



ALUMNI NEWS & NOTES

2023-2024

John Ashley Jr. (AB '12, MIP' 15) recently started as a Legislative Affairs Specialist with the Federal Protective Service, part of the Department of Homeland Security.



Ovidiu Balaj (AB' 14) was promoted in early 2022 to the Chief Operating and Strategy Officer of RAAH Technologies, a global (Atlanta headquartered) Identity Access Management and Security firm.

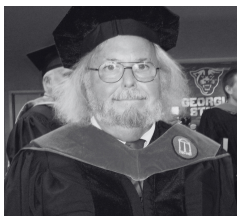
Raymond Barrett (AB' 11) was promoted to Chief Financial Officer/Deputy Commissioner of Finance at the City of Chicago, Department of Family and Support Services, Chicago's largest social service organization.



Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado (Ph.D. '86) celebrates his 1st anniversary at TCU and recently retired as an Emeritus Professor at the University of Nebraska.



Ryan Boileau (AB '18) served as a mentor to the 61st annual US Senate Youth Program in March of this year, which offered him the chance to engage with the best and brightest students from all across the country. Ryan was recently married (September 2nd, 2023).



Wendell Broadwell (Ph.D. '86) retired this summer after 23 years at Perimeter College and Georgia State.



Patricia Butcher (AB '10) loves helping small businesses and young professionals protect their assets and families. She assists families in the Athens area with personalized estate planning through the Arch Legacy Firm, which has grown to a team of four in its third year of operation.

Paul Carlson (Ph.D. '12) has been named to the inaugural 40 under 40 cohort for North Wisconsin by Insight Publications.

Ben Cecil (AB '13) recently began working as a Senior Education Policy Advisor at Third Way. Third Way is a national think tank that champions modern center-left ideas. The higher education team there works to expand the conversation about federal higher education policy from focusing solely on the cost to comprehensively prioritizing return on investment for students and taxpayers.

Kyle Clark (AB '10, AB '10) has been working in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy since 2020, providing civilian oversight of our Special Operations Forces. While there, Kyle held an assignment as the Country Director for Jordan and Lebanon, and in March this year, he accompanied the Secretary of Defense Austin to Jordan as a policy expert. Since then, he has moved over as the Chief of Concept Integration for the United States Space Force in the Pentagon, helping shape the future of our newest military service.



Kaylee Craven (AB '19) began her career with the Georgia Department of Community Supervision in 2019 with a criminal justice internship where she could explore. After the internship ended, she accepted an officer position with the agency and served in the Western Judicial Circuit. She focused on caseloads of individuals battling addiction and mental health conditions. Kaylee was also a law enforcement liaison with the Western Circuit Felony Drug Court. In December, she accepted the position of Criminal Intelligence Analyst with the Georgia Information Sharing and Analysis Center, which serves as Georgia's primary repository for counterterrorism and criminal intelligence information. Kaylee ensures timely and accurate intelligence information is disseminated to DCS to enhance field operations and officer safety. She assists federal, state, and local LE agencies with intelligence gathering, ongoing investigations, and coordination of warrant operations.



Maddison Dean (MPA '18) and her husband Matthew welcomed their first child to the world on November 11, 2022: a healthy baby boy and future UGA bulldog named Bode!

Pam Delargy (AB '75, MA '78) won the first Arizona State University Presidents Award for Global Engagement in 2023 for leading ASU's initiative of support for Afghan students and scholars, including coordinating the arrival of 69 young Afghan women students at ASU.

Brandon Dial (AB '04) was elected Augusta Family Bar Association president for 2023-2024. Mr. Dial resides in Augusta with his wife, Maura Dial, and his five children: Kathryn, Caroline, John, Margaret Banks, and Ryan. Since 2007, he has been a solo practitioner helping Augustans in family law, probate and estate planning, and plaintiffs' personal injury.



Hadley Dreibelbis Diffley (AB'14, AB '14) married fellow SPIA alumnus Ryan Diffley (AB '14) on August 20, 2022. Hadley and Ryan met two years after they had separately moved to Washington, DC, to pursue careers in public relations and policy, respectively. They were attending two Dawg-filled Friendsgivings in one night. They decided to carpool together between events, conversing and hitting it off. Nearly six years after meeting, the two tied the knot at Duke University Chapel, where Hadley returned to school to obtain her Juris Doctor degree. Hadley now works as an intellectual property associate at the international law firm Hogan Lovells. Ryan is a senior manager of federal affairs at Troutman Pepper Strategies. They are thrilled to be celebrating their upcoming first wedding anniversary and cheering on the Dawgs together for a lifetime!

Brian Dill (AB '94) is the new President and CEO of the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce and the Carroll Tomorrow Economic Development Agency. He remains the Vice President of External Affairs for the Tanner Health System in Carrollton, Georgia.

Sarah Dolezal (AB '15) became the Trending Topics/ Service Journalism news writer at the Athens Banner-Herald on July 31, 2023. She received an early career journalist scholarship for the Online News Association in 2022. She was awarded a diversity and inclusion scholarship at the Online News Association in 2023.

