“When I grow up, I want to be a teacher.”
about the cover...

Editor’s Note: Throughout my life, I have been blessed with a number of remarkable teachers — starting with my mom. Anything I learned later from Martin Luther King Jr. or Gandi or Gloria Steinem or Malcolm X or Mr. Rogers, I first learned from her.

Along the way, in the classroom and on the playing field, I had excellent teachers and coaches who made substantial, positive impacts on my life. One among them, Dr. R. Sterling Hennis, was my favorite. His creativity, wit, sense of wonder, and support seemed boundless. He was my methods teacher before student teaching. He encouraged me to come back for my master’s and doctorate. He chaired my doctoral committee. He was a lifelong mentor and a valued friend.

He passed away a little over a year ago.

In Spring 2018, as I began planning this year’s Teaching Matters, I thought about Dr. Hennis and his continuing, powerful influence on me, and I considered asking certain faculty members to write about the teachers who inspired them to become teachers. That would make a good article, I thought, remembering how early in my life, around age five or six, I began developing a reverence for certain teachers. That sense of admiration and esteem would intensify over the years. And I recalled the oft-asked question children and teens hear throughout life: What do you want to be when you grow up?

Those musings led to this one: How about dressing up a little kid, perhaps a first grader, to look like a teacher? I pictured it in my mind. Yeah, that would make a cool cover.

Special thanks to Ms. Kathy Livengood, principal of Brier Creek Elementary School, for liking the idea and securing the models. Special thanks to former SOE student Christina Gordon, now a fantastic teacher at Brier Creek, who vouched for me to her boss.

Oh ... and thanks to my trusted assistant, Kendy Madden, who dug deep into her wardrobe to supply the glittery-sparkly duds for the back-cover photo shoot.
Great teachers impact our lives. Oftentimes, we reminisce about the people who have touched our lives in special ways. We think about someone who profoundly influenced our life — perhaps a first-grade teacher, a fourth-grade music teacher, a junior high cheerleader coach, a high school guidance counselor, or even a university professor.

Is there just one person who comes to mind? No, not for me. I say “thank you” to all of my teachers — my elementary, junior high, high school and college educators. All of them have helped shape my life, and all have had a positive influence on me.

I come from a family of educators, so teaching is in my blood. I always knew I would be a teacher, but what helped me cement my decision to be an educator was the caring and compassion extended to me by my teachers. Watching my teachers go above and beyond the call of duty in the classroom, hearing them express a belief in me, trusting in their encouragement to just be me — these experiences made my road easier to navigate. Great teachers lead by example. Great teachers learn by doing. Great teachers are attentive listeners. Great teachers make learning fun. I had some great teachers, and I appreciate each and every one of them.

Teachers have a significant, lifelong impact on their students. My self-esteem was nurtured through the sensitivity, respect and caring of teachers. My teachers were among the charismatic adults who not only touched my mind but also my spirit. I was blessed to meet the right teachers and mentors at the right time.

Their influence was a rare privilege that I prize, and as an educator, I have learned to nurture, motivate and energize others.

A few years ago, there was a popular bumper sticker that said:

If you can read this, thank a teacher.

Clever? Sure. But beyond that, there is a simple, deep-rooted truth. So many of the “little” things that help us grow and develop and blossom are linked to the teachers in our lives. In this issue we feature several faculty members writing about the teachers who inspired them. I hope their stories inspire you to reflect upon the teachers in your life.

Dr. Audrey W. Beard, dean of the School of Education, sits next to author/researcher Dr. John B. Diamond, keynote speaker for the fourth annual Let’s Talk Racism Conference. Please see the related story on page 18.
welcome back
A former counseling graduate student / public school counselor / and college professor returns to teach in the SOE

Editor’s Note: In Summer 2013, Teaching Matters featured a profile on Taheera Nadiyah Blount, a recent graduate of the NCCU Counselor Education Program, who was working as a school counselor at Riverside High School in Durham. In the following years, her career path would take her to N.C. State University, then on to Cincinnati, Ohio, eventually back to North Carolina, and, more importantly, back to the NCCU Counselor Education Program — this time as a faculty member.

While education students have a variety of reasons for wanting to become teachers, administrators or counselors, research shows that the number one reason is “wanting to help students learn.” As a school counselor in 2013, Taheera Blount said she believed “all children have the ability to learn despite obstacles that might be presented to them.” She wanted her students to believe “they can be champions.”

While these goals are typical of many educators, Blount came to this belief system from a set of circumstances different than most. In the early years of her life, as a 5-year-old who often “felt out of place,” her life and the lives of her two slightly older brothers were thrown into chaos after her father’s death, when her mother — overcome by grief — descended into drugs, alcohol and depression. As Blount wrote in “The Power of Imagination,” a chapter from Inspiring Student Writers: “At a very young age … I had to imagine the life I wanted live. The power of my imagination brought forth reality.”

Blount’s family would regain its stability, and she would embark on an educational journey that would take her to Barton College and, eventually, graduate school at NCCU.

After completing her master’s in school counseling at NCCU in the spring of 2008, Blount worked at Chewning Middle School as a school counselor. She then moved to Riverside High School, where she stayed for four years as a school counselor, while working on her doctorate at N.C. State University.

As a counselor, Blount was an immediate success. While many educators have the ability to be liked and respected, not everyone is genuinely loved by students, parents, colleagues, staff and administrators. This is how she was described in the 2013 article:

Taheera Blount’s smile is her not-so-secret weapon. It is the real deal — a smile that says she cares, that she understands, that she can help you find a solution. It is not the pasted-on mask of
an actress or politician. Blount is the real deal — a counselor who wants to help everybody: students, parents, administrators … everybody. When she talks about “encouraging and empowering every child,” she is a woman whose actions speak louder than her words. She is the counselor whose former students never actually say goodbye. They return to see her, to let her know how they’re doing, to share their successes, and to say thank you.

Blount’s success came through her ability to work with all parties — teachers, parents and students. She was a calming presence. Beyond that, she was a relentless seeker of successful solutions, a positive-energy dynamo. She stated her motivation simply: “I enjoy helping students live up to their potential.”

She began her days early and ended them late. Despite the physical, mental and emotional drain of being a school counselor, for five days out of the week, she worked as a mental health note auditor for a non-profit private agency. Additionally, she started working part-time towards her doctorate in counselor education at NCSU. “NCCU helped me become an effective counselor,” she explained. “Now I’m adding on to my skills as a practitioner by becoming a researcher.”

As a practicum intern student, she began co-teaching a group-counseling course with her advisor, Dr. Edwin Gerler. Blount admired her mentor — his wonderful sense of structure and detail, his clear expectations and assignments, as well as his great class control. “I learned excellent management skills from him,” she said. “I learned about establishing a sense of community in the classroom.”

She envisioned herself as a university professor, mentoring and training the next generation of counselor educators. She wanted to conduct research and publish findings about dropout prevention. In Fall 2012, she took a big step; her article, “Dropout Prevention Strategies for School Counselors,” was published by the Journal of School Counseling.

That article outlined her approach for dealing with students in trouble. The first thing she does is provide options. She and the student work together. They acknowledge the problems. Honest and compassionate, Blount gives out practical advice, then backs it up with constant attention and concern. She forms a connection and then, she notes, “I stay on them.”

If a parent is the source of a student’s anxiety, Blount enlists the student in creating a solution. “So often a student gets overwhelmed when a parent struggles,” said Blount. “There is no parental support, no encouragement. Now the student has no idea how to cope. At that point it’s easy to just give up.”

Blount is no enabler. One by one, she takes away the excuses. No support? Blount becomes the source of support, taking on that parental role. Blount collaborates with the student on new courses of action. She is energized by her students’ successes, and her energy is contagious. “My life as an educator is filled with proud moments,” she remarked.

“I enjoy helping students live up to their potential.”

One of her singular strategies is finding out students’ goals and dreams. “If they tell me doctor, lawyer, artist, I tell them: ‘That’s what you’re going to be,’” she said. “And every time I see them I say: ‘Okay, doctor … Okay, businessman … Okay, businesswoman … that’s what you’re going to be.’”

