EcoGenomix rides the next wave of environmental surveillance
Research, scholarship, and creative activity have taken on an increased level of vitality at UNCG. Thus, it seems appropriate to have a fresh publication that captures this energy. UNCG Research is the result.

One of the most exciting features of research at UNCG is its breadth. It encompasses the performing and visual arts, education, business, social and behavioral sciences, health sciences, and natural and physical sciences. Last year we implemented a program to heighten the awareness of UNCG's research strengths and identified five Areas of Research Emphasis (ARE). These include: Learning and Development, Human Diversity and Culture; Health and the Life Sciences; Environment and Society; Performance, Composition, and Communication.

For instance, Dr. John Salmon's ongoing work with the incomparable Dave Brubeck represents a creative activity in Performance, Composition, and Communication. Dr. Martin O'Hara and Dr. Chris Paylor's investigations about the impact of early child care experiences on a child's development are typical of work in Learning and Development. Dr. Loren Schwengeler's seminal work on slavery in the United States belongs under the domain of Human Diversity and Culture or Environment and Society. The work of Drs. Vince Heinrich and Poina Bautista, co-creators of a revolutionary new method to test water supplies, represents Health and the Life Sciences and Environment and Society.

In the past year, UNCG faculty published more than 60 books and 570 journal articles and had more than 1,900 public performances and presentations. In the past fiscal year, UNCG was awarded a record $35.6 million in contracts and grants from proposals that faculty submitted.

Practical application of research, frequently referred to as technology transfer, has assumed a new role for the UNCG research enterprise. The 1980 Bayh-Dole Act gave researchers the freedom to retain the intellectual property of the work supported by federal dollars. In addition, the Act required that they put their best efforts into translating their research into usable products, an activity that often proves to be exceedingly difficult when the researcher is working alone to accomplish this. In April of 2002, UNCG opened the Office of Technology Transfer with Jerry McCullough as its director. Within months of his arrival, UNCG spun off its first company, EcoGerminus.

To further support the research activities of faculty, my office has provided an unprecedented opportunity for funding. This program, called EP/CTR (External Program Development Incentive Program), was designed to promote interdisciplinary research. Faculty submitted proposals in which they described how they would leverage these starter funds to secure external support for their research. Approximately $400,000 was awarded to nine research teams.

It's an exciting, happening time in the research world at UNCG. I am proud of the exceptional work of the UNCG faculty. I hope that you enjoy reading about it in our first edition of UNCG Research.

Rosemary C. Wunder, PhD
Associate Provost for Research

Dr. Rosemary Wunder emphasizes the broad spectrum of research at UNCG.

In the background, sculptor Nikki Blair checks student work in the Art Department kiln.
In the three-plus years since the project’s inception, we have observed youth volunteers who were nonverbal become verbal; who often looked to the ground, begin to hold up their heads; who felt powerless, become empowered.” Dr. Stuart Schlein

The numbers behind volunteerism are impressive. In 1998 alone, volunteers did the work of 9 million full-time employees, a value of at $325 billion. Yet, citizens with disabilities — who make up 17 percent of the US population — account for only a small fraction of America’s volunteer corps.

"Partnership F.I.V.E. (Fostering Inclusive Volunteer Efforts) seeks to ensure that individuals with disabilities are recognized as valuable assets to their community and afforded their right to full community involvement,” said Dr. Stuart Schlein, department head of Recreation, Parks and Tourism and principal investigator for the project. Partnership F.I.V.E., which is funded by a three-year, $312,000 grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration in the US Department of Education, matches disabled individuals with volunteer opportunities at nonprofit agencies.

"We want to create a social shift, where the disabled are seen as contributors and builders of their communities,” said Partnership F.I.V.E. Project Coordinator Kim Miller. "It’s exciting. The topic of inclusive volunteering is uncharted territory." Social barriers, such as stereotyping and negative attitudes, have traditionally kept disabled individuals from volunteering, Miller said.

"The disabled are usually regarded as the recipient of volunteer services rather than the giver of such services," she said. "Our project is that it’s that time is an important component in producing health," he said. "It’s not impossible for people to maintain good health when the economy improves or when they get busier. But rather, people need to take special measures to make sure their health doesn’t suffer.

Ruhm’s research also implicates lifestyle. The figurative “tail” of an expanding marketplace becomes literal when workers fail longer hours, exercise less and eat more fast food. During times of economic success, Ruhm found an increase in deaths due to automobile accidents, heart disease, liver diseases, flu and pneumonia.

The National Science Foundation provided a $201,067 grant for the research. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism supplied two more grants totaling $288,083.

**Cracking the Code**

Chemists study how herbs work

As an Amazonian shamans tells a visiting anthropologist that a particular plant is effective for the treatment of foot fungi. The ethnomedicinalist tries the plant, and it works. The scientist subsequently ships the plant to a laboratory where his colleagues separate it into parts, looking for the “active ingredient.” Unfortunately, the individual parts seem to have no effect on foot fungi, so the plant is discarded as useless.

For Dr. Nadja Cech, assistant chemistry professor, discovering what makes herbs work is a lesson in synergy.

"It is often impossible to identify a plant’s ‘active ingredient’ because of the inherent complexity of herbs, which consist of hundreds or thousands of compounds that work together," she said. Her study, “Synergy in Immunomodulation by Echinacea and Spiroanthol,” seeks to crack the mysterious code harbored by plants reported to have immune-enhancing properties.

"We’ve had some exciting results in our initial experiments," she said. "We’ve observed an immune-stimulating response in vitro for Spiroanthol. We’ve also developed some highly-effective techniques to study the chemical composition of a variety of plant extracts."

Cech’s research team includes biochemists, immunologists and health care practitioners, as well as four graduate and 10 undergraduate students. The long-term goal of the research is to develop approaches for the use of plant medicines to treat or prevent medical conditions with immune-related causes.

The study has far-reaching ramifications. Most drugs are based on the chemical properties of plants. In many cultures, plants are still being used medicinally and are a major health care commodity. In the United States, millions of people use and moderate with herbs, which are loosely regulated by the FDA. "More knowledge about how herbal medicines work will help the public make informed decisions about the safety and efficacy of such products," Cech said.

Cech’s research is supported by a one-year grant from the North Carolina Institute of Nutrition.
North Carolina leads the nation in the number of neural tube defects, and it was that statistic ... that served as the impetus for this project.” Dr. Heidi Krowchuk

Dr. Heidi Krowchuk has found a toothbrush to be an effective way to get a message across. By printing a folic acid reminder on toothbrushes and distributing them to college-age women, Krowchuk, associate professor of nursing, hopes to get women to understand how important folic acid is to their health. Just 0.4 milligrams of the vitamin each day can prevent birth defects and decrease the rates of heart disease and colon cancer in women. Her project, Point 4 The Future (P4TF), targets 18- to 24-year-old women.

