

# GCU

NOVEMBER 2017

MAGAZINE

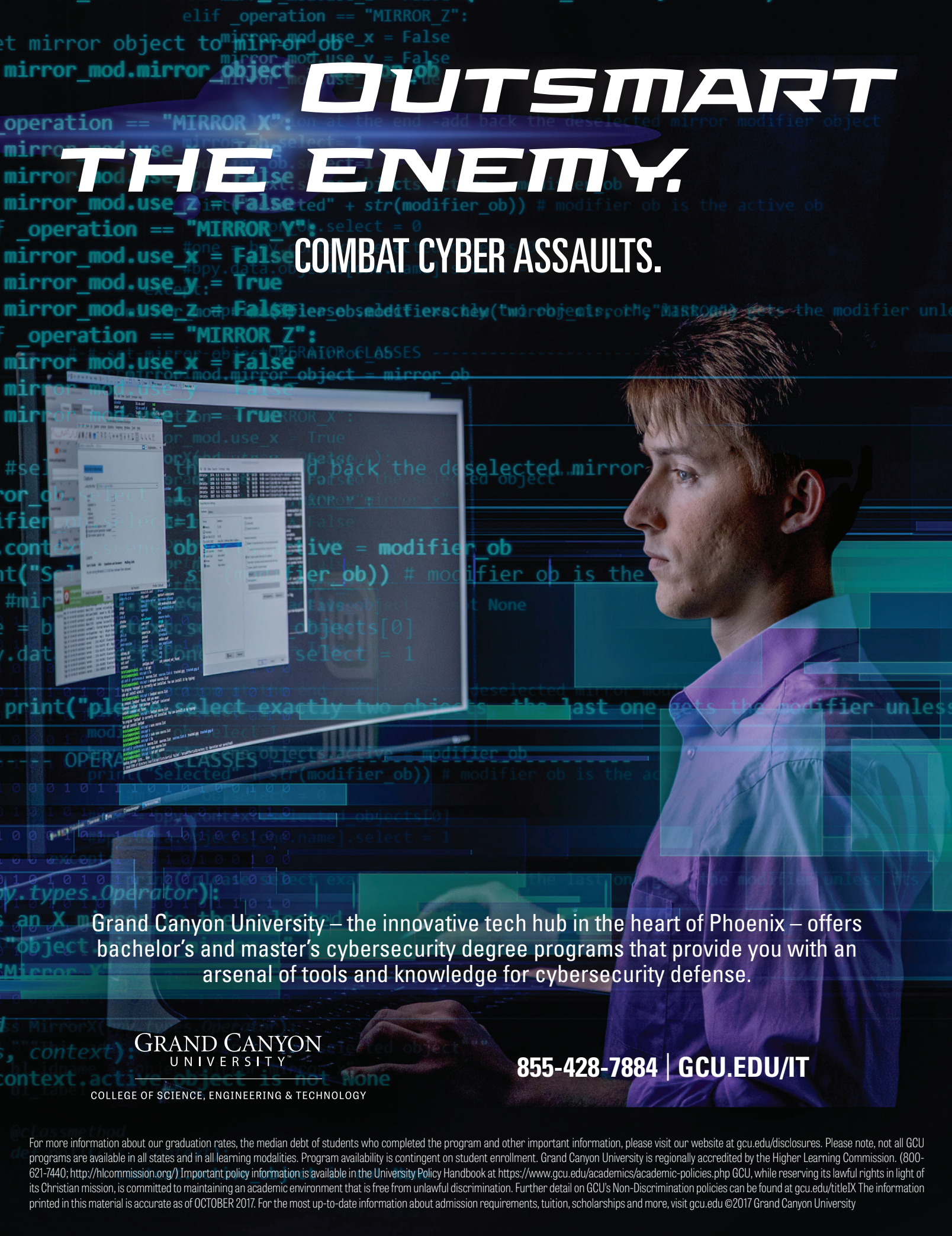
JERRY COLANGELO  
MUSEUM

## He means Business

What has  
**JERRY  
COLANGELO**  
done for GCU  
and his college?  
You name it







# OUTSMART THE ENEMY.

## COMBAT CYBER ASSAULTS.

Grand Canyon University – the innovative tech hub in the heart of Phoenix – offers bachelor's and master's cybersecurity degree programs that provide you with an arsenal of tools and knowledge for cybersecurity defense.