Blount lives by setting goals, and she encourages her students to do the same. “I explain how this process works for me,” she said. She set ambitious goals as a graduate student, and, in 2011, she presented at the N.C. School Counselors Association and received the North Carolina Licensed Professional Counselors Association Nancy Howell Scholarship.

In April 2013, Blount was awarded a fellowship for the highly competitive Preparing for the Professoriate (PTP) at NCSU. “In order to complete this program and fulfill the requirements of my doctoral studies, I made the decision to resign from my job as a school counselor with Durham Public Schools,” she said. “I had the opportunity to serve as a PTP fellow and graduate teaching assistant for Africana Studies with Dr. Craig Brookins. I co-taught African Civilizations and Psychology of the African-American Experience. My responsibilities involved grading tests, quizzes, response papers and final exams. I learned the valuable skill of infusing your passion as an instructor into the classroom and the powerful force of mentorship.”

In August 2014, Blount served as the graduate teaching assistant for the Wake STEM Early College High School. She was charged with designing and implementing programs to assist students with understanding the resources that were available to them at NCSU. In addition, she co-taught several classes every semester and counseled 11th and 12th graders who had academic and/or social problems. “The program was successful, and at the 2016 North Carolina School
Counselors Conference, I presented an overview for other high school counselors on how to implement this program at their schools.”

With two part-time jobs and her doctoral studies, Blount realized that maintaining her living expenses necessitated a third part-time job, so she served as a licensed professional counselor — providing in-home individual and family counseling services to children, adolescents and their families. “I thoroughly enjoyed working in the community, especially reaching out to underserved populations,” she said. “I developed therapeutic relationships with families and assisted them with collaborating with schools and other community agencies.”

In 2015, Blount was awarded a fellowship from the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) Minority Fellowship Program. “This generous monetary award helped me complete my doctoral studies and furthered my research related to substance use addiction,” she explained. “I extended my research on how African-American women use spirituality and religion to assist them with refraining from substance use. Without the support of this program, I would not have had the opportunity to complete my doctoral studies. As an NBCC Fellow, I had the opportunity to give back to the community by conducting seminars to share with young adults on the importance of refraining from substance use. I also had the opportunity to attend conferences to expand my knowledge on substance use within the community.”

Prior to defending her dissertation in March 2017, Blount was recruited for her first tenure-track position at the University of Cincinnati (UC). She began work at UC in fall 2017, teaching School Counseling Internship, School Counseling Leadership, and Comprehensive Program Implementation. She also served as the field service coordinator for the School Counseling Program. “I conducted site visits to ensure that student internship placements were successful,” she said. “I traveled throughout Cincinnati and suburban school districts and had the opportunity to develop collaborative partnerships with Cincinnati Public Schools and neighboring school districts. I enjoyed teaching the next generation of school counselors.”

At UC, Blount learned the valuable skill of having a sustained scholarly research agenda. “My UC mentors taught me to have a broad perspective, to consider the present but to think about the future. You’re working on an article now, but how might that impact your next article?” she explained. “They had me develop a timetable.”

Most importantly, they pushed Blount to develop a writing schedule. “They told me to find 30 minutes a day to devote to writing research. ‘Turn everything else off,’ they said. ‘Focus on writing,’” she said.

And she did. “I remain excited and driven to continue the research pipeline I have started,” she remarked. Currently, having been recruited by the NCCU Counseling Program, Blount is glad to say she’s back home. “After living in a city with very cold winters, iron-gray clouds, a scarcity of sunlight, and constant rain, I am so appreciative of North Carolina’s beauty,” Blount said. In addition to the natural grandeur of NC, Blount is happy to be surrounded by people from diverse cultural backgrounds. “It is so inspiring to witness individuals from various ethnic groups living among one another,” she said. “Yes, we have our issues in America, but to witness how so many individuals here in Durham and the Triangle are able to mesh and treat each other as individuals … it is stunning.”

2013: Blount, a school counselor at Riverside High School, works with two students on getting admitted to college. “NCCU helped me become an effective counselor,” she said.
The start of this article alluded to Blount’s difficult childhood. As she said in the 2013 interview, “I don’t share my life experiences with everyone, but as a counselor sometimes I do ... That can make a big difference.”

In her previously noted chapter, “The Power of Imagination,” Blount recalls her difficulty as a 5-year-old seeing her mother, “a full-time worker and functional parent involved in her children’s learning, deteriorate into an 85-pound, nonfunctional parent who didn’t care about her appearance and family.” As her mother’s disease escalated, Blount and her brothers were sent to their grandmother. As a small child, Blount remembers feeling “very angry with my mother for leaving me.”

After a year, the family was reunited. The mother was living with a man. Immediately, the young Taheera “knew deep down that the man had an ugly side,” and soon her premonition came true. It was evident that her mother was drinking again. The man kept her mother isolated in a bedroom and refused to allow the children to spend time with her:

Things escalated. Every night my mother would get drunk, fuss, and fight. The police came to our apartment at least two-to-three times per week. As a child, I just wanted my life to get better. I got tired of seeing vodka bottles, Bacardi Rum, cigarettes, and beer in an apartment full of alcoholic adults. I also became tired of [the man] screaming, hitting, and threatening my mother.

Things continued to escalate. “I would come back from playing, only to see my mother’s arm and leg swollen, covered with circles,” she wrote. The man was now injecting her mother with heroin.

There were numerous incidents of verbal abuse. The little, introverted girl began to hate the man and started to become defiant. The man held his tongue when her brothers were around, but when they were gone, he would berate her. “I started sleeping with a knife under my bed,” she wrote.

All of this led to a particular night in 1987:

On [this] night [the man] and my mother had gotten into an argument in Harlem. As usual, my mother was drunk. My brothers were staying with my grandmother because they were tired of [the man], but I had to stay behind. I don’t remember what the fight was about, but [the man] hit my mother outside of my aunt’s apartment complex and when he hit my mother, I immediately picked up a trashcan and hit him, causing him to fall on the concrete. “YOU WILL NEVER TOUCH MY MOTHER AGAIN!” I screamed.

I ran into the apartment and made my aunt call 911. That was the last time I ever saw [the man]. At the tender age of seven, I had learned how to protect myself.

After that, in January 1988, the story turns around, as the family moves to North Carolina:

I am proud to say that my mother has been free from the lifestyle of addiction for 19 years. As a family, we found refuge in the church. My mother went back to college and graduated with her associate’s degree in criminal justice. We attended family therapy to work through the issues of neglect, abandonment, and grief, and we were able to mend the broken pieces. My family is doing extremely well.

As she ended her chapter, Blount wrote about her expected career:

As a future school counselor, I know that I possess the awareness, understanding, and empathy to help children ... Shaped by my past experiences, I will be a beacon of light and hope to encourage students that they can succeed through any challenge.

Shortly after writing the piece in 2008, Blount graduated and earned her school counseling license. That was 11 years ago. Now, back at NCCU in the SOE, Taheera Blount continues to mentor and train the next generation of counselor educators.
Editor's Note: Last year, *Teaching Matters* featured Dr. Robert Horne’s 10,000-mile motorcycle trek around the United States to raise awareness about mental health and addiction. This year, in further exploring this aspect of his career, we focus on his work as a faculty member in the School of Education’s Counselor Education Program and his role as coordinator of the Addiction Studies Certificate Program.

**The Problem**
The statistics on mental health and addiction are frightening. When Dr. Robert Horne recites them, each one registers with a decisive impact:

- 42.5 million adults and over 17 million children in America experience mental health and addiction disorders.
- In North Carolina, over a million people suffer from a substance use and/or process addiction, like gambling or sex addiction.
- In North Carolina, drugs like marijuana, cocaine and crystal meth are major substance use concerns.
- In North Carolina, four cities — Wilmington, Hickory, Jacksonville and Fayetteville — rank in the nation’s top 25 for worst opioid abuse.
- North Carolina has seen an increase in substance use overdose-related deaths — from 363 in 1999 to close to 2,000 in 2016.