A woman’s body needs folic acid to make DNA, which is required for the rapid growth of fetal tissues and organs in early pregnancy. “That’s why it’s important for a woman to have enough folic acid in her body both before and during pregnancy,” Krowchuk said.

She has established a web site where students can register to receive a daily email reminder to take folic acid. Krowchuk has made presentations on college campuses across the state and forged partnerships with campus healthcare providers. In addition, she has trained students to educate other students. With their help, more than 2,000 bottles of vitamins have been distributed. “Since the project’s inception, we have established a presence on about 20 college campuses per year.” Krowchuk said.

P4TF has experienced enormous success so far. In a nine-month period, Krowchuk has seen a rise in the number of women who now take a daily multivitamin that includes folic acid.

P4TF has received $86,000 in grants from the Greater Triad Chapter of the March of Dimes. Because of the project’s initial success, it also has received $100,000 from the national March of Dimes that is renewable for three years.

CENTE-R enables deafness experts to understand early intervention techniques and, conversely, allows those trained in early intervention to learn about deafness. “This is really breaking new ground, to the point that we had to first establish the accepted standards of practice that are now used across the country,” Shroyer said. The project has so far pulled together more than 50 experts and partners who collaborate on module development.

Compton, Niemeyer and Shroyer are already receiving acclaim for CENTE-R, which is made possible by a five-year, $2.5 million grant from the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. One parent stated that the training provided by CENTE-R “was a great experience for me personally and professionally. It’s apparent that all the members are committed to helping young, deaf children. I know this project greatly benefits the professionals who will hopefully be required to educate themselves about deafness in infants and toddlers. Additionally, it provides great support to parents whose babies are diagnosed as deaf.”
How the confluence of science and commerce is putting UNCG on the biotechnology map

In the good old days of academic research, it is likely that aside from a passing awareness of the other’s specialty, UNCG biologists Dr. Vincent Henrich and Dr. Parke Rublee would have rubbed shoulders only at events such as departmental faculty meetings, graduation ceremonies, and the like. Any common ground in the realm of research between Henrich, a molecular geneticist, and Rublee, an aquatic ecologist, would likely have been accidental. As for the odds of collaborative research, well, that would have been about as likely as the Carolina Panthers winning the Super Bowl.

And if all of that seems a stretch, then the two of them taking chairs as vice presidents at the boardroom table of a biotech company whose genesis included the university as one of its parents would have sounded like a bit of award-winning science fiction. Yet, that is precisely what is happening in the laboratories of the Eberhart Building and in the hallways of the UNCG Office of Technology Transfer, where science and commerce have combined to make all of these things a reality.

The result has been a university-licensed company called EcoGenomix. Its calling card, a microscope slide-sized piece of cutting-edge science called the WaterChip, has the potential to fundamentally reorder how municipalities, governmental agencies and private industries monitor and manage a host of issues including water quality, among them the detection of pollutants and toxins, the remediation of contaminated sites, and the presence of natural and bioterrorism pathogens. Traditionally, these sorts of analyses have been conducted only intermittently and have relied on chemical or physical assays of narrow focus and slow response time. The WaterChip, on the other hand, will take a completely novel approach by using the tools of the molecular biologist to analyze a genetic portrait of the organisms living in the water. What’s more, it will do it in real time. So if the tests of old were like ordering a five course meal a la carte at five different restaurants, then the WaterChip is more like one-stop-shopping for a 500 course banquet, with your dinner already cooked before you check out.

How big could this be? "There are hundreds and hundreds of instances where this sort of real time monitor-
“Every startup that I know of is a fragile beast. The key is not just technology. You’ve also got to have management and finances. There will be some winners, but there will also be a lot of losers.” Jerry McGuire

To avoid losing, the American technology transfer system has been largely modelled after Japan’s, says McGuire. Unlike many American universities, where much major research is languished, unknown are untrifflated, in what has been called “the academic brickyard,” the Japanese developed a systematic database that matched technological breakthroughs with commercial applications. It was a question, says McGuire, “of combining creativity and productivity.” Today, that combination has arrived at UNCG.

The combination of creativity and productivity at EcoGenomix is owed in no small part to Eric Button ’82, ’87 MBA, whose scientific and business skills have made him a star in the technology transfer world. A biotech entrepreneur with a degree in biology and a knack for finding venture capital, Button is the president of BlkEntegrage Partners, a Climenko-based biotech consulting company. He brings an international reputation to the table, and along with Jerry McGuire, it will be Button’s responsibility to move EcoGenomix through its development phase. Operating from temporary offices in the Nelson Center, he will also serve as the CEO until the company is ready to build its own facilities and make the move to the bigger place.

In fact, EcoGenomix is UNCG’s second foray into the world of big time university-sponsored biotech companies. The first occurred in 2001 in the form of a spin-off called Transgreenx, which sought to parlay gene function in plants into a place at the table in the lucrative pharmaceutical industry. In the end, Transgreenx failed, a victim of the steep learning curve and capital-rich requirements of the genre. In the case of EcoGenomix, both Button and McGuire believe that it already possesses a better all-around science pedigree, its funding is secure and adequate at this stage of development, and it has a much more marketable commercial niche.

Filling that niche may yet require several years and a lot of hard work, but the consensus is that EcoGenomix has more than a fighting chance. And in a landscape that is crowded with biotech companies, McGuire believes there may be other chances waiting in the wings for UNCG faculty, including many in what he calls the little explored “crossover fields” of social sciences, life sciences, music, and the arts. “Look at any arts program,” he notes, “and there is new technology at every turn.” From computers in classrooms, to laboratory equipment, to teaching materials, much of what comes from what McGuire calls “leveraging the traditional uses of a university.”

He believes UNCG is positioned, perhaps better than most, to move those uses from the classroom to the business world. But in an important nod toward what got the university to this position in the first place, he believes that UNCG will be “a contributor, not a competitor” as it works with other institutions in the system. So it may well be that in addition to being an incubator of ideas, the university may yet become an incubator of small businesses that will carry UNCG’s reputation far beyond the Piedmont.

A MARRIAGE OF MINDS

Appropriately enough, the incubation of EcoGenomix came from a purely scientific conversation. Rubin, who has spent years studying Pfiesteria, the toxic dinoflagellate that is killing the microorganisms that has plagued the fisheries of the Neuse River basin, thought that molecular biology might prove useful in understanding the organism. In the end, the relationships and changes that occur between toxins and their environments.

ing is needed,” says Jerry McGuire, who, as the director of the university’s Office of Technology Transfer, has shepherded EcoGenomix through its licensing phase and sits on its board. With a public now aware of the new biotech pathogens as weapons, safe drinking water is the most obvious market. But toss in pharmacuticals, food processing, microchip production, or virtually any other high-tech industry, and the everyday potential for the WaterChip becomes obvious.