**GRAND CANYON  
UNIVERSITY**

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

**855-428-7884 | GCU.EDU/IT**

For more information about our graduation rates, the median debt of students who completed the program and other important information, please visit our website at [gcu.edu/disclosures](http://gcu.edu/disclosures). Please note, not all GCU programs are available in all states and in all learning modalities. Program availability is contingent on student enrollment. Grand Canyon University is regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. (800-621-7440; <http://hlcommission.org/>) Important policy information is available in the University Policy Handbook at <https://www.gcu.edu/academics/academic-policies.php>. GCU, while reserving its lawful rights in light of its Christian mission, is committed to maintaining an academic environment that is free from unlawful discrimination. Further detail on GCU's Non-Discrimination policies can be found at [gcu.edu/titleIX](http://gcu.edu/titleIX). The information printed in this material is accurate as of OCTOBER 2017. For the most up-to-date information about admission requirements, tuition, scholarships and more, visit [gcu.edu](http://gcu.edu). ©2017 Grand Canyon University



GCU Magazine is a quarterly publication of the Office of Communications and Public Relations at Grand Canyon University.

## WRITTEN AND EDITED BY

RICK VACEK  
Communications Manager  
602-639-8203  
rick.vacek@gcu.edu

## WRITERS

PAUL CORO  
602-639-6841  
paul.coro@gcu.edu

LAURIE MERRILL  
602-639-6511  
laurie.merrill@gcu.edu

LANA SWEETEN-SHULTS  
602-639-7901  
lana.sweeten-shults@gcu.edu

JEANNETTE CRUZ  
602-639-6631  
jeannette.cruz@gcu.edu

DESIGN BY  
BILLIE WORTH  
Graphic Designer

PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
SLAVEN GUJIC  
TRAVIS NEELY

VIDEOGRAPHY BY  
KRISTA BANNISTER  
CONNOR BRINTON  
AMBER BUZIS  
ELLIOTT DE NEVE  
JACOB SPRATLIN

## OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

BOB ROMANTIC  
Executive Director  
Grand Canyon University  
3300 W. Camelback Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85017



news.gcu.edu

Facebook: /GrandCanyonU

Twitter: @GCU\_Today

YouTube: /GCU Today News

**Men's Basketball  
Coach Dan Majerle  
speaks at one of  
the popular Lopes  
on the Road events,  
which bring together  
alumni, students and  
employees at selected  
GCU away games.**



26

## Features

### 8 The Colangelo Effect

Jerry Colangelo has long considered himself a teacher, so it's no surprise that the Colangelo College of Business is thriving thanks to his considerable influence.

### 16 Guiding lights

When Levi Conlow and Nathan Cooper started Lectric Longboards, they couldn't fathom the challenges they faced. Luckily for them, their faculty mentors could.

### 18 Braun's barometer

Amazing how it's come together for Joshua Braun during his basketball career at GCU. But he points to one reason — God's guidance: "He's never done with me."

### 20 Designing students

The Ethington Theatre stage for "Tartuffe" was stunningly beautiful, the wigs meticulously elaborate. Students made it happen, and here's how they did it.



## In Every Issue

- 4 Calendar
- 5 5 on 5
- 6 My LopeLife
- 24 Online
- 26 GCU Alumni

**ON THE COVER:** Phoenix business icon Jerry Colangelo stands in the museum GCU built in honor of his achievement-filled life. It opened in late September. PHOTO BY TRAVIS NEELY





## November

15

### HEALTH SCIENCES, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY DAY

High school juniors and seniors, their parents and faculty tour DNA, cadaver and simulation labs and other cutting-edge science facilities. 7 a.m.-1 p.m.

17-19/24-26

### 'YOU'RE A GOOD MAN CHARLIE BROWN'

The feel-good, family-friendly musical brings to life the beloved comic strip "Peanuts" by Charles M. Schulz. Ethington Theatre, 602-639-8880.

29

### HANGING OF THE GREENS

This annual event – a chance for students to get in the Christmas spirit – serves as the kickoff for GCU's roster of holiday festivities. 8-10 p.m., GCU Arena.