“It’s staggering to think, but in America approximately 40 percent of people with addiction concerns do not receive any type of treatment,” Horne said. “This is largely because citizens lack health insurance and/or can’t afford treatment; their health insurance doesn’t cover mental health and/or addiction treatment; they don’t know where to go for treatment; and they lack transportation to treatment services.”

Horne is sensitive to the plight of members of minority and underserved populations — such as people of color, members of LGBTQIA communities, and people living in rural communities. “They cite three reasons for not participating in mental health and addiction counseling,” he noted. “First, the negative social stigmas associated with mental health and addiction counseling create barriers in many communities. This is
related to people’s misperception of any type of mental illness as being ‘crazy’ or losing one’s mind. Second, the lack of diversity among addiction counseling professionals serves as another barrier for many people of color seeking professional help. Third, there is a lack of available addiction counseling professionals.”

Currently, only a small percentage of people have the credentials to become licensed addiction counseling professionals, and a significantly smaller number of people of color possess those credentials. Thus, there is an extreme national and international shortage of addiction counselors. Those individuals who possess addiction counseling licenses typically migrate to large cities or suburban areas that offer a greater earning potential.

“This is where our Addiction Studies Certificate Program (ASCP) at NCCU comes in,” Horne said. “We address these shortfalls and concerns by providing quality training through an accredited, graduate-level addiction studies program that prepares students for licensure.”

How the ASCP Started
In 2013, before Horne started working at NCCU, he was having a conversation with Dr. Kyla M. Kurian, who was a faculty member in the NCCU Counselor Education Program. As counselors, they were alarmed by the increase in addiction concerns being reported among mental health and addiction counseling professionals. They were also noticing an increasing number of clients with opioid-related concerns, overdoses and deaths.

In 2015, Horne was hired by the NCCU Counselor Education Program to develop an accredited addiction studies program, now known as ASCP. Together with Kurian, the program’s structure, format and course syllabi were developed.

In the summer of 2015, the first ASCP courses were taught to a small number of students. Horne and Kurian also set their sights on obtaining the North Carolina Substance Abuse Professional Practice Board’s (NCSAPPB) Criteria C Substance Abuse School accreditation, which represents the gold standard in addiction counselor training. “Through diligence, sacrifice, hard work and the support of the Counselor Education Program faculty, we were able to complete the accreditation process in less than nine months, a task that typically takes 18 to 24 months,” Horne said.

On February 4, 2016, the Counselor Education Program received a one-year accreditation as a Criteria C Substance Abuse School by the NCSAPPB.

In 2017, the ASCP was re-accredited for three years, the longest period for which a Criteria C Substance Abuse School can be accredited.

The Mission
For individuals interested in addiction studies or becoming a licensed addiction professional, the ASCP offers cross-cultural exposure to the field of addiction; addiction-specific training and experiences that meet the substance abuse-specific requirements for licensure as a clinical addiction specialist; and a distance-learning opportunity that develops skills for a variety of professional employment opportunities.

The program is divided into two sections: Criteria C and Criteria A. Each program consists of 180 substance-abuse specific hours, or 12 semester hours, divided into four courses: Introduction to Substance Abuse; Traditional and Contemporary Issues in Addiction; Prevention, Treatment, & Intervention of Alcohol, Drug & Behavioral Addictions; and Alcohol, Drug & Behavioral Addictions: Family & Crisis Intervention.

These courses include, but are not limited to, work related to HIV/AIDS/BB (bloodborne pathogens)/STD; ethics; clinical supervision; pharmacology; nicotine dependence; substance use among veterans, women and the elderly; and evidence-based treatments.
Students in the criteria C section are also required to complete a 300-hour supervised internship in an addiction setting.

Now and In the Future
“The ASCP is leading the way in preparing future addiction counselors,” Horne said. “In its three-year existence, the program has garnered state and national attention. Twenty-two students in the ASCP have been awarded both NBCC and SAMHSA fellowships totaling over $240,000. Additionally, five ASCP students have been awarded addiction scholarships ranging from $4,000-$5,000 from the North Carolina Governor’s Institute totaling over $20,000.”

ASCP students have attended and presented at local, national and international conferences and symposia. Notably, several students have presented with Horne at the American Counseling Association’s conference in Montreal, QC, CA, and at the NBCC’s national symposia from 2016-2018. “These student successes have increased interest and enrollment in the ASCP,” Horne explained. “Currently, over 90 students are enrolled in the program.”

While the ASCP has had tremendous success, Horne notes “the program is still in its infancy.” Licensed addiction counseling professionals have an option of becoming international certified advanced alcohol and drug counselors, which certifies licensed addiction counselors to practice in 47 states and several countries, including China.

As the ASCP continues to grow, Horne and Kurian intend to extend the reach of the program to provide addiction counselor training to underserved populations domestically and abroad.

Big Plans
Horne identified three future goals for the ASCP. The first involves expanding the faculty, allowing the ASCP “to open its doors to non-NCCU students seeking addiction credentialing and/or training.”

Second, he wants to create a study abroad program that “facilitates addiction training and treatment modalities between students, faculty and addiction professionals.”

Third, Horne’s “ultimate desire is to develop the ASCP into an international addiction institute that would be able to obtain national and international grants in order to conduct culturally appropriate research.”

Currently, few universities and no HBCUs are performing these tasks. But Horne is optimistic. “With the current strength of the ASCP and the international connections already present within the NCCU School of Education, we are optimally positioned to achieve this goal as we move into the future. It’s just a matter of time,” he said, smiling.

"I want to be a teacher."

SOE educators talk about the teachers who inspired them to become teachers

When you are young, there are LOTS of career possibilities: superhero, Hollywood star, world-class athlete, firefighter, guitar shredder, brilliant detective, astronaut, platinum-selling recording artist, et cetera.

And there’s teacher.

Teacher?! It’s not a glamorous job. Far from it. Lots of people characterize it as stressful. Others describe it as extremely stressful. Some demean it as “glorified babysitting.” Some parents try to dissuade their children from considering the pursuit. “Do you have any idea what teachers are paid?” they ask rhetorically. “Do you understand what the job demands are?” Others offer this standard warning: “Those who can, do. Those who can’t, teach.” Others add this phrase: “And those who can’t teach, teach people who want to be teachers.” (Ouch!)

And yet … year after year, decade after decade, millions of people — young and old — all over the world decide to become teachers. Sometimes the verdict comes limping in around late sophomore year of college: “Gee, I’ve got to major in something. Hmmmm. If I teach, at least I’ll get the summer off.”

For many, however, the drive to become a teacher is based on inspiration, a motivation that comes from teachers whose brilliance, impact, connection, personality, and/or joie de vivre make teaching a glamorous, uplifting, exhilarating job. And often, it’s not a job as much as it is a calling.

In this article, several SOE teachers talk about the key people who inspired them to become a teacher.

Dr. Jamila Minga
Assistant Professor
Communication Disorders Program
Speech-Language Pathologist

“I failed the exam and this isn’t the type of student that I am. Can you help me learn this material?”

Those were my words, uttered pretty matter-of-factly, as I stood before Dr. Chip Gerfen’s desk. There was no intimidation from this 5’9” European-American male. He was a bright, engaging teacher, non-threatening, who routinely dressed in cuffed denim pants and button-down shirts. A sophomore, I had failed my first undergraduate exam in his Introduction to Linguistics course. I needed to do well in this course and my other courses, because my plan, at the time, was to attend medical school with my twin sister and start a private practice serving women and children. Little did I know that this interaction with Dr. Gerfen, who insisted that I call him Chip, would change my trajectory of academic and career pursuits.

Chip agreed to work with me. I took his offer seriously. I read the textbook. I studied. I went to his office hours frequently. We would discuss concepts. I mastered the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet). He helped me transcribe language samples. On my own, I began transcribing longer passages. I’d practice with televised news shows.

