March and was promoted to corporal at the Harris County Jail in Hamilton, Ga. Dunn has two sons and lives in Hamilton.

2008
Derik Roberts, B.A., was named executive director of Teen Advisors, Inc. in May after working five years as campus minister for Cougars for Christ and Rose Hill Church of Christ in Columbus. Teen Advisors uses Christian principles to promote integrity, abstinence and accountability among Columbus-area teens.

Tyrone Wells Jr., B.S., who’s working on a doctorate in biochemistry at Georgia Tech, recently received international attention for his research exploring how to convert lignin, a substance found in trees, into biodiesel. The Swedish American Green Alliance recently featured on its website a Georgia Tech video, also on YouTube, about Wells’ research.

2009
Roderick L. Cox, B.M., has been selected from an international pool of applicants to become the 2012 David Effron Conducting Fellow for Chautauqua’s Music School Festival Orchestra in Chautauqua, N.Y. Cox was to be featured in several of the orchestra’s amphitheater performances this summer as well as various other projects of the music school. Cox, who also earned a master’s in conducting from Northwestern University, was a recent finalist to become assistant conductor of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra.

Andrew Georgiou, BBA, earned the right to compete in the 141st Open Championship in Lancashire, England in July, finishing with a 74 on each of his two rounds. Now in his fourth year as a pro, Georgiou earned an invitation to the major tournament after a standout
G. Keith Nichols, MPA, was the subject of a profile in the March 21 issue of the Henry Neighbor newspaper. He was appointed police chief of Georgia’s Henry County in July 2010.

Robert Nichols, B.A. and MPA ’10, was hired by Edward Jones to open a fifth office of the financial advisement firm in Columbus. Nichols and his wife, Lorianne, B.S. ’94, reside in Columbus.

Janice Toney, B.S.Ed., is celebrating the birth of her daughter earlier this year, taking time off from her job as a First Steps teacher at The Goddard School in Tucker, Ga.

2010
Tiara N. Brown, B.S., became in May the world’s women’s boxing champion in the 125-pound class. The final competition to win the world title in her class was held in Qinhuangdao, China, about four hours from Beijing. Brown received a gold medallion in addition to the title. Defeating opponents from China, India, Russia and Poland en route to the world title, Brown becomes only the third U.S. woman boxer to ever win gold at the world championship. She also was a top contender to make the U.S. Olympic Boxing Team, but she was eliminated at the Olympic trials in February. She lives in Lehigh Acres, Fla., near Fort Myers.

Chad Ibison, B.M., was a semifinalist at the Guitar Foundation of America Convention held in Charleston, S.C., June 26-July 1. The GFA is widely recognized as the world’s most prestigious guitar competition. (The 2011 GFA convention was held at CSU’s Schwob School of Music.) Ibison, who earned a master’s in guitar performance at the University of Texas this year, lives in Columbus.

2011
Donovan Butez, B.M., was a semifinalist at the Guitar Foundation of America Convention held in Charleston, S.C. The GFA is widely recognized as the world’s most prestigious guitar competition. The 2011 GFA convention was held at CSU’s Schwob School of Music. Butez lives in Los Angeles.

Whitney Knight Shaffer, B.S., was hired as a staffing specialist for the new Columbus office of PSA Healthcare, a private-duty nursing and therapy agency. Shaffer currently lives in Phenix City.

Junior forward Ashley Miller kicks past a University of Tampa player during a 1-0 victory over the Florida school on Sept. 2 as Nikki Turnbull, left, a CSU freshman midfielder, moves in to help. CSU’s Lady Cougars will host four home games at CSU’s Walden Soccer Complex in October.

Focus on Columbus State University 22 Fall 2012
DECEMBER

1 CSU Theatre. Santa’s Christmas Tree. 10 a.m. Box office, 706-507-8444. CSU’s Riverside Theatre.

4 Schwob School of Music. CSU Choral-Orchestra Concert. 4 p.m. RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. Free.

5 Schwob School of Music. LegacyLive! Concert Series: Aspen String Trio. 7:30 p.m. RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. $20.

5 Continuing Education. Integrating Social Media in Your Organization. Learn which social media tools are right for your situation, and then integrate them into your website to develop a social media strategy for your organization. Online 16-hour course, working at your own pace through Nov. 30. $195.

8 Schwob School of Music. CSU Wind Ensemble. 7:30 p.m. RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. Free.

9-11 CSU Theatre. Amadeus. Nov. 9-10 at 7:30 p.m., Nov. 11 at 2 p.m. CSU’s Riverside Theatre. Box office, 706-507-8444.

10 Coca-Cola Space Science Center. Astronomy Night. 6 p.m. Stargazing and planet viewing at Providence Canyon State Park. Lumpkin. 6:30 p.m. Lumpkin Center.

12 Schwob School of Music. Columbus Brass. 7:30 p.m. RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. Free.

14 CSU Women’s Basketball. Shorter University. 6 p.m. Lumpkin Center.

15 Schwob School of Music. CSU Wind Orchestra. 7:30 p.m. RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. Free.

15, 17 Continuing Education. Shooting HDSLR Video. If you own a digital SLR camera capable of capturing HD video, you can capture motion as well as memories. Two sessions: 6-9 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 15 and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 17. $135.