## December

5

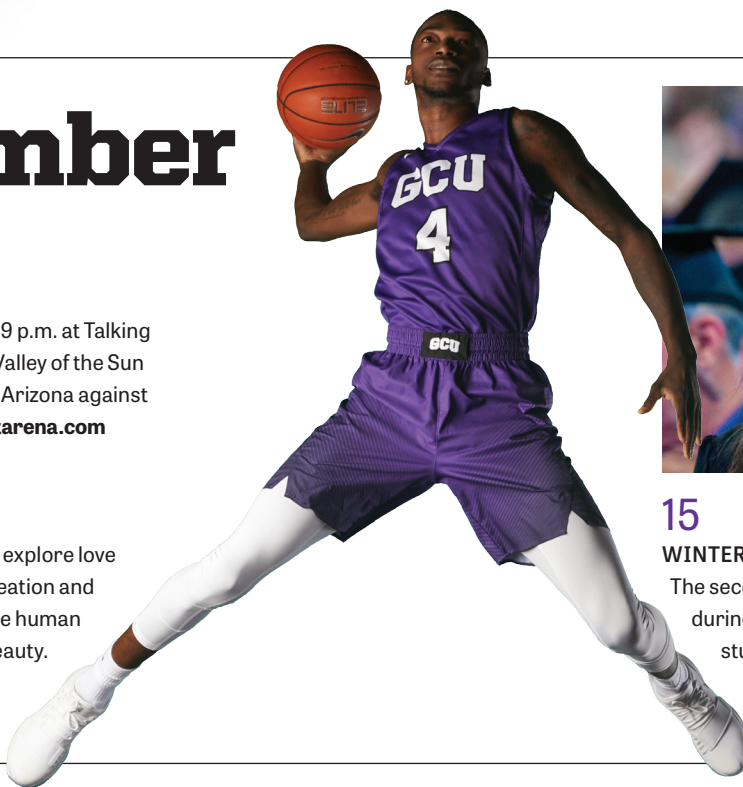
### MEN'S BASKETBALL

The Lopes take on St. John's at 9 p.m. at Talking Stick Resort Arena in the first Valley of the Sun Shootout. The 7 p.m. game pits Arizona against Texas A&M. [talkingstickresortarena.com](http://talkingstickresortarena.com)

8-9

### WINTER DANCE CONCERT

In "The Arc Between," dancers explore love and hate, life and death, and creation and destruction as they navigate the human condition in all its terror and beauty. 7:30 p.m., Ethington Theatre.



15

### WINTER COMMENCEMENT

The second set of graduation ceremonies during the academic year features many students who earn their degrees in fewer than four years. Two sessions, 9 a.m. and 2 p.m., GCU Arena.

## January

5-6

### SPRING WELCOME WEEKEND 2018

New and transferring students are welcomed by volunteers who help them move in, and orientation and a social activity round out the schedule.

17

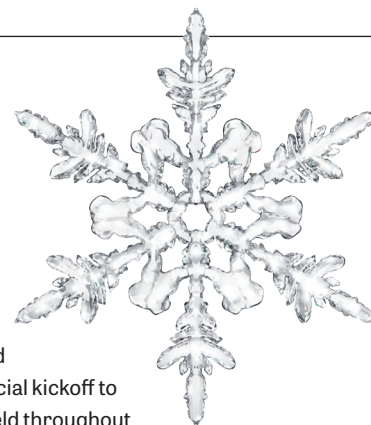
### STEM INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT

Features innovative ways K-12 schools are engaging STEM students, visionary thinking by experts and an opportunity for networking. 9 a.m.-3 p.m., GCU Arena.

24

### WINTERFEST

This annual Canyon Activities Board event is the official kickoff to the activities held throughout the spring semester. 7-9 p.m., Thunderground.





## 5 QUESTIONS WITH

# Breanna Naegeli

*Assistant Dean, Honors College*

**B**reanna Naegeli was born and raised in Phoenix. Before coming to Grand Canyon University in 2009, she completed her undergraduate degree in Psychology and Exercise Science from Bethany College in Kansas and her graduate degree in Sports Exercise Psychology from Argosy University. In addition to her role in the Honors College, Naegeli juggles several programs on campus, her doctoral candidacy program and life as a new mother.