The devil, as always, will be in the details. In this case, that means refining and scaling molecular technology so that it is easily manipulated and accurately interpreted. With $8 million in hand from the Environmental Protection Agency, and more state and federal grants in the works, the refining is happening space under the direction of EcoGenomix research director Dr. Jennifer Freeman. Once that’s done, “I think,” says Rublee, “that we can only imagine the implications of this technology.” Adds Heinrich, “Somebody can make this work, and it might as well be us.”

If, in fact, “us” turns out to be Rublee, Heinrich and Freeman, then EcoGenomix will put UNCG squarely on the international biotech map. It’s a scenario that was unimaginable only a few years ago, and it just goes to show what can happen when two very smart guys who have spent divergent careers working on the genetics of fruit flies and the ecology of aquatic microorganisms spend a couple of hours talking.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER — OR HOW TO INCUBATE IDEAS INTO COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS

If all of this seems an unlikely marriage between the otherwise contradictory worlds of academia and commerce, then welcome to the new age of academic research and something called technology transfer. In a nutshell, it’s what happens when disparate studies that might once have been malicious by cynics as the province of “so what” science converge to reveal scientific applications that transcend the campus and produce commercial products with the potential to create jobs, revitalize local economies and even attract global markets.

Angus Kingston, executive director of the Technology and Commercialization Program in the College of Management at NC State, calls this process “the front end of innovation,” and with this sort of leverage in hand, humble public relations and economic rewards are everywhere apparent. And in an era of tight budgets and flat economies, Raleigh News and Observer writer Jonathan Cox has noted it is no surprise university administrators are increasingly aware that the creation of high profile university-sponsored spin-off companies is a more concrete way to show their shrinkage in local communities.

Today, bolstered by the federal Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, which encourages universities to license and market their discoveries, 43 states have biotech initiatives in place. The results are undeniable. As recently as 1999, the Association of University Technology Managers estimated biotech initiatives had generated $40 billion and 270,000 jobs. Google, the hugely successful internet search engine, is one example, having been created at Stanford University. Closer to home, technology-rich North Carolina has become one of the bright spots in the biotech firmament and, between them, UNC Chapel Hill, NC State, and Duke have combined to spin off 65 biotech companies. Dozens more are in the offing, and the UNC system has undertaken a series of conferences to guide university researchers and administrators through the unfamiliar territory of patents, licensing agreements and corporate finance.

The guide at UNCG is Jerry McGuire, who brought with him more than 30 years of experience in the marriage of technology and commerce when he arrived in 2002 to head up the Office of Technology Transfer. Unabashedly enthusiastic and unstinting in his candor about the realities of technology transfer, he will tell you “this is about trying to leverage the fruits of research to generate economic income.” That leverage can be years in the making, and EcoGenomix, which is already licensed, is unusual in that it has made it to the licensing stage much faster than anyone expected. The reason, McGuire says, is that the basic technology is already established.

But even with established technology, he will also tell you that you have to pick your battles carefully. “Every startup that I know of,” he says, “is a fragile beast. The key is not just technology. You’ve also got to have management and finances.” And you’ve also got to build the better mousetrap, because if you fail to find the right commercial niche, then in a world with 43 biotech initiatives, McGuire says, “there will be some winners, but there will also be a lot of losers.”
So in the fall of 1999, in a quest to get at what he calls "the bigger stuff," Rublee, the ecologist, who knew about aquatic ecosystems, spoke to Henrich the geneticist, who knew how to conduct molecular level analyses.

As with most scientific discoveries, timing proved to be all. Henrich had been thinking since the mid '90s about something called microarrays — molecular level probes that are common in cancer diagnostic tests — and how they could be used to characterize complex mixtures. He needed those mixtures for his research, and Rublee, who wanted to get to what he calls "the front end of genetic technology," needed the microarrays. "Within a matter of hours," Rublee says, "the basic idea came out." They talked more, and then they took courses in each other's specialty. From there, "this thing keeps evolving," says Henrich. Along the way, that basic idea became the WaterChip, which acquired its name from the so-called "gene chips" that are used in producing molecular probes.

Aquatic environments are enormously complex, but the WaterChip's concept is simple: if you likened a lake to a cancer patient, and if you could produce a microarray that could sample the right things, then here was a way to characterize the "patient's" physical and chemical environment and detect large and small scale changes in those patterns. It is, says Henrich, "reverse ecology, in a sense." Changes in those patterns would infer a problem, and you could then look for factors that are known to cause those specific changes. "It's not foolproof," says Rublee, "at least not yet," but it is a step up from current tests, which may search for only a single pathogen. Such tests are used sporadically, at best, and at worst, only after it's become obvious there's a problem.

The WaterChip, on the other hand, will have the capability of characterizing and continuously monitoring large-scale patterns in aquatic systems. It could be the ultimate ecological early warning system, and, most importantly, it will produce real time data. It may make the difference, says McGuire, in avoiding the situation that the city of Milwaukee, WI, once encountered, when public works employees learned of tainted water supplies only after there was a run on Kopectate in every drug store in town.

Much has been made, and will doubtless continue to be made, about the WaterChip's potential as a guard against the use of waterborne pathogens as weapons of bioterrorism. It is a popular notion, but "how often will city water supplies test positive for bioterrorism pathogens?" asks Rublee. Hardly ever, he guesses. And although tests for specific pathogens can be developed, Henrich notes that bioterrorism monitoring and testing is expensive. So in the end, it seems unlikely that bioterrorism will become the WaterChip's signal use. But in fact, it's probably better that way, because markers for potential bioterrorism pathogens can easily be piggybacked on the WaterChip, meaning that cities and industries can monitor for these pathogens while simultaneously using the system in a much more expansive and cost effective way to keep tabs on a myriad of other characteristics.

It is ironic, in a way, that in an era that's dependent on what Rublee calls "an information-based economy," the heavy lifting in this attempt to unscramble the workings of complex natural systems will fall to neither super computers nor banks of space age equipment. To be sure, the gadgets will have a role, but the new ecological certainties in the next wave of what Henrich calls "environmental surveillance" will be the microbial organisms that form the most basic tiers of life on our planet. More precisely, their DNA, which gives every living thing its own genetic fingerprint, will be mapped to create a sort of community level genetic fingerprint for aquatic ecosystems that run the gamut from...
It is ironic, in a way, that in an era that's dependent on what Rublee calls "an information-based economy," the heavy lifting will fall to neither super computers nor banks of space age equipment. The new ecological centurions will be the microbial organisms that form the most basic tiers of life on our planet.

alpine lakes to municipal reservoirs to treat streams to rivers. New microbes always leave genetic traces, so if unknown fingerprints show up, they will be clear that new hands have been in the water. It will fall to the WaterChip, which will highlight changes in the DNA patterns through the use of fluorescent markers, to detect the changes and help identify to whom those hands belong.