15-17 CSU Theatre. Amadeus. 7:30 p.m. CSU’s Riverside Theatre. Box office, 706-507-8444.

16 Schwob School of Music. CSU Wind Ensemble. 7 p.m. RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. Free.

17 Oxbow Meadows. Bacterial Monitoring. This workshop will teach volunteers how to monitor e. coli levels in their streams. E. coli is an indicator organism that’s often used to assess water quality. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. 3491 Lumpkin Road. $75.

18 Schwob School of Music. Piano Studio Recital. 4 p.m. RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. Free.

18 Schwob School of Music. Guest Artist Concert: Elem Eley, voice. 7:30 p.m. RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. Free.

20 Schwob School of Music. Guitar and Voice Recital. 7:30 p.m. RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. Free.

22 Schwob School of Music. CSU Jazz-Contemporary Ensemble Concert. 7:30 p.m. RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. Free.

25 Schwob School of Music. Christmas Trombone Concert. 12:30 p.m. RiverCenter lobby. Free.

30 Columbus State University. Spring Semester Admissions Application Deadline.

The Aspen String Trio — Victoria Chiang on viola, Michael Mermagen on cello and David Perry on violin — will perform at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 5 at RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall as part of the LegacyLive! Concert Series staged by CSU’s Schwob School of Music.

1 CSU Men’s Basketball. Voorhees College. 2 p.m. Lumpkin Center.

2 Schwob School of Music. Schwob Concerto Competition. 1-5 p.m. (Final round open to public.) RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. Free.

2 Schwob School of Music. CSU Trombone Ensemble. 6 p.m. RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. Free.

3 Schwob School of Music. CSU Guitar Studio Recital. 7:30 p.m. RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. Free.

4 Schwob School of Music. Voices of the Valley Concert. 7 p.m. RiverCenter’s Legacy Hall. Free.

5 CSU Women’s Basketball. Albany State. 6 p.m. Lumpkin Center.

8 Oxbow Meadows. Chemical Monitoring. This workshop is designed to teach volunteers about basic stream waterchemistry and how to conduct tests using hand-held field equipment. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. 3491 Lumpkin Road. $75.

8 Schwob School of Music. Carver Bible. 2 p.m. Lumpkin Center.

10 Columbus State University. Graduation Ceremony. 6:30 p.m. Columbus Civic Center, 400 4th St.

12 CSU Women’s Basketball. West Georgia. 5:30 p.m. Lumpkin Center.

15 Coca-Cola Space Science Center. Astronomy Night – Holiday Special! 7 p.m. Stargazing and planet viewing at the center. 701 Front Ave.

16 CSU Basketball. Young Harris. Women, 5:30 p.m. Men, 7:30 p.m. Lumpkin Center.


24 CSU Basketball. Montevallo. Women, 5:30 p.m. Men, 7:30 p.m. Lumpkin Center.

26 CSU Basketball. Georgia Southwestern. Women, 1:30 p.m. Men, 3:30 p.m. Lumpkin Center.

31 CSU Basketball. North Georgia. Women, 5:30 p.m. Men, 7:30 p.m. Lumpkin Center.

31 CSU Theatre. Beggars in the House of Plenty. 7:30 p.m. CSU’s Riverside Theatre. Box office, 706-507-8444.

FEBRUARY


4 Coca-Cola Space Science Center. Winter Comic Book Show. Comic book vendors, costume characters, Omniphere Theatre shows, exhibits and more. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. 701 Front Ave.

7 Alumni Relations. First Thursday. Casual networking gathering of CSU alumni. 5-6:30 p.m. Location TBA. RSVP, 706-507-8957.

14 CSU Basketball. Augusta State. Women, 5:30 p.m. Men, 7:30 p.m. Lumpkin Center.

16 CSU Basketball. Georgia College. Women, 1:30 p.m. Men, 3:30 p.m. Lumpkin Center.

MARCH

2 CSU Basketball. Clayton State. Women, 1:30 p.m. Men, 3:30 p.m. Lumpkin Center.

8-10 CSU Men’s and Women’s Basketball. Peach Belt Tournament. Lumpkin Center. TBA.

4-10 Columbus State University. Spring Break. No classes.

22-24 CSU Theatre. Rent. March 22-23 at 7:30 p.m., March 24 at 2 p.m. CSU’s Riverside Theatre. Box office, 706-507-8444.

28-30 CSU Theatre. Rent. 7:30 p.m. CSU’s Riverside Theatre. Box office, 706-507-8444.

APRIL

4 Alumni Relations. First Thursday. Casual networking gathering of CSU alumni. 5-6:30 p.m. Location TBA. RSVP, 706-507-8957.

18 University Advancement. President’s Recognition Dinner. 6:30 p.m. reception, 7 p.m. dinner. Cunningham Center. $60 per person. 706-507-8956.

May

6 Columbus State University. Graduation Ceremony. 6:30 p.m. Columbus Civic Center, 400 4th St.

4 Coca-Cola Space Science Center. Comic Book Day. Workshops, presentations, panel discussions, door prizes, costume and quick draw contests. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 701 Front Ave. Free.
Parents: If this issue is addressed to a son or daughter who no longer lives at home, please send the correct address to the Alumni Office at the above address above or email us at alumni@ColumbusState.edu. Thank you.