**1 To what do you attribute the Honors College's growth?** When I started in the Honors College, we had just grown from 59 to nearly 200 students, and we've been growing ever since. I love the opportunity to work with our bright, eager and ambitious students and look forward to our future growth and development. The Honors College has had significant support from our president, executive and academic leadership team, and fellow colleges and departments on campus. We wouldn't be where we are today without that collaboration and support. In addition to that, current Honors students are starting to share their experiences with other current and prospective students – and they want to know more!

**2 What do you like best about your role at GCU?** I feel very blessed to have such a diverse job description. Although my primary role is Assistant Dean of the Honors College, I also get to experience different aspects of the University in different roles. As an instructor, I work with NCAA student-athletes. This is fun because my background is in sports psychology, and I get to incorporate those topics into the classroom. I also have been in their shoes as a student-athlete – I played volleyball, softball and soccer and also danced. As manager of the Study Abroad and Global Studies programs, I work with ambitious, global education seekers. I also get to meet and work with our freshman residents while overseeing the four different Living and Learning Communities.

**3 What is the biggest misconception people have about Honors College students?** That all they know is academic

coursework, studying and spending time in the classroom. Our Honors students excel far beyond the classroom. They are motivated, determined leaders on campus, in athletics and club sports, as student workers and as interns for great companies. Our Honors students want to make a significant impact on their local and global communities, and we strive to support them in that mission as they think through their options and maximize their four-year careers.

**4 Do you anticipate any changes to the Honors College program?** It will continue to grow as GCU grows, and I think we'll continue to get stronger, too. We've developed some great relationships with our fellow colleges and departments on campus and have established a phenomenal Honors College advisory board with esteemed professionals around the globe. Together, we will continue to provide incredible resources and opportunities for our students so they can grow into impactful change agents within our community.

**5 How do you juggle all of the hats you wear on campus – in addition to being a new mom?** Every day is certainly something different on my plate. It is challenging, but it is also rewarding. The students and their families make it 100 percent worth every minute, and having my baby girl really helped me balance priorities and appreciate family so much more! In general, GCU is a friendly and fun place to have your family, so I couldn't think of a better place to work while having my daughter.

— Jeannette Cruz





## The purpose of loving

Acts of kindness, even the little ones, play big role at GCU

BY NOAH WOLFE

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** My LopeLife is a GCU Magazine feature in which students and staff share enlightening experiences about life at GCU. To be considered for a future My LopeLife, please submit a short synopsis of your topic to [GCUToday@gcu.edu](mailto:GCUToday@gcu.edu) with "My LopeLife" in the subject field.

I distinctly remember the emotions I felt at Move-In three years ago as I arrived on campus and waited in an endless line of cars, excited for what the future held. As I looked out the window from the back seat of our minivan, I thought I was ready for anything that this new season of life had to offer.

But once my family was engulfed in the sea of purple, I realized that what I thought I wanted and what I actually wanted were two entirely different things.

Instead of charging into my new dorm without any trace of fear or anxiety, as I had envisioned, I suddenly wanted to hide in the back of the van for the rest of my life. There was a feeling in the pit of my stomach as my parents left that day that I had lost any direction toward the purpose that I wanted to find.

A lot has changed since that hot summer day nearly three years ago. But some things have remained the same, such as my internal longing to discover what personal purpose truly is.

As my time here has progressed, I have learned that God always knows the purpose and always has a plan. It is our job to wake up every day with a willingness in our hearts to lean into this truth. Do that, and we can understand our major purpose. However, questions arise as we begin to dive deeper into everything we were intended to be.

Was I destined to be pastor or perhaps a



Noah Wolfe

PHOTO BY TRAVIS NEELY



“There is a spirit of community on this campus that is like no other, and that is what makes this place special.”

politician? Was I designed to spend my time developing businesses, building a family or investing in both? These questions, along with a multitude of others, all have crossed my mind the last few years. It took an inspiring group of stories to finally bring clarity and perspective to what true purpose is.

During my sophomore year on a gloomy morning in January, I walked into GCU Arena for Chapel feeling rather depressed. For more than a year, I had been running around on intramural fields, joining clubs, volunteering time and developing relationships – all in the name of finding purpose – and I still felt as if I had nothing to show for it.