As the semester continued and I talked more and more about linguistics with Chip, I started to study ideas and concepts beyond the scope of his course. When I’d bring up new ideas and use more professional vocabulary, I could tell from his facial expressions he was pleased and impressed. I could see he was thinking: You get this or You’re a natural. He was constantly motivating me nonverbally.

Something interesting was happening. While I was still driven to make a good grade, I was also developing a fascination with phonetics. I was enthralled with the way speech worked — the interaction between...
coordination of the lips, the tongue, and the hard structures of the mouth. Eventually, I passed the class with a good grade. More importantly, I fell in love with linguistics. This was unexpected and, obviously, rewarding.

One day in Chip’s office, at the end of the semester, he said, “Have you considered switching your major to linguistics? Everyone who wants to enter medicine majors in biology. Don’t be afraid to set yourself apart. You’ll be different than all of the other applicants to medical school.”

Under Chip’s guidance, I changed my major. Through many interactions and course offerings, my love for linguistics and research was ignited. I began to engage in small-scale, sociolinguistic research projects. I spent hours in the phonetics lab with Chip learning to read spectrograms and analyzing written transcripts and audio-recordings of language samples. Around this time, Chip suggested that I consider speech-language pathology. “This is a career that combines your interests of biology and linguistics,” he said. Shortly after that, the two of us co-founded a linguistics club for undergraduates that is still active today.

I don’t remember exactly when I realized it, but it was clear that Chip saw something in me that I didn’t. He had helped me dare to be different; he had inspired me to explore the unexplored; and he had encouraged me to ask questions.

His impact would continue during my graduate years, and three years after I completed my undergraduate degree, he served on my dissertation committee where my research explored a linguistically-based area of right hemisphere brain damage that is under-researched. I was, again, exploring the unexplored.


Chip was a great teacher whose demonstrations and explanations were life-changing and inspiring.

Today, as a junior faculty member, I strive to provide my students with the mentoring and pedagogic style that Chip demonstrated during my undergraduate studies. In my teaching, I, too, encourage students to dare to be different. I challenge them to think critically about what exists in the literature to determine if it is truly applicable to their clients, to consider ways in which improvements can be made, and to reflect on how they might do something to contribute to improvements. This is the hallmark of true and lifelong learning.
Throughout my K-12 experience, I never had an African-American male teacher. During that period, it did not seem important to me that the majority of my teachers were female and predominately Caucasian.

After graduating from high school, I wasn’t sure what to do with my life. As I tried to find a sense of direction, I enrolled in an African-American history class at Prince George’s Community College (PGCC) in Maryland. That decision would change my life.

The teacher was Dr. M. Sammye Miller. Although he was on the faculty at Bowie State University, he was also teaching a course at PGCC. He stood 6’2” with a thin body frame. He was well-spoken, personable, and conveyed a high level of confidence. It took me little time to recognize his powerful impact on me. While I’ve had many fine teachers throughout my life, Dr. Miller was the most influential, most inspiring teacher I ever had.

As a non-traditional student and first-generation college attendee, I’d had few examples in my life of scholarly pursuit and higher education. Miller’s course changed my perspective of America, while igniting my desire for knowledge of African-American history. Through his course and his example as a knowledgeable, caring teacher, I began to examine my role as a young African-American male and how I fit into American society. Growing up, the history that I was exposed to, for the most part, was often reiterated stories of slavery and the struggle of the Civil Rights Movement. I remember viewing Alex Haley’s “Roots” on television and watching documentaries during Black History Month of African-Americans being beaten by police, sprayed with fire hoses, and bitten by police dogs. While these historical events were important, I only received a small sample and, therefore, a fleeting, limited awareness of the great contributions of African-Americans to our nation.

Dr. Miller worked without notes. I recall his clear voice directing the class to examine and discuss various chapters in our textbook *From Slavery to Freedom* (1988), which was written by two renowned African-American scholars, Alfred A. Moss Jr. and John Hope Franklin. Dr. Miller’s ability to capture the attention of the classroom was unmatched by any of my college professors. Of all my classes, his was the one I was excited to attend. He introduced me to the work and wisdom of people like Carter G. Woodson, James Baldwin, and W.E.B. Du Bois. During one class, when he discussed the classic question of whether Du Bois or Booker T. Washington better advanced the lives of African-Americans, I sat there riveted, with my mind and heart completely engaged.

At each class, his students would feverishly jot down notes, as he described the details of a topic. I realized my note-taking was not where it needed to be, and I had to obtain this important commodity if I were going to successfully complete his major project. He provided so much information that it was hard to keep up. His depth of knowledge was amazing, and his ability to articulate facts regarding significant events seemed poetic. He described African-American history as that of a resilient people whose origin began long before slavery. Our history as African descendants included that of the North African Moors who conquered Spain, the Zulu tribe that ruled the southern region of Africa, and the Ethiopians who were considered one of the oldest civilizations in history.

Not only did this experience give me an introduction to the rigor of research, it inspired me to enroll full-time at Bowie State where Dr. Miller taught. I would stop by his office often to discuss African-American history. As my passion for knowledge grew, I entered a master’s program at Johns Hopkins University and a doctoral program at the University of Texas at Austin.
In 1990, I arrived back to Westtown School in the fall for my 11th-grade year with a determination to meet the challenge of my peers. The previous year, I had started attending the private boarding school after a life of public education just outside of East St. Louis, Illinois. I was unprepared for the world I was thrust into, and even the math classes I had always taken refuge in were a struggle. Classmates always got answers faster than me, and at times I just couldn't keep up. I wasn't sure I belonged.

For the next two years, my math classes would become a safe haven, where my missteps were okay and the classmates would become something akin to the class from the 1970s sitcom “Welcome Back Kotter” — a happy band of misfits, all equally brilliant and equally unique. Teacher Rob Upton created this space. At Quaker schools, a teacher has the title of “teacher” and we address people by first name. So, Teacher Rob carries both the familiarity inherent in a caring relationship and the respect of mentorship and station.

Teacher Rob was the athletics director for the 400 students in the Upper School (high school). He coached soccer, wrestling and track, and I had the pleasure of his coaching in both soccer and wrestling as a new athlete in both sports. The most important trait of Teacher Rob was his experience as a coach. It enriched everything he did. As a coach he was familiar with the process of pushing young people to dig deeper, try harder and recover from missteps. He could acknowledge a star pupil in class and also nurture a person struggling without creating feelings of inadequacy. He could joke with the most brilliant and charismatic members of the class, and he could convey the unspoken message of “give someone else a time to shine.”
Humor and practical jokes were also a common element of our class. On a few occasions the students would work in TV references. Instead of Teacher Rob, we’d borrow Bob from Bob Barker of “The Price Is Right,” and we’d also work in “Jeopardy.” Students would say: “I’ll take question number seven for 500, Teacher Bob.” At times, Teacher Rob — his aim honed from years as an athletic director and coach — would lob erasers at dozing students, waking them up in a cloud of multicolored chalk dust. One time the students struck back, balancing six erasers on top of a cracked door, waiting for Teacher Rob to open it to enter class.

I would have likely not chosen to be a math major or math teacher without his example. The mid-term reports were often a time for a sobering conversation and realistic planning. My desire to repay these investments saw me up at 9 a.m. on Saturdays, calculus book in hand, reading in the empty halls or classrooms while my classmates slept in. I never got the best grade, but I learned to appreciate the challenge and seek out the rigor. Those inspired choices from a committed teacher paved the way for my passion in math education for students with visual impairments.

Beyond this rigor and focus, Teacher Rob endeared himself to us with stories of challenge and triumph from his own life. We enjoyed the cat-and-mouse game of getting him off track for at least half a class period, but truthfully it was because his stories gave us insight on how to live. One story etched in my mind is of his summer work. It was likely embellished with the passing of time, but when he was in college, he drove a truck to earn tuition money. Truck driving may sound perfectly reasonable. However, in the Teacher Rob versions, his trucks were carrying explosives for clearing mountain passes — adding a distinct edge and daring. Danger and prestige aside, this man did the work necessary to ensure his path for his future. Three years later, I would set down my whistle as a lifeguard and aquatics coach/director to earn more money cleaning houses in Ocean City, New Jersey. The work lacked prestige and was more grueling, but those days of cleaning and nights of delivering food were made easier by my thoughts of the footsteps I followed.