Denise Dunbar (MA '86) was elected president of the DC Pro Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists for the 2023-24 program year. She won first place for editorial writing in 2022 from the Virginia Press Association and the Society of Professional Journalists.

Cameron Evers (MIP '15) started a new job in June 2022 as a Senior Africa Analyst for Emergent Risk International, a consultancy that advises multinational firms on geopolitical risk.



Nikki Farago (AB '04) is the Deputy Commissioner for Agency Culture and Relations at the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Annette Freyberg-Inan (Ph.D. '98) will be stepping down as Dean of the Graduate School (School of Social Sciences, University of Amsterdam) after holding the position for almost seven years. She is looking forward to her well-deserved sabbatical!



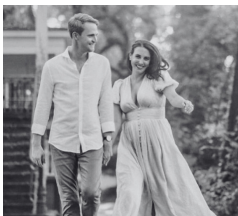
Ronald Gaddie (MA '89, Ph.D. '93) has retired after 27 years on faculty at the University of Oklahoma, including the last ten as political science chair, associate dean of the Gibbs College of Architecture, and senior assistant to the president. Ronald accepted an endowed chair at TCU in August 2023. Additionally, he has a new book, *The Philadelphia House: Organic Architecture and Placemaking in Chestnut Hill*, which explores innovative organic design approaches in early 20th-century homes in Philadelphia's Germantown community.

Kate Grier (AB '20) has graduated from the UGA School of Law with her Juris Doctorate.

Chloe Hamby (AB '19) recently co-founded a non-profit in Atlanta called Journey ATL (journeyatl.org) to provide free professional and academic development resources to underserved communities in the city. Journey ATL is partnered with the Latin American Association and the Fulton County Library System and can be found on LinkedIn ([linkedin.com/company/journeyatl](https://www.linkedin.com/company/journeyatl)), Facebook ([facebook.com/JourneyATLanta](https://www.facebook.com/JourneyATLanta)), and Instagram ([instagram.com/journey.atl](https://www.instagram.com/journey.atl)).

Bennett Hardee (AB '21, MPA '23) graduated from UGA with an MPA in 2023 and continues to work in the Workforce Development and Economic Analysis Unit of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government.

Douglas Harden (AB '05) was promoted to Export Control Analyst in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Under Secretary for Policy.



John Harden (AB '16) got engaged in 2022, began working with Delta Air Lines as an Innovation Strategy Manager in March 2023, and will be married in March 2024.



Tricia Hise (AB '99) was appointed Chief Magistrate Judge in Habersham County and will continue practicing law with her firm Hotard & Hise with offices in Clarkesville and Gainesville, Georgia.

Stephen Jaques (AB '13, MPA '18) was promoted to Planner III within the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department.



Linan Jia (Ph.D. '22) became a faculty member of the School of International Relations and Diplomacy at Beijing Foreign Studies University in Spring 2023.

Hellen Kalla (AB '13) has begun a new position at a boutique public affairs firm in DC after working for nearly a decade in politics.



Chris Konke (AB '04) is pursuing a career in acting and has recently found a manager to help launch him. He can be found on IMDb: www.imdb.me/chriskonke.



Caroline Kraczon (MPA '20) graduated with a JD from Georgetown University Law Center and now works as an EPIC Law Fellow at the Electronic Privacy Information Center.



Chase Lackey (AB '12) welcomed their first child, Dawson Ree Lackey, in November 2022.



Brent Lanford (AB '91, MPA '93) was named Chief Information Officer (CIO) of the Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC) effective July 1, 2023. His 29-year career with the MGRC has focused on project development and management, emphasizing the application of digital and geospatial data technologies to support regional planning and development.

Leighton Lang (AB '70) retired as associate General Counsel of Verizon Communications, Inc., on March 17, 2023.



Audrey Lewis (AB '07) has been appointed to the SPIA Alumni Board of Directors and the Women of UGA Alumni Affinity Group.



Ariana Love (AB '21) received the Dental Public Health Award for commitment to the field of dental public health. The award is given by the Dept. of Health Policy and Management at UNC.

Jessica Meaders (AB '20) After 3.5 years of working for the federal government, Jessica was recently hired as a Consultant at Deloitte in the Government and Public Service practice.

Rafael Montano (AB '17) recently graduated from a master's program with a degree in Mental Health Counseling and will be working as a mental health counselor intern in the suburbs of Orlando.



Abby Palazzo (AB '20) accepted a new full-time role at the APA Foundation and has begun the American University's MA program in Political Communications.



Amy Parrish (AB '91) won re-election to the Oconee County Schools Board of Education and was elected Vice-Chair by other board members. Amy also won the Rotary Club of Oconee County Lee Arrendale Vocational Excellence Award.

Lauryn Perry (AB '08) is a former felony prosecutor who started her own firm several years ago. She now represents clients accused of felony and misdemeanor offenses throughout the metro area.

Richard Petty (AB '73) celebrated the birth of two grandchildren: Aubrey J Foster in March 2022 and Lee Briscoe Burdett III (Tripp) in July 2022.