Why microbes? As it happens, bacteria, algae, and the like are remarkably sensitive to environmental stressors; they are also ubiquitous, easy to sample, and their DNA is easily decoded and compared. And, as Rublee notes, the WaterChip is intended to detect pathogens, most of which are microbes. This fortuitous combination of factors makes them predictable indicators of both baseline, or normal, conditions, as well as changes, particularly in the complex soup of aquatic ecosystems. The biologists call such organisms "biotickers," meaning that their presence — or absence — can give us vital clues about the biological and chemical characteristics of the environments in which they — and we — are living. In plain English, they are the microbial equivalent of a canary in a coal mine. As long as these invisible canaries can drink the water, so can we.

How hard will this be? There are thousands of water-borne microbial species, many of which are not yet known to science. But fortunately, says Rublee, "We don't necessarily need to know all of them. We don't need exhaustive knowledge; we just need enough to rely on." Both professors know fundamental issues regarding methodology, reliability and economies of scale remain to be solved. "We're asking simple questions right now," says Henrich, but the basic molecular technology for getting at complex ideas is in hand. Once the chemical and biological characteristics in the DNA of a representative fraction of the microbial community can be reliably cataloged and encoded on the WaterChip, then for the first time, scientists will have an index against which they can reliably compare later indices, and the way for rapid detection and response will lie open.

Today, Henrich, who is from the Midwest and grew up believing that "the only tools had windshields, metal, and rubber tires," chuckles at the memory of those first discussions, and says "I was just the guy who supplied the petri dishes." But scratch a little harder, and both of these scientists will tell you that this happened because of what Henrich calls UNCG's "openness of communication." Rublee says that "the size and nature of UNCG fosters this sort of collaboration," and if you want more of this sort of thing, then Henrich's advice to administrators is simple: "Just pose labs that don't do the same things." And if the scientific advances and commercial possibilities are nice, Henrich will tell you "the most exciting thing to watch is when you get a visiting scientist into one of our students' seminars. "No one, apparently, expects what's coming, but everyone sits up straight and pays attention to the students' lab work before it's over. With this attention, of course, because this is gee-whiz science of a rarified kind that could give every body of water on the planet an ecological address of a sort never before seen. And that's important, because one of the biological truths of life on Earth is that the amount of water present today is precisely the same amount that was around 2 billion years ago. We can make a lot of things, but we can't make water. This means water is the strongest proof that the fate of the microbes below us on the food chain is also our fate. Trouble in the basement augurs poorly for the penthouse, and it's why the noted wildlife writer Larry Earley has said of water, "There is no more important community than this one, commanding equal fealty from largemouth bass, great blue herons, white-tailed deer, monarch butterflies and 5-year-old children skipping to school."
PETITIONING THE PAST

"If it can be said that there are many Souths, the fact remains that there is also one South." — W.J. Cash, The Mind of the South

My enduring image of Dr. Loren Schweninger is one of him sitting in front of a computer in the cavernous attics of his College Hill home and recounting the extraordinary yet overlooked lives of 19th-century black property owners. With his tall frame shadowing mountains of carefully arranged, over-sized computer printouts, and surrounding him by almost every book ever written on the African American experience, his fingers deftly deliver commands while he shares poignant tales of the black struggle for respect, economic independence and family sovereignty.

While in the graduate history program at UNCG, I worked in that attic office as Dr. Schweninger’s research assistant, analyzing listings in the 1830, 1860, and 1870 U.S. Census to further study his 19th-century property ownership in the South. A well-built, tireless, ever-to-be-historian, I marveled at Schweninger’s gift for taking intimidatedly huge amounts of information and turning them into something that helps us understand our past and ourselves. For months, I watched him comb through volumes of material and piece history together through millions of bytes of computerized data, methodically building what would become an award-winning monograph. While I contributed a mere fraction of the work that needed to be done, I thought about his commitment and debated whether he was crazy or fearless in an insatiable sense of curiosity. As the voices of schoolchildren and the smell of homemade pizza wafted up the stairs, I wondered what compelled this man — teacher, father, husband — to take on a project that seemed to have no end.

Some 18 years after working for Dr. Schweninger, once again I am sitting across from him and listening to him share insights into African American life from his current project, the Race and Slavery Petitions Project 1776-1867. His boundless energy for the process and the meaning of his work is electrifying — almost grounded in his keen, pragmatic demeanor. It’s a familiar feeling; surrounded by countless legal-sized sheets filled with photocopied petitions, he banishes into his computer while expounding on profoundly disturbing yet significant revelations into the institution of American slavery.

"Legislative petitions reveal the brutal nature of slavery, the forms of whites living in areas of large concentrations of blacks, and the workings of a legal system designed to control African Americans," Schweninger says. "They also tell us slaves’ yearnings for freedom, the attitudes of free blacks toward the South, and the efforts of free persons of color to overcome restrictive laws."

REMEMBER WHAT HISTORY FORGOT

In examining these legislative petitions, Schweninger brings the forgotten names and faces, perils and indignities of slavery into the minds and hearts of 21st-century Americans. Immense in scope and depth, the massive project is under way to compile a documentary history of race and slavery from thousands of petitions submitted to state legislatures by Southern slave owners, slaves and free blacks. When completed in 2005, the Race and Slavery Petitions Project 1776-1867 will make available a repository of more than 18,000 petitions on 150 reels of microfilm, four letterpress volumes of selective petitions, a searchable database and a comprehensive slave index.

While 20th-century historians have undeniably enhanced the study of slavery, the petition project has begat a new yet little-known intrinsics of the institution. "Scholars have produced extensive literature on race and slavery in the South," Schweninger says. "But to a remarkable degree, this scholarship has relied either on slave reminiscences, slave narratives, slave autobiographies, or on plantation records, planters’ journals, and the test-imony of prominent whites. ... The petitions with which this project deals not only supplement available resources but create a much more detailed picture of African Americans seeking their legal rights at local and state levels. By their nature, these records reveal new dimensions of the African American experience." The Petitions Project also helps dispel the myth of paternalism of the Old South and demonstrates the material and psychological consequences of white supremacy. The myth that slaves received benevolence treatment and were considered part of the slaveowner's family collapses in light of the harsh duality of racism and owner labor. Through the words of slaveholders, we see the cold-hearted economies of the institution, slaves as property and modes of production, the relentless pursuit to dominate an enslaved people, and the ideals of submission and obedience.