I’ve taught professionally since 1996 in one way or another. I started coaching swim teams in 1994. My father was a coach and a hard worker on sometimes less desirable tasks. On reflection, Teacher Rob filled a role of a father figure in those important years in high school. He was someone I’ve come to describe as the mentor surrogate, which is a critical role for a youth exploring the beginnings of adulthood. At that time in our life, we need an example besides our parents to either contrast or reinforce, sometimes both, what we have known.

In traditions now abandoned, young apprentices got this mentorship, but increasingly it is seen in higher education. In that way, Teacher Rob has equipped me well for the roles needed to teach my students. I see teaching as a profession where we refine a craft. Our subjects or specialties are all in service to the opportunities we open to our students. At the same time, we need to convey the rewards of hard work and nurturing spirits. This happens on teams and in classrooms. For my part, this is the legacy from Teacher Rob I work to preserve.

Dr. Yolanda Dunston
Associate Professor
Curriculum and Instruction Department
Elementary Education

An article making the rounds of social media claims that Black children who have exposure to at least one Black teacher are more likely to graduate from high school and go to college. I am confident I would have been on the path to college either way, because my parents were serious about education, but I do acknowledge the impact my teachers, particularly my Black teachers, have had on my life.

When I was asked to write about my favorite inspiring teacher, I was quickly able to whittle the list down to two memorable women: Mrs. Lillian Cannon and Ms. Alycia Allen. Both were strong, effective educators, and both were African-American. Mrs. Cannon was my kindergarten teacher — a no-nonsense, old-school teacher of whom I was honestly a little afraid, at first. My time with her, I believe, was the year I learned to read, and Mrs. Cannon always made a big deal out of my reading skill. In fact, when other teachers would visit our classroom, she would pull her Avon catalog from her purse and tell me to read from it.

I must confess that my memory is a bit fuzzy here. I don’t fully recall how advanced a reader I was at age five. My mom and dad had always made my home a language-rich environment, and I was an early, precocious conversationalist. My mother was — and still is — a master storyteller, so I was exposed aurally to all the basic writing elements and internalized an understanding of syntax and imagery. Therefore, I don’t think
Mrs. Cannon was the driving force behind my learning to read. However, what I do know is that she made me believe that reading was good and important, and that being smart was something to be proud of. So I gladly and expressively read from the catalog for her, showing off for the guests. I loved every minute of it.

As significant as my memory of Mrs. Cannon is, Ms. Allen had an even greater impact. In third grade, I took part in a creative movement camp she led. I fell in love with Ms. Allen right away, because she was my older sister’s dance teacher at the junior high school and, of course, I wanted everything my sister had. But I was also enamored of her gentle spirit and firm instruction. She moved so smoothly across the room with her “baby doll” Mary Janes and flowing skirts. I wanted to be like her, and I craved being in her presence. In junior high and high school, she became my art and dance teacher, as well as my cheerleading coach.

Of all of the teachers I have encountered, Ms. Allen was the most memorable because of the way she built rapport with her students. She cared about us as learners, artists, and human beings. She celebrated with us when we learned to drive and got our first cars, and helped us through our first crushes and heartbreaks. She let us choose the music we listened to in art class. She found the good in us, and she called us on our foolishness when necessary. She knew our families and cared about us as if we were her own family.

Even after we graduated from high school, Ms. Allen was still a part of our lives as we grew into mature adults, got married, and had children. When she passed away unexpectedly, a memorial service was held at the high school. As I looked around at the hundreds and hundreds of attendees, I realized how many in the community held her in the same regard as I did. The outpouring of love and the sharing of memories was extraordinary.

The Cannon-Allen impact on me as a young Black girl in the 1970s was significant. In their own ways, they taught me what it meant to be smart and confident, to be compassionate to others around me, and to stand tall in my own skin. However, they were not the only Black educators to have an influence on me, and I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge several others:

Mrs. Carolyn Perry, my second- and third-grade teacher, expected nothing but my best — and then some — and encouraged me to aim high with my reading and math goals.

My sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. Dorothy Carey, like Ms. Allen made a point of knowing me and encouraging me to excel both in and out of the classroom. Thirty years later, Mrs. Carey and I would become co-workers in the School of Education. Currently, she serves as my department chair — Dr. Dorothy Singleton.

Mrs. Hazel Gibbs, my elementary school guidance counselor, took me to The World’s Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee, and bought me my first taste of Häagen-Dazs ice cream. I still see Mrs. Gibbs around town, and she hugs me like I am 10 years old all over again.

Mrs. Burney, my seventh-grade language arts teacher, cultivated my love of writing.

Mr. Earl Boone was a high-school teacher who brought a dry wit to a course in U.S. government which I really appreciated.

And I cannot leave out Mrs. Dee Dolby, my high school guidance counselor, who encouraged me to apply for the North Carolina Teaching Fellows scholarship and pursue a career in education.

It is true that one small moment can change a life. My life in education has been populated with teachers who generously shared moments — small, medium and large — with me. Their influence lives on. As a teacher, I am inspired to make a similar impact on my students.
The 2018 issue of *Teaching Matters* introduced readers to the photographic artistry of Dr. William Wiener. After receiving an enthusiastic response, we are offering new photographs with descriptions by Dr. Wiener.
I’ve spent time in North Carolina near the Pungo Lake area. After a long day of photographing, I was about to put my camera away as the sun was going down. All of a sudden, these two Sandhill Cranes flew by with their wings in coordinated down-stroke, and I was able to capture their flight.

The Southeast region of the country is an area where birds are plentiful. During the winter holiday break, I took time to travel to photograph them. I mostly enjoy shooting larger birds, such as herons and egrets. On this particular trip I went to several locations, including the Tampa area and the Cape Canaveral area in Florida.

I love the coloration of Blue Herons. When they are searching for food, they seem to be particularly attentive and appear to have an attitude. I was lucky to catch this one before he flew away from his perch. While this picture suggests I was very close to him, I was actually quite far away and using an 800mm telephoto lens.

On one of the days, I was walking down the beach near Jekyll Island and came across these small Sandpiper birds running back and forth between the water and the shore looking for food. I had to stop and take a picture of their V-shaped formation.

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Last spring, I took a trip to Charleston and came upon the Magnolia Plantation. I was intrigued with the azaleas that were everywhere. This particular scene reminded me of a tunnel made up of trees and flowers.

I had seen many Roseate Spoonbills feeding in the swamps, but was amazed to see one overhead in one of the trees. This is an unusual sight I enjoyed capturing.

I find it essential to get an early start to the day when photographing. The birds are in feeding mode early in the morning and easier to capture in photos. Often, as I start out waiting for the sun to come up, I am privileged to see beautiful skies, such as this one.
dismantling racism

Fourth annual conference focuses on moving beyond good intentions, features author John B. Diamond

Delivering his keynote address with calm, measured tones, John B. Diamond, co-author of *Despite the Best Intentions: How Racial Inequality Thrives in Good Schools*, offered practical, research-based strategies for combatting racial inequalities in schools. He spoke to a packed auditorium at the Let’s Talk Racism Conference on March 23, 2019.

“Too often our stories are just about suffering,” said the Kellner Family Distinguished Chair in Urban Education in the Department of Education Leadership and Policy Analysis. Diamond, a faculty affiliate in the Departments of Afro-American Studies and Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, urged the audience to create new stories of “hope, aspiration and success” by mobilizing and providing active support to the cause.