Colin Phillips (MA '17) and his wife, Megan, celebrated the birth of a baby girl (Emerson Brewer Phillips) on June 12, 2023.

Lindsey Pidgeon (AB '21, AB '21) completed her MPH in 2023 with highest honors. She was hired as a high-level ESG consultant for Ramboll US.

Conner Poe (BS '01) was promoted to Assistant Vice President, Government Relations, at the Norfolk Southern Corporation on June 1, 2023.

Mario Ponsell (AB '08) adopted their daughter, Mía Isabella Ponsell, in December 2022. They will be celebrating her 1st birthday in October 2023. In June 2023, Mario was selected for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in the Army Reserve and was assigned to the 353rd Civil Affairs Command in Staten Island, NY. Also, in June 2023, he led a US Army Civil Affairs detachment to Nienburg, Germany, to participate in NATO Joint Cooperation 2023, its first iteration since the pandemic.



Laura Pontari (AB '16, MPA '17) recently celebrated the first anniversary of starting her own small business in addition to working as a Senior Associate at the Pew Charitable Trusts conducting research on federal and state fiscal policy, as well as attending American University Washington College of Law as a law student in the evening program. In April 2022, she began Del Mar Designs DC, creating and selling jewelry, trinket dishes, and home decor. Using recycled oyster shells sourced from local restaurants around the DC area, Laura's work reduces food waste and creates something beautiful and unique at the same time.



Ashley Powell (AB '06) welcomed her second daughter, Mary Elizabeth Powell, on December 9, 2022.



Advait Ramanan (AB '19) graduated from the University of Michigan Law School and started a job at Gibson Dunn in San Francisco.

John Ronquillo (Ph.D. '11) joined the University of Maryland as the Founding Director of the Institute for Public Leadership and Associate Professor in the School of Public Policy.

Addison Shelt (AB '22) recently became a member of the Board of Directors for the Georgia Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association.



Jason Shepherd (AB '98) was nominated by District 1 Commission Keli Gambrell and appointed by the Cobb County Board of Commissioners to a four-year term on the Development Authority of Cobb County. Shepherd was also invited to join the Carter Center as a participant in the Georgia Democracy Resilience Network. The Carter Center launched the cross-partisan, grassroots effort in August 2022 to conduct various activities to build community resilience to conflict and foster confidence in elections.

Patrick Steck (MIP '16) welcomed a son, Grant Thomas Steck, on January 1, 2023. Patrick was promoted to Vice President of External Affairs for Deans for Impact, co-chaired a workgroup that drafted a set of National Guideline Standards approved by the US Department of Labor for registered teacher apprenticeships, and served as a national advisor to a state task force on teacher recruitment, retention, and recovery in Louisiana.

Jarrett Sullivan (AB '20) joined Stateside Associates in the spring of '23 as a Special Projects Associate.

Julia Taylor (AB '06) owns GeekPack, an eLearning company on a mission to close the digital skills gap for women and other traditionally underserved communities. They were recently awarded a \$250,000 grant to scale their newest initiative, GeekPack Partners, where they serve as the training partner for the Economic and Workforce Development Organization and provide accessible and up-to-date digital skills training for their members.



Eric Teusink (AB '03) and his business partners, R. Kyle Williams, David Metzger (BBA '02), and R. Lawton Jordan (JD' 00), recently completed a historic renovation of the original campus of Decatur First United Methodist Church, which includes a chapel constructed in 1899 and an adjacent school building built in 1849. The chapel will host events while the school building will serve as office space, with Williams Teusink, LLC, their law firm, as the primary tenant. This is the second historic renovation for Eric and his partners, as they had previously renovated the High House, a circa 1830 home that is believed to be the oldest two-story structure in DeKalb County.



Heather Turner (AB '08) continues to work as an international trade consultant with Customs Connect and as an exercise instructor. This year, Heather and her fiancé bought a sweet shop. They will be getting married in Feb 2024.

Katherine Twomey (AB '19) graduated from Mercer University School of Law in May 2023. She is now a judicial staff attorney for the Honorable Katherine K. Lumsden in Houston County, Georgia.

Aria Valasquez (AB '14) relocated from Atlanta, GA, to Chicago, IL.

Christopher Ware (AB '16) was hired as M&T Bank's Vice President of Government Relations in August 2023.



Joshua Watson (AB '06) married Stacy Strickland Ekmark on June 26 and started a new position with Brown & Brown Risk Solutions in Atlanta, GA, developing a crisis risk solutions practice.

Kyle Wiley (AB '11) co-founded a government relations + intellectual property firm in late 2022 and, in 2023, added additional staff/partners. Connector Labs uniquely combines government relations and intellectual property under one integrated team. They specialize in helping energy and technology companies, from startups to Fortune 500s, navigate complex policy and regulatory challenges in Washington, DC, and globally.



Andrew Wills (AB '11) joined Invenergy, the world's largest private clean energy company, as the Senior Vice President for Federal Affairs in August 2023.