"Outs is a target of moonlight and magnolia; it is a complex one, filled with ambitions, inconsistencies and consequences. One of the lessons of Dr. Schweninger’s Petitions Project is that oversimplifying the history of the South trivializes the lives of those who constructed it. As well, history is not easy and convenient because life doesn’t play out that way. To learn from the wrongs of our past we need to understand them — in all their imperfections.

A NEW LOOK AT THE OLD SOUTH

Moreover, the petitions illustrate the raw drama of slave life — both in the lives of slaves and their relationship with owners. In each petition, an intriguing human story unfolds filled with the layered textures of life and exciting plots about the struggles of slavery, fractured families, betrayal, violence, runaways, resistance and more. "Indeed," Schweninger says, "they provide fascinating insights into every aspect of Southern life —

John Hinkle states he “contracted with one Van Steuringsen ... for a Negro boy man for the sum of six hundred dollars” in July 1817. Based on the “declarations & recommendations of said Steuringsen,” the petition admits he “did not for a moment suppose that [the slave] was not perfectly sound in all respects.” However, Hinkle can’t believe that Steuringsen “committed a gross fraud.” He affirms that the slave Tom arrived at his house “full of pain & disease,” adding that “someone in the month of October last ... he was compelled to lay up in bed being unable to walk or continued until the 5th of February 1818 where he died.” Changing that his “family was put to great inconvenience in nursing and attending upon the slave for several weeks & was obliged to hire him from place to place he being unable to walk.” Hinkle claims that the judgment obtained by Steuringsen for imprisonment he experienced.

—from The Petition of John Hinkle to the Superior Court of Chancery for the Winchester, VA, district, 1818

Christopher Clark purchased a slave named Randall for eight hundred dollars from John Skillern on the recommendation that he was “a very good Country Black Smith” and that he was “honest and faithful.” Clark hired Randall out in “Shoemaking and Weaver, Iron masters” but later learned the slave was “commanded there a system of plundering and cheating and does equalled and perhaps never surpassed.” As punishment, Randall was “burnt in the head,” but “this punishment has produced no reformation for before the wound got still he committed new folies and again apprehended, tried and condemned to be burnt and the court from the kindness of his character valued him at only five hundred dollars.”

—from The Petition of Christopher Clark to the Court of Bedford County, VA, 1816
LAW AND ORDER

IN 1991, UNCG HISTORY PROFESSOR DR. LOREN SCHWENNINGER BEGAN TRAVELING around the South to gather legislative and county court petitions to further a study of runaway slaves. Expecting to find boring, legal transcripts, he instead discovered a wealth of information about the lives and experiences of slaves between the American Revolution and the Civil War. It was an awakening that would change his life and the study of America’s “peculiar institution” forever.

Deciding to build a repository of slavery petitions, Schwenniger gathered approximately 5,000

Research
540 research hours from 1001-1994
175 courthouses
268 counties
14 state archives
15 Southern states and DC
African Americans
33,000 defendants
37,000 petitioners
Database of more than 94,000 known slaves

Documents
18,500 photo-reproductions
3,000 legislative petitions
16,800 county court petitions
51,000 related documents

Marguerite Ross Howell, left, confers with Michael Richardson while examining petitions to be transcribed. Pictured in the background are Nicole Mazgaj (center) and Jennifer Burns.

Marguerite Ross Howell, left, confers with Michael Richardson while examining petitions to be transcribed. Pictured in the background are Nicole Mazgaj (center) and Jennifer Burns. The legislative petitions and 20,000 pages of documentary evidence, from seven states (Delaware, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia) from 1991 to 1994. Also included were some 15,300 county court petitions and 124,000 pages of documentary evidence from 15 Southern states and the District of Columbia. With the petitions scattered and isolated, the undertaking proved to be time-consuming and laborious.

But the collection process was only the beginning. To provide access to this wealth of information, Schwenniger decided to create a searchable database, realizing the mammoth task of logging the petitions would require funding and staffing. A tireless campaign of applying for research grants has produced more than $3.22 million since 1991.

Currently, the project is working with $470,000 and underwritten primarily by three sources. A $2,500 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission has been awarded every year since 1991. Schwenniger has won four grants — more than $10,000 each — from the National Endowment for the Humanities. And the prestigious Charles Mott Foundation, which awards $90 million a year, has given the project two-year grants totaling $250,000.

Funding has enabled Schwenniger to hire a staff to help organize, enter and edit the petitions. In 1997 he hired a full-time assistant editor; since 2001 that position has been held by Marguerite Ross Howell. An outstanding student whose strengths complement Schwenniger’s, Howell began working on the project in 2000 as an undergraduate assistant.

Also working full-time on the project are Kate Knight and Nicole Mazgaj, who, as a native of France, has been instrumental in translating Louisiana petitions written in French. In addition, five graduate students currently work on the project.

Using a template to streamline information, assistants create a Petition Analysis Record (PAR) for each petition, including names, status, color, subject, county, date and disposition, as well as an abstract and related documents. Once the information is entered, it is edited and proofread numerous times, requiring hours of work. Petitions are transcribed exactly as written, but spelling and archaic phrasing are modernized.

Notations are added only when necessary for clarity.

Impressively, the project is on schedule to be completed in 2005. “I feel great that we are going to finish on time and that we have done what we set out to do,” Schwenniger says.

To find out more about the Race and Slavery Petitions Project visit
http://history.uncg.edu/slaverypetitions/

By the Numbers

A glance at the breadth of Loren Schwenniger’s Race and Slavery Petitions Project

Overview
14-year project, 1991-2005
100 reels of microfilm
More than 100,000 pages of documentary evidence

Projected four letters per page volume of selective petitions
Searchable database

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PETITIONING THE PAST

political, legal, economic, social and cultural.

Their drama appears even more dynamic given the brutal honesty of the petitions. Because of the nature of the cases, it was to the advantage of Southerners to tell the truth in civil proceedings. Further, in most cases, the parties involved knew one another, so petitioners couldn’t falsify information, even if they wanted to. With denials, verifications, rebuttals, judgments and witnesses, the documents put forth a penetrating portrait of Southern life. According to Schwenniger, “There is a bias reflected in all testimony, but when it was in the interest of individuals or groups to state their case as clearly and truthfully as possible, and to secure corroborating testi-

Polly Gray seeks “some adequate support” from James Gray, her husband of 30 years. Challenging that he is guilty of many offenses, the petition explains that he “has for about six or seven years been continually in the habit of deserting the concerns of a bond & after effectue wife to whom he was bound by way of a reflux of manner & law.” That he has “committed the usual open conjugial infidilities with prostitutes of the most unchaste order,” and that he “has taken to the very honorable in which they reside — a man whose very colour is so stigmatize her as her crimes — and who “assails her with reproaches & insults which would be insufferable even from one more respectable.”