To challenge the reproduction of racial inequality, Diamond advocated five approaches: disrupt current thinking; provide new theoretical tools for understanding race and how it is embedded in educational organizations; help educators understand how white supremacy is embedded in school organizational routines; help educators deconstruct and reconstruct routines to challenge these processes by providing opportunities for all races; and take part in activism for racial justice.

“We need to do the work, even in the face of resistance,” said Diamond, adding: “We can’t engage in the struggle without self-care.”

In discussing the discipline problem, in which children of color, especially males, are disproportionately punished, Diamond said, “We can’t change discipline without changing the way people think about black and brown bodies.” Throughout his speech, he referred to America’s early history of using race and gender to justify various forms of exploitation that extolled White culture and White intelligence, while disparaging African-American culture and intelligence.

Diamond referred in particular to Thomas Jefferson — a president and slaveholder, a man often taught with reverence by teachers — whose stated beliefs adamantly argued in terms of the inferiority of African-Americans and the justification of slavery. These beliefs about race, Diamond asserted, are “deeply intertwined with ideas about intelligence, moral worth and criminality.”

Diamond explained that children become aware of race around ages 3 and 4. According to research, “by middle-childhood, most U.S. children are aware of stereotypes suggesting that White people are more intelligent than Black, Latinx, and Native American people.”

Diamond introduced the concept of opportunity hoarding as a “process through which dominant groups who have control over some good (e.g., education) regulate its circulation, thus preventing outgroups from having full access to it.” In the United States, he noted,
“Whites have long hoarded opportunities by establishing school systems that provide no, or an inferior, education to Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans.”

A method of unifying communities and promoting activism that Diamond recommended was providing critical book studies in schools. He noted that his book is being used in multiple locations. “Critical book studies combine reflection with actionable steps to address educational inequalities,” he said. “There is compelling evidence from fieldnotes, teacher journals and interviews.”

After the keynote, the day was filled with a variety of thought-provoking presentations, which were dubbed as “concurrent conversations” by the conference organizers.

Thirty-nine sessions were offered in the classroom wing of the Michaux Building. Most of the sessions were full, with many attendees having to stand or take a seat on the floor. While we can’t cover all the sessions in this article, we will highlight several.

Adrienne M.B. Davis, an administrator from N.C. State University, spoke on “Beyond Bias Impact: Repairing Harm with Restorative Practice.” Her session explored bias incidents in grades K-12 and higher education and envisioned ways that practitioners and educators can employ restorative practices to respond effectively.

Dr. Jerry Woods, director of the Institute for Social Awareness, looked at North Carolina public schools 65 years after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, in which the Supreme Court ruled that any state laws establishing racial segregation in public schools are unconstitutional, even if the segregated schools are otherwise equal in quality. The Court ruled unanimously that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” The session focused on attempts made by some to find new ways to segregate in North Carolina, which have had lasting effects on the quality of educational experiences across the state up to the present day. The session noted the challenges in 2019, explained the context leading up to the Brown decision, clarified the responses by state leadership to Brown, and summarized reactions following Brown to reactions today.
we are summer camps

confront racism via reading, speaking and art activities

for children in grades 1-5

The concept of summer camp may conjure up images of softball, swimming, and other outdoor athletic activities. However, we are has its own version and vision — a week-long program for elementary students that fosters anti-racist identities in youth, builds a historical understanding of race and racism, and equips families with tools and resources that extend anti-racist practices in the home and community.

The 2019 camp meets in Durham and Greensboro. In Durham, the grades 1-2 camp will meet June 17-21. The grades 3-5 camp will meet July 8-12. In Greensboro, the grades 3-5 camp will meet July 29-August 2.

Each day goes from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., with after-camp care available up to 6 p.m. The Durham camps will take place at E.K. Powe Elementary School at 913 9th St. The Greensboro camp will be held at College Park Church at 1601 Walker Ave. The cost per camper is $300. Scholarships are available upon request.

“Our major focus is meeting together and engaging in talking, reading, and art activities, but we also make time for recess, lunch, quiet time activities, and snacks,” said Dr. Ronda Taylor Bullock, the camp director. “Each day is structured around a particular book. For example, when we focus on activism with our first- and second-graders, we read The Streets Are Free and...
discuss using our voices and standing up for what is right.”

Taylor Bullock recounted the story of a 7-year-old biracial camper who, during the 2017-18 school year, saw a White teacher mistreating a Black child. “The camper thought the situation had to do with the color of the child’s skin, and she intervened,” Taylor Bullock said. “Later, she told her parents, who brought the episode to the attention of the school’s principal. I recognize that the camp may not be solely responsible for this child’s activism, but her parents believe it played a role. We encourage our children to take this type of action.”

By exploring race in an open, honest manner, Taylor Bullock believes the camp helps guide campers away from racial bias. “Adults often believe that talking about race encourages racial bias in children, but the opposite is true,” Taylor Bullock explained. “Silence about race reinforces racism, because it lets students draw their own conclusions based on what they see, which often leads to generalizations and stereotypical beliefs. Teachers and families play a powerful role in helping children of all ages develop positive attitudes about race and diversity, while learning skills to promote a more just future, but only if we talk about it!”

The camp, now in its fourth year, has grown steadily. “We began in 2016 with 15 children, kindergarten through 2nd grade,” said Taylor Bullock. “In 2017, we came up with two age groups: first- and second-graders and third-, fourth- and fifth-graders. That year we had 56 campers. Last year, we had 69 campers. This year, we’ve set a maximum of 80 campers.”

The camp is staffed by a number of dedicated counselors. While new members join each year, Taylor Bullock highlighted a number of individuals who have been instrumental to the camp’s success: Turquoise Parker, a graduate of NCCU and a teacher at Glenn Elementary School; Jessica Bullock, a former elementary teacher, now a reading specialist with Durham Public Schools; Caroline Efird, a former teacher, now working on a doctorate in public health at UNC-Chapel Hill; Torrey Staton, a doctoral candidate at UNC-Chapel Hill; Dr. Cherish Williams, a board member since the camp’s inception and a child psychologist; Kara Robinson, a former elementary teacher, now finishing her master’s in administration and serving as an assistant principal intern at Riverside High School; Leah Mahony, an elementary teacher at E.K. Powe; and Zaina Alsous, an activist and journalist.

To register for the camp online, go to www.weare-nc.org/events-news. For more information about the camp and we are, contact Taylor Bullock at 984-377-5761 and visit the website (weare-nc.org).

Happy campers from the grades 1-2 camp in 2017. On the left is counselor Caroline Efird, a doctoral student in UNC’s Department of Health Behavior. Top right is Dr. Ronda Taylor Bullock, the camp director. Below her is Dr. Cherish Williams, a child psychologist and one of the camp’s board members.
Dr. Danai Kasambira Fannin, associate professor in the Communication Disorders Program (CDP), is a speech-language pathologist who holds the certificate of clinical competence (CCC-SLP). She is involved with clinically-based research for children with autism.

She was a professor in communication disorders at Northern Illinois University (NIU), where she taught courses in clinical procedures and professional issues, multicultural aspects of speech-language pathology, social communication development and disorders, introduction to communication disorders, qualitative research methods, introduction to research in health and human sciences, as well as provided supervision and diagnostic training in the university clinic.

“I am still a dissertation chairperson for an NIU student getting her Ph.D. in interdisciplinary health sciences, whose focus is cultural competence of speech-language pathologists when working with bilingual children,” she said. “I was a postdoctoral fellow immediately before NIU at the University of California, Los Angeles, focusing on autism treatment research for infants and toddlers.”

Recent awards include the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) Award for Continuing Education, the NIU College of Health and Human Sciences Fisher Award for Excellence in Service, the NIU Presidential Commission on the Status of Women Outstanding Mentor Award, and the NIU Gender & Sexuality Resource Center LGBTQIA+ Ally Award.

The hardest part about her job in the SOE is postponing participation in initiatives and committees outside classroom teaching and research. “There just isn’t enough time to do everything I would like to do with new course preparations these first two semesters,” she said, “but I hope to be able to be involved in other things across campus when I get settled in a few years.”