Forced to abandon their home, Polly notes that at the time of their marriage James was very poor and that she brought to the marriage a number of slaves, who “are now with them increased 114 male and female ser- vants. Polly Gray prays the court will acquire her possession, ‘which security becomes necessary’ as she said James Gray is daily assailing and assuaging on her hands those possessions which should be preserved for the comfort & support of your unfortunate crore.”

— From the Petition of Polly Gray to the County Court of Southampton, VA.

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loose sheets of music written by Brubeck. There are cantatas, oratorios, pieces for strings and other compositions. In fact, the volume of music is so massive that he took leave fall semester 2002 in order to catalogue the literature. So far, the professor has labored 120 hours and the job is about 70 percent complete.

Also during his absence, the professor was busy editing “Serious Brubeck,” a collection of six piano works, as well as writing its 3,000-word preface. The 204-page publication was co-edited by Salmon and Gail Lew, director of keyboard publications for Warner Brothers, and was published in March.

“I send pieces immediately to John and ask him if he likes them. I trust him as an editor to see it through,” said Brubeck, lamenting that a dozen errors were found in a score Salmon didn’t review. “John has a critical, sharp mind. He’s a stickler. It’s humorous to watch the way he reacts to music. It isn’t the way he thinks it should be, he can get really red in the face.”

Salmon knows Brubeck’s music nearly as well as the composer himself. He has written several articles about the jazz artist, including 1992’s “What Brubeck Got From Milhaud” for American Music Teacher, 1997’s “Dave Brubeck’s Pioneering Explorations of Rhythm” for The Chronicle of Higher Education, and “The Classical Side of Dave Brubeck,” printed in 2001 in American Music Teacher. In October 2002, he participated in a Brubeck Symposium at Emory University, where he led a master class and a public concert.

Salmon is one of those rare musicians who can slip comfortably between classical and jazz playing styles. As a high school student, he played in a jazz trio. Yet, when he graduated, he decided to follow the classical route, earning a doctorate at The University of Texas at Austin.

“The die is cast and I can’t give up either one now,” he said.

Last fall, the professor recorded a 55-minute compact disc of Brubeck’s music, some of which he was simultaneously editing for “Serious Brubeck.” Through that process, his roles as performer and editor intertwined, resulting in helpful notations in the publication that will offer Salmon’s suggestions for performance. Salmon is currently seeking a label for the CD’s release.

That versatility has been beneficial in his work with Brubeck, a composer who is constantly blurring the lines between classical and jazz. Although Brubeck composes classical and choral works, his own playing style leans toward jazz.

“I stumble through classical,” he confessed.

Without Salmon’s initiative, many of Brubeck’s pieces would have faded into obscurity, said the famed composer. The professor has crafted piano solo arrangements for works originally written for string quartet and small chamber ensemble.

“There were things that had been hanging around for years,” Brubeck said, citing the dark piano solo “Tritonis” as an example. “John really believed in that piece. Otherwise, it might never have seen the light of day.”

Brubeck, 82, is still touring and writing prolifically.

While known to mainstream audiences as the creative genius behind “Time Out” and “Blue Rondo a la Turk,” Brubeck is also a talented composer of classical work. With nearly 100 minutes of playing time written for solo piano, Brubeck has surpassed Samuel Barber’s output by 40 minutes and approaches Aaron Copland’s 115 minutes of literature.

“Seriously Brubeck” makes a statement about the composer’s range. It includes six large-scale compositions for piano: “The Salmon Strikes,” “Tritonis,” “They All Sang Yankee Doodle,” “Chromatic Fantasy Sonata,” “Points on Jazz” and the Milhaud-inspired “Glances.” Of the selections, “Chromatic Fantasy Sonata” has been the most difficult to edit, Salmon said.

Littered with accidents, the piece requires meticulous analysis. Brubeck paid tribute to his editor’s piano performance by dedicating a composition to him called “The Salmon Strikes.” He has played a jazz version in concert with the Dave Brubeck Quartet, but the classical version has never been performed.

It was published for the first time in “Seriously Brubeck.” Through music, Brubeck draws the analogy between Salmon’s hard-hitting technique and a feisty salmon he wrangled during a 1960s fishing trip in Alaska.

“It starts out very brash,” explained Salmon. “There’s a place when the salmon is circling the boat, and then it progresses to when the salmon takes off in a rage.”

Salmon has previously edited two other publications of Brubeck’s work, “Nocturnes” and “Two Part Adventures.” Going beyond catching typographical errors, he attempts to capture Brubeck’s stylistic intentions during the editing process and to ensure the music is playable.

“I take this very seriously,” Salmon said. “When you commit something to print, that’s a sacred act. I am doing this for the precocious 12-year-old in Kansas who is going to play this. He would catch an error. I was like that.”
A Question of Quality

Two UNCG professors find that the caliber of childcare matters most

By Dawn Martin
Photos by Chris English
And Bert Van Der Veen '93, '97 MA

PARENTS WHO WANT TO GET THEIR NEWBORN into a high-quality childcare center like Creative World in Greensboro might want to reserve a spot in those precious first three months.

The first three months of their pregnancy, that is.

That’s because parents can spend four to six months on the center’s waiting list — just to secure their little one a space in an infant class. Enrolling toddlers at the center can be even tougher because few parents give up those prime spots once they’ve got them.

“They get in and stay in,” says Carolyn Pryor, the executive director of Creative World.

Parents scramble to get into this center, mainly because it boasts lots of credentialed teachers, computers, extracurricular activities, summer camp and even such amenities as video classroom monitoring.

Mothers and fathers who seek this kind of high-quality childcare — and take the time to investigate their options — have the right idea, say two UNCG professors.

And Dr. Chris Payne and Dr. Marion O’Brien should know. The professors in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies are two of the investigators in one of the largest long-term studies of childcare in the United States.

The federally funded Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development began in 1991, when a diverse group of parents across the country enrolled more than 1,200 newborns into the project. The parents chose what kind of childcare arrangement they wanted for their children. Some infants were cared for at home with mothers or grandmother.

Others had babysitters or went to childcare centers.

Then, researchers in 10 key areas throughout the country — including Morganton in western North Carolina — observed the children as they grew from infants to pre-teens. The children are now in sixth grade, and investigators hope to follow them into adolescence.

So far, most findings show that children do not suffer developmentally when they are cared for in high-quality settings by people other than their mothers. According to researchers:

Family dynamics have more impact than childcare on a child’s development.