With advising first-year graduate students and teaching two sections of second-year students, she finds her students “very nice, with the positive intentions and abilities to treat all clients competently.” Fannin noted this is not always the case across programs, as reported by faculty and even ASHA accreditation site visitors. “Although students are indeed academically capable, interpersonal skills and kindness are often overlooked, yet those are very important factors in a practical field,” she explained.

One of her interests is music. “Although I haven’t been involved in organized choirs or orchestras lately, I sing alto and play viola,” she said. She also likes to cook food “from everywhere.”

Although born in the U.S., her parents are from Zimbabwe, “so having been raised by them, I still identify with the multilingual, immigrant community.”
Dr. Kellyn Hall, a certified speech-language pathologist, is an associate professor in the CDP. At Baylor University, she earned a B.S. and M.S. in communication sciences and disorders. She completed her doctoral studies in speech and hearing science at the University of Illinois. “I then did a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Chicago from 1991-1992, where I studied the effects of different treatments for head and neck cancer on swallowing function,” she said.

In May 2018, she received the Graduate Faculty Teaching and Mentoring Award at Longwood University. “As a teacher, my passion is bridging the gap between research and practice to best prepare students to work in medical settings,” Hall said. “I love working with students and getting them excited about learning and doing research, and I have many fun ways of engaging students. For example, we held a ‘Dysphagia Café’ in January, where students fed each other puree and nectar-thick water while wearing ear plugs and goggles with Vaseline on them, so that they could experience what it’s like for an elderly person with dementia to be fed by someone else.”

She is also planning a “thickened liquids challenge.” Students would agree to drink liquids like water or soda that have been thickened to a honey-like consistency. “It’s a way to get students to empathize with what patients with swallowing problems have to endure,” Hall said. “Imagine if, after working out or jogging, you couldn’t drink regular water. This is a good example of discovery learning, and we can present it as a fund raiser. Proceeds will go to support NCCU’s NSSHLA, the organization for speech-language pathology students.”

Last fall, one of the most challenging parts of her job in the SOE was related to “being so new!” Self-described as “directionally challenged,” Hall found it particularly difficult to navigate from her office to the classrooms. “I kept going out the wrong door!” she said. “Or I’d go out a door and find that it was locked, and I had to go around to the front of the building again to get back in!”

And then there was parking. “It took me two months before I could navigate to the faculty parking lot from home without circling campus three times,” she said, smiling.

Most satisfying has been the authentic connections she has made with colleagues within and outside of her department. “Across the board, from the SOE staff, through all levels of faculty and administration, there is a culture of compassion, respect and kindness — a genuine camaraderie and cooperation that is very empowering,” Hall said.

Might there be a secret to her success with others? “Most people know of my enthusiasm for chocolate and ice cream,” she admitted. “I always have chocolate in my office to share.”

Dr. Leslie Johnson, an assistant professor in the CDP, did her undergraduate and graduate work at UNC-Chapel Hill in speech and hearing sciences. She completed her doctoral work at UNC-Greensboro, concentrating on adult neurogenics (transmitting information through the brain and nervous system) and brain injury.

The hardest part of her new job in the SOE “is organizing my time to meet all the requirements for teaching, research and service, while having a work/home life balance.”

The most satisfying part of the job is working with the students and teaching classes. “I love seeing their little neurons connect when they ‘get’ something in class,” she said. “I like to relate the content to something they’ve seen or experienced in their clinical settings. I keep a stash of supplies I’ve used throughout my clinical career related to artificial airway, infant feeding, and head and neck cancer that I use for demonstration in class. This provides students additional opportunities to explore various classroom and clinical skills, while stimulating classroom conversation.”

After completing her doctorate, Johnson took several years off to continue working in the hospital clin-
ical setting. “During that time I taught several graduate level classes at area speech-language pathology schools, including NCCU,” she said. “I decided I needed to get out of my comfort zone a bit and learn something new, so I made the transition to full-time academia. I’m very interested in researching clinical practices to provide additional evidence-based research for clinicians working in the inpatient hospital setting.”

And if that doesn’t sound like a full life, Johnson is “kept busy” at home by three young boys, a husband, and a new puppy.

A North Carolinian all of her life, she loves visiting the mountains and the beach. And there is also music, which has always been a big part of her life.

“I have enjoyed finding ways to incorporate music into my clinical and teaching experiences, as well as my research,” she said. “Music seems to be one of the only things that can engage many different areas of the brain simultaneously. We know the brain integrates sensory and motor information while we listen and engage in music-making. I’ve used music to facilitate memory recall, expand attention span, and improve expressive language abilities for my patients with stroke or brain injury.”

Dr. Kelly M. King, an assistant professor in the Counselor Education Program, completed her doctorate in counseling and counselor education at UNC-Greensboro in May 2018. In spring 2016, on her way to a Ph.D., she won the Corey/Ivey Essay Competition on the multicultural and social justice counseling competencies.

The hardest part of her new job? “Decorating my office!” she exclaimed. “I have slowly been bringing in personal touches — including some paintings I made.”

What she’s found most satisfying is the opportunity to work with passionate, dedicated students. “The conversations in the classroom and during clinical supervision have a wonderful spark to them, as well as real-world application,” she said. “For instance, some students have shared that they are interested in advocating for underserved populations, and then they go on to plan guidance lessons or counseling interventions that do just that.”

Originally from South Florida, she started out searching in North Carolina for “comparable Cuban coffee and Colombian-style arepas.” An arepa, explained King, “is made of cornmeal and typically served with cheese or split to make sandwiches.”

She loves to cook, hike, and travel whenever possible. The photograph below was taken when she journeyed to Machu Picchu, a 15th-century Inca fortress, in Peru, South America.
Dr. Megan Nicole Lyons is a visiting lecturer in the Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) Program. Previously, she was an assistant professor of special education at the University of Dayton (2016-2018), an assistant professor of C&I at Western Illinois University (2014-2016), a career technology intervention coordinator (2010-2014) in Fulton County Schools, and an inclusion teacher (2004-2010) in Fulton County Schools.

The hardest part of her new job is “adequately meeting the social and emotional needs of the students, as well as meeting their technological demands.” And she deals with LOTS of students, since she’s teaching two sections of EDU 3030: Diversity, Pedagogy and Social Change, one section of EDU 2800: Computer Utilization, and supervising three student teachers.

Most satisfying to her is seeing students implement strategies from their methods courses in their field placements. “It’s exciting to watch students improve their instructional practices during their student teaching,” she said.

When she’s not working, she enjoys traveling. Her favorite destinations are the Caribbean or the beach.

She’s also a budding cellist. “I began playing four years ago,” she said. “I love the cello because of its rich, deep, intense and robust sound.”

Quintin T. Murphy, the new SOE Student Services Specialist, is a graduate of the NCCU School of Business, with an honors degree in marketing and business management, as well as a master’s in information technology. “My primary role is student recruitment for all departments and programs housed in the SOE,” Murphy said. “I visit high schools, form partnerships with community colleges, create program materials, and attend various career fairs, conferences and events to promote our programs.”

Murphy likes working for his alma mater, particularly interacting with the faculty and students on campus. “In collaborating, I use my skillset of social media and marketing to help enhance the SOE voice and project it across the nation,” he said.

Murphy, a technology enthusiast with business savvy, is a natural for the role. “As the CEO of Triangle Marketing Solutions in Raleigh, N.C., I lead a social media marketing firm that helps small businesses, entrepreneurs, and non-profits use their voice on social media platforms,” he explained.

As of Feb 7, 2019, his social media firm signed a partnership with Nationwide Resource Group, making him the youngest African-American fuel distributor in the Southeast Region of the United States with access to the $75 trillion industry as a seller of oil and gas commodities.

In 2015, Murphy signed a contract with St. Augustine’s University — in partnership with Google, Tide, and AT&T — to help teach senior citizens across the state how to use and implement technology in their
Dr. Ruixia “Rachel” Yan, an associate professor in the Communication Disorders Program, obtained her Ph.D. in communicative disorders from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in 2007. She then worked as a faculty member at the Speech-Language Pathology Department at Misericordia University, Pennsylvania, through May 2018, before joining the SOE in August 2018.