Out-of-home childcare doesn’t significantly harm children’s relationships with their parents.

High-quality childcare can improve preschool children’s language skills and help them do better on school-readiness tests. This is particularly true when the care is provided in childcare centers that offer children extensive interaction with adults.

But researchers also caution that:

Children who spend significant amounts of time in childcare in their preschool years can sometimes get into trouble with their teachers, who perceive them as more aggressive than their classmates.

And children in low-quality childcare centers do not do as well as their peers on school-readiness tests.

The Early Years

Both Payne and O’Brien say they are doing this research to help answer questions for both parents and policymakers.

“I don’t think the debate should be whether we should have childcare or not have childcare,” O’Brien says. “Many women need to work or want to work. I don’t think it’s really an option for our society to say, ‘It’s time for all mothers to stay home.’ That’s just not going to happen. We should be asking, ‘What is it that we need to look for in quality care?’

And when we try to improve quality, what are the kinds of things we should try to change to make all care better?”

The researchers define high-quality care by the kinds of interactions childcare providers have with children.

“I always encourage parents to think about the care in terms of how the care provider is interacting with children,” O’Brien says. “Are they talking to a lot, smiling a lot? Do they seem to be enjoying being with children, spending time with children?”

The researchers have found that high-quality care can exist in any kind of setting. “Quality does not necessarily mean center care or a home-based environment,” O’Brien says. “We found high and low quality in all types of care.”

O’Brien, who formerly lived in Kansas, became interested in child development as a freelance writer. “I spent a lot of time watching children and observing and reading about child development, and I became more and more interested in the children,” she says. “I thought I really ought to go back to school and get a degree.”

She earned her doctorate in developmental and child psychology at the University of Kansas. She tracked children at the national study site in Kansas before joining the faculty at UNCG in 2001.

She also has some personal experience with childcare. As a mother of three, she was able to bring her children to work with her in their early years and later enrolled them in childcare centers for preschool.

Her colleague, Chris Payne, has been in North Carolina for most of her career. While teaching learning-disabled children in elementary and high schools, she increasingly noticed that the early years were key predictors of a child’s success in school. She, too, decided to pursue graduate work in child development and family relations. She

Lona Shockley at Creative World listens intently to a 2-year-old in her class during a lesson on putting away toys.

Dr. Marion O’Brien and Dr. Chris Payne say parents should watch for how childcare providers interact with children to determine the level of quality offered by a childcare center.

She became the principal and director of a High Point childcare center that was being developed as a model for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Her own children spent some time in the care of their grandmother and a nanny before starting at an organized preschool.

“We all have personal concerns as working parents,” Payne acknowledges.

A Long-Term Look

This study’s large sample of children, its lengthy duration and its observational methodology sets it apart from other childcare studies, both researchers say.

“A lot of studies involve surveys and questionnaires,” Payne says. “But this is one of the largest studies to include such extensive observational data.”

And it is extensive. Researchers visit families’ homes. They interview parents and children. They videotape children and parents together. They watch children playing and learning. They note how children get along with their playmates and siblings. And they visit them at school.

Children then come to the lab in Morganton once a year to undergo developmental and psychological assessments and to take part in various social activities.

Unlike other studies, this one evaluates family factors as well as childcare arrangements.
A Question of Quality

Above, a study participant and her friend play a game of jenga behind a two-ways mirror. Researchers watched and videotaped the girls' interaction and problem-solving strategies designed as part of an ongoing study of the effects of childcare. Right, the study participant completes an assessment.

That means that researchers consider such indicators as the parents' employment, income, home environment and even their mental states. That's because "children are not randomly placed in different kinds of child care," O'Brien notes. "The factors we looked at in families have something to do with what kind of childcare parents select. We look at all of these family factors into our analysis and then we look at: on top of those factors, did childcare have an effect?"

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

The study, funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, is divided into four phases. Payne and O'Brien received $1.7 million from the NICHD via a subcontract from UNC Chapel Hill in their 2001-03 funding.

In the first phase, researchers followed families and children from birth to age three. A key finding here showed that children who were cared for outside the home still developed strong attachments to their mothers. "That has been a concern in the field for a number of years, and it was one of the early kind of debates that this study was designed to answer," Payne notes. (The NICHD did measure children's attachment to their fathers.)

The second phase tracked these children through first grade, allowing researchers to examine their transition into school. One finding in this phase received a great deal of publicity — that children who spent extensive time in non-maternal childcare were perceived as more aggressive by their kindergarten and first-grade teachers.

There was no clear evidence as to how much time spent in this kind of childcare spoiled trouble. "It was not that part-time care was fine, and full-time care was not," O'Brien says. "There really were no cutoff points."

She notes, however, that none of the perceived behavioral problems — which included disobedience, defiance, and assertiveness — were in ranges that signaled serious problems. Payne says she was somewhat surprised by the finding, but also points out there could be another explanation for children's troublesome behaviors. Perhaps their families were more stressed because the parents had to work longer hours, and that in turn affected the children.

Research from the third phase, following children into fifth grade, has not yet been released. It will likely be available in about two years. This phase considers children's school achievement and delves into health behaviors and physical activity.

The fourth phase, if funded, would follow the children into adolescence. "That's just such an important time to look at," Payne says. "We could examine peer networks, risk-taking behaviors and the transition into adolescence, a major developmental milestone."

That possibility is exciting for them. "From a scientific point of view, it's a unique opportunity to be able to see how children change and study that over time," O'Brien says.

CAREFULLY CONSIDERED

Of course, the study has implications beyond the researchers' own scientific interests. Many times, their findings make news. Sometimes, they cause controversy. And almost always, they are examined by parents everywhere.

That's a responsibility they don't take lightly. "We try to make sure that all the caveats are known and that people don't leap to one-sentence, sound-byte conclusions. There are no simple answers in social-science research."

Both researchers say they try to remain objective and not interpret themselves too much into the national debate over childcare. But they do hope policymakers will rely on their research to consider more family-friendly policies, such as flexible work schedules for parents; more liberal family-leave policies; and anything to make high-quality childcare more affordable.

And they hope that their findings will assuage some parents' childcare fears. "Overall, our findings are very positive for parents," O'Brien points out. "Parents don't really need to agonize over the 'childcare or no childcare' decision. Children's care in itself is not a bad thing. Children are thriving in childcare, particularly if it is high-quality and their family is involved with them. "There is no one right way to raise children. Both patterns can work fine."