“I have been constantly serving as an ad-hoc reviewer for scientific journals and conferences in the field,” she noted. “At Misericordia University, I obtained 17 faculty research grants, six faculty development grants, and one writing-intensive grant. At NCCU, I am pursuing opportunities for new grants.”

In the SOE, she enjoys “the privilege of teaching students from across the globe a wide variety of courses.” Yan believes a good teacher should embrace her students’ cultural backgrounds, which she feels “is also the hardest part about my job.” To succeed in this area, she is “always open to my students” and values every chance to communicate with them so as to learn about their cultures and backgrounds.

The most satisfying part of her job is the culture of the SOE. “Our academic life is so productive and enjoyable,” she said. “My colleagues are so positive, supportive and helpful. Working in the SOE is really a pleasure.”

Life is enhanced by her 7-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter. “Both of them are adorable, and they love to smile!” she exclaimed. “The most beautiful thing in the world is to see them smile, and I know we parents and educators are the reason behind that smile.”
Last year, in addition to being recognized for her 15 years of service to NCCU and the School of Education, Dr. Yolanda Dunston received several university and system-wide awards. She was an NCCU Teaching Award winner, which is bestowed upon individuals who demonstrate commitment to student success through providing effective, transformative instruction and creating a culture of teaching excellence. She was honored for this distinction at the Eagle Promise Awards Banquet in May 2018.

She also received faculty retention funds through the NCCU and UNC System Office Faculty Retention Award. This award seeks to maintain a productive and competitive faculty in order to create dynamic programs and enhance student success.

In August, Dunston was selected to be a faculty mentor for two students in the inaugural class of Cheatham-White Scholars. This group of elite students, among the highest achievers in the high school graduating class of 2018, have been admitted to NCCU with a full academic scholarship. “As a faculty mentor, I meet regularly with the students, facilitate research and creative projects in their areas of interest, and identify and support their attendance and participation in professional opportunities,” she said.

In November, Dunston — along with Justine Daniel, a Durham Public School teacher and Regional Teacher of the Year, and Susan Stock, a recent completer of NC-CU’s Literacy Add-On Licensure Program — successfully submitted a manuscript that will appear in the Handbook of Research on Assessment Practices and Pedagogical Models for Immigrant Students in 2019.

“Our chapter, ‘ILLs for ELLs: Using an Interactive Notebook Strategy to Foster Success for English Language Learners,’ demonstrates how one teacher used the interactive notebook strategy to create an inclusive and successful learning environment for her middle school language arts students,” Dunston explained.

Above: Dr. Jeanette Beckwith (in blue) and Dr. Josephine Harris (resplendent in NCCU sweatshirt) talk to students from Seawell Elementary School of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools. The students, part of the Infinity For Success Group, are being prepared to be college-bound as they move through middle grades and high school. Beckwith and Harris gave the students and their faculty chaperones an overview of the School of Education and NCCU. “The students loved the NCCU swag bags,” said Harris. “After our talk, they toured the SOE and the campus, ending up in the W.G. Pearson Dining Hall. During lunch, they had a wonderful time mingling with college students and faculty members. Many were so excited about being able to be with older students.” Insert: As part of their SOE tour, the students got to meet Dr. Nigel Pierce, who, in addition to delivering sage advice, put in his pitch for their becoming future Eagles.
Dr. Josephine Harris and Mrs. Sherri Morris, the director of Talent Acquisition and HR Programming for the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, presented “Harnessing the Power of Professional Partnerships to Positively Impact the Quality and Diversity of the Teacher Workforce” at the annual conference for the American Association for Employment in Education in St. Louis, Missouri, in November.

“We explained how the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, a high performing, largely majority-serving school district, and North Carolina Central University, a nationally recognized HBCU, created a professional partnership and administered TA2TP, a teacher preparation program designed specifically for the district’s teacher assistants,” Harris said. “We showed how the success of the program is rooted in three key factors — investment in internal talent, collaborative partnerships, and generous community support. By illustrating how TA2TP is positively impacting the depth, quality and diversity of our teacher workforce, we wanted to motivate the attendees to recreate similar programs for their systems throughout the nation.”


Her research includes results from a principal study in two states, Massachusetts and Maryland. “The results focus on real-life experiences from K-12 principals who lead a regionally or nationally recognized school that has significantly increased the achievement of minority students,” McLaughlin explained. “I selected non-magnet public schools where 80 percent or more of the school’s African-American and Latino students are proficient on the state’s standardized English and math assessments. Additionally, I selected National Blue Ribbon Exemplary Public Schools, National Blue Ribbon Exemplary Gap Closing Schools, and schools that received awards from the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC) that meet the above proficiency criteria. The results include thoughtful, practical solutions to problems principals encounter as they endeavor to solve vexing problems with the underachievement of students of color.”

She also presented “Leading High Achieving K-12 Schools for Latino Students” at the ICPEL International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership in August.

Dr. Diane Scott, a professor in the Communication Disorders Program, completed the final year of a three-year term on the ASHA Multicultural Issues Board (MIB). The MIB presented a one-hour seminar on “Building a Resume That Tells YOUR Story” at the annual ASHA convention in November in Boston.

Scott successfully completed the online course, ACUE’s Course in Effective Teaching Practices, offered through the NCCU Office of Faculty Professional Development, earning her a Certificate in Effective College Instruction.

Scott was involved in three publications. Working with a number of colleagues, she co-authored “Pathways to Cultural Competence: Diversity Backgrounds and Their Influence on Career Path and Clinical Care,” which was published in August in Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups, Vol. 3.


In the summer of 2018, Scott traveled to Beijing, China, to teach two courses, Introduction to Audiology and Aural Rehabilitation, for students at the Beijing Language and Culture University. “Curiously enough, I taught both courses in a hearing aid company,” Scott said. “I had a number of students who were employees of the company, and that provided a nice mix with the traditional communication disorders students.”

And if that is not curious enough, Scott mentioned a particular student from eastern Europe. “She journeyed to China to learn how to speak Chinese, but along the way she became interested in communication disorders and eventually wound up in my classes,” Scott noted.

Dr. William Wiener served as the chairperson of the Higher Education
Accreditation Commission for the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired; was a member of the Migel Medal Award Committee for the American Foundation of the Blind; was a Board of Governors member of the American Printing House for the Blind, Hall of Fame; and was a member of the Publication Advisory Committee for that organization. “I assisted the committee by developing a national survey to determine which books and publications should be revised and further developed in the next five years,” he said.

Wiener gave presentations on “Accreditation of University Programs” and “Innovative Use of Specialty Camer- as in Preparation of Orientation and Mobility Students” at the Biennial Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired Conference in Reno, Nevada.

As the associate editor for the Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, he coordinated the peer reviews of all manuscripts relating to independent travel for individuals with visual impairment.

The dean and colleagues discuss educational issues with Rep. Horn

D. Craig Horn, a representative from District 68 for the N.C. House of Representatives, met with Dean Audrey Beard and an NCCU group in the School of Education on Jan. 22, 2019, to examine a variety of educational issues.

“This meeting was an opportunity to support our graduates — the teachers, counselors and instruction- al specialists who dedicate themselves to the students and parents of North Carolina,” Beard explained. “We know we have an advocate in Rep. Horn, and we wanted to make our case. Rep. Horn chairs the committee on educational appropriations. He met with us to learn more about what we’re doing. In order to make laws and policy to benefit education, he needs the understanding and, more importantly, the data to drive his requests to the legislature and secure their votes.”

Associate Dean Edward Moody was pleased with Horn’s visit. “We are happy to champion reinstating master’s pay for teachers with an advanced degree and advanced training,” he said. “We would like to see the return of the Teaching Fellows Program, which helped encourage many of the best-and-brightest students to declare themselves as education majors.”
“When we grow up, we want to be teachers.”