Her example proves it's possible to address social issues while pursuing individual interests. Linda Brown


The play follows the events of Edmonia's life from the age of 8 until the time of her death, another unknown date. The expressionistic play captivates dreams—like language and images, and in one of its most eloquent moments, Spider Woman, a Native American Creationist, mixes Indian and African myths into a mystical language that literally simmers. Cast with students from the Theatre Department, Edmonia is played by two actresses in two roles. The Storyteller is Edmonia as a mature artist reminiscing about her life. But it is through Wildfire/Edmonia that events unfold in chronological time.

Early on, Edmonia is forced into a world of rejection and ridicule. Her brother sends her to boarding school and then on to Oberlin, the first college to admit women and blacks. There she is falsely accused of poisoning two white classmates. Awaiting her arraignment, she is abducted and brutally beaten. After the trial, Lewis moves to Boston, the center of the Abolitionist Movement and begins sculpting. From Boston she travels to Rome, where after many trials, she achieves international recognition.

"Wildfire: Black Hands, White Marble," celebrates Edmonia's life vision, strength and determination. Dr. Frank Woods, director of the African-American Studies Program, envisioned the play after completing his dissertation on Edmonia Lewis. He approached Dr. Marsha Paltadon in the Theatre Department with the idea and the final piece fell into place when they discovered author Linda Brown was writing a novel based on Lewis' life. They asked her to write the play — a proposition that was absolutely irresistible for a writer," Brown says. "It's almost unbelievable the life she lived."

Dr. Frank Woods and Dr. Marsha Paltadon on the set of "Wildfire: Black Hands, White Marble."

Director Marsha Paltadon enhances the symbolism in the play with minimal set pieces and props. In the final image, Spider Woman, the Storyteller and Edmonia become a living totem pole with a projection of a photograph of Edmonia Lewis shining over them. The troupe plans to tour the country introducing new audiences to this trailblazing woman.
Protestant unrest

"Reforming Empire: Protestant Colonialism and Conscience in British Literature" by Christopher Hodskins University of Missouri Press

Ben Jonson wrote, "The strength of Empire is in religion.

Christopher Hodskins, associate professor of English, takes Jonson's dictum as his point of departure in "Reforming Empire: Protestant Colonialism and Conscience in British Literature."

Organized around religious theories, Hodskins' book shows how the Arthurian chronicles were used by England to claim Rome's inherent right to build an empire. Closer to home, the book traces how the celebration of the marriage of Pocahontas to John Rolfe eventually faded and gave birth instead to racist metaphysics.

Presenting both sides of the coin, Hodskins focuses on writers who were anti-expansionist and famed the flames of Protestant imperial guilt. Written in a lively and accessible style, "Reforming Empire" will enthrall anyone with a passion for English literature and history.

Not business as usual

"Becoming an Invitational Leader: A New Approach to Professional and Personal Success" by William Purkey and Beth Siegel Humancis Publishing Group

In "Becoming an Invitational Leader: A New Approach to Professional and Personal Success," Dr. William Purkey, professor of Counseling and Educational Development, and co-author Dr. Beth Siegel of Kennesaw State University, present their fresh and innovative leadership model to a broad audience.

"Most leadership models," Purkey says, "are based on either 1. Behavior — I'll pay you to do this. 2. Incentivization — You will do this or pay the price. or 3. The Power Play — It's my way or the highway."

All of these approaches assume people are not motivated and lack direction. Not only is this insulting, but statistics show that it's an incorrect assumption. People want to do good work.

Purkey has a national reputation for his concept of Invitational Leadership. It employs respect, trust and optimism to create a philosophy based on persuasion instead of coercion. "The idea is working with, instead of working against. It encompasses voluntary commitment and enthusiasm to involve others."

Based on sound philosophical and psychological assumptions, this model has been tested and successfully applied by leaders in numerous fields, including administration, business, nursing, dentistry and counseling. As further proof of the theory's power, Purkey received a $350,000 research grant to work with schools in the Washington area to implement the Invitational Leader Theory. "A must read" for leaders in all fields, the authors provide practical applications to support and help implement their theory.

Interesting characters, intricate plots and evocative, lyrical writing won UNC English Professor Michael Parker critical praise for his first two novels. "Keep Me Guessing" and "Towne Without Rivers." A critic with The Charlotte Observer said Parker's writing "invites comparison to Faulkner and Reynolds Price." With such accolades, Parker's third novel, due to hit the presses this summer, is eagerly anticipated by many readers.

"The Daily Advance," the working title of his third novel, is set in the 1970s. "Two brothers are the prime suspects in the murder of a high school student," Parker says. "Almost they will be found guilty, the two brothers flee their small town in Eastern North Carolina. On the road, Pete and Daniel are drawn closer, and Daniel eventually confesses to his brother that he is gay."

"Meanwhile, back at home, their father, Thomas, the editor of the local newspaper, keeps track of the investigation and the town's reactions. The novel focuses on the impact this event has on the lives of these three men and the outcome of the investigation."

People tend to think that as long as they are on the Internet, their computers can talk to each other. Singh says. "Not necessarily."

Using intelligent software agents to set up a framework to model economic processes in marketplace, they hope systems will more easily interact and share information and knowledge on businesses more for dynamic changes — such as a furniture manufacturer who might be impacted by the activities of cloth, wood and fabric manufacturers and wholesalers.

"All the companies are on the Net but it's not enough," Singh said. The researchers also hope to create software agents that can organize and present information for problem-solving and decision-making.

Singh said he has always been interested in artificial intelligence. "I've always been interested in how artificial intelligence is important to business decision-making," he said. "Salam's passion in electronic commerce. He has focused on helping decision makers in e-business by using artificial intelligence.

"Iyer found her way into e-commerce research before coming to UNC. When she arrived she taught the first e-commerce classes in the Bryan School. She also brought with her managerial expertise. Dr. Iyer's research encompasses the fields of knowledge management (KM) and electronic commerce (EC)."

"The three of us got together and asked, how can we put our backgrounds together?" Salam said.

The group discussed the issue for two to three months before they started writing and designing. "It's a general problem people have been looking at for the last 25 years," Singh said. "It's an evolving problem."

"The researchers are, from left to right, Dr. Lakshmi Iyer, Dr. Rahul Singh and Dr. Al Salam."
Counting down the days

From the first brick to the last light bulb, the UNCG community has been watching the construction of the new science building and awaiting the day it would open for learning.

And now the countdown is on.

With move-in scheduled between May 15 and July 15, students will take their first classes in the $40 million state-of-the-art facility during the second summer session.

Some other things students in the departments of chemistry & biochemistry and biology can count on:

- 5 classrooms (300 seat auditorium, 120 seat lecture hall, 100 seat lecture hall, two 50 seat classrooms; total 625 seats)
- 7 seminar rooms
- 25 teaching labs
- 15 research labs
- 34 faculty offices
- 1 specialized NMR facility
- 172,000 square feet
- Full use Fall 2003