The speaker that morning was GCU President Brian Mueller, and at the end of his message he shared something that changed me: stories about students who loved well.

He told us of a student who chose to befriend another who had a mental illness, ignoring what other people might think.

He pointed to a young man who went out of his way to serve a boy with a disability at every basketball game even though he did not have to.

He talked about an individual who gave up his Saturdays to lead a group of students as they invested in the local community.

By the end of the stories, my eyes were filled with tears as I looked around and realized that I was sitting next to each person who had been referenced. They were my friends. Then I took a moment to look out across the Arena onto the thousands of students with stories similar to what I had just heard.

It was in that moment that I finally understood the beauty of this place, a campus full of people loving the fact that they get to wake up and love people well.

There is a culture that is being created here at GCU that centers around love. There is a spirit of community on this campus that is like no other, and that is what makes this place special.

Someone once told me that if you find what you love, you find your purpose. In my own personal life, I could not agree more.

The moments on this campus when I have been able to see true genuine love expressed

unconditionally have challenged me to something beyond the mundane. Holding a door open longer than it has to be or purchasing a milkshake for another student in the last days of a semester, when the Lopes cash is scarce, is the type of love that the world needs more of.

Every student has the opportunity to love this way. Every person has the opportunity to build upon their purpose in light of these truths.

Time is flying by here in LopeLand, and I still have yet to fully discover my purpose in its entirety. But one thing is certain: I now wake up every morning excited to keep searching, and I go to bed every night blessed to live in an environment that loves the way this place does. **G**

## ABOUT NOAH WOLFE

Noah Wolfe is a Business Management and Biblical Studies major with a minor in Philosophy. Originally from San Diego, Noah has enjoyed many opportunities since being on campus, among them serving as a resident advisor and working for Discover GCU. His hobbies include traveling, playing guitar and Ultimate Frisbee. While he would love to say that his dream Friday night would be one full of adventure, it would be much more probable to catch him in Grand Canyon Beverage Company reading a book.

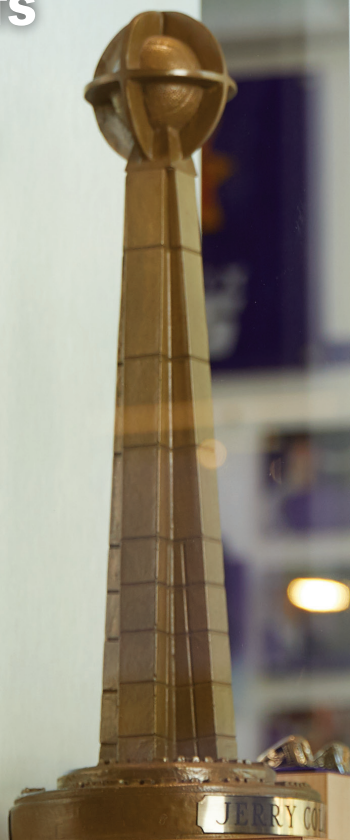




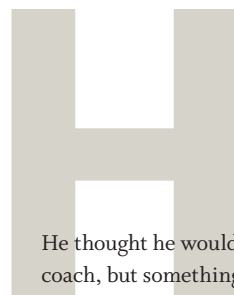
# BUILT FOR THIS

Colangelo's core beliefs  
are the foundation  
of his rock-solid  
business school

BY RICK VACEK







He thought he would become a teacher and a coach, but something inside told him to take some business classes in college. Three years later, Jerry Colangelo was starting a career in the business of professional sports.

Let's see now ... how did *that* work out?

But arguably the most famous person in the history of Arizona — and certainly the most industrious — also might be the best educator. So here he is today, connected at the hip to Grand Canyon University, once again turning serendipity into success, once again having the time of his life. At last, the teacher is in the classroom.

"I love being on the campus," he said. "I love being around young people. That helps keep you young.

"This came along at the right time in my life. I think it's been a win-win."

The victories, as they have for Colangelo during his tenure as the head of USA Basketball and owner of the Phoenix Suns, Arizona Diamondbacks and numerous other sports franchises, have come at his typical brick-by-brick pace. He's a teacher, but he's also a builder.

GCU opened the Colangelo School of Sports Business in 2012. The school quickly has developed a cutting-edge curriculum focused on preparing students for meaningful jobs in the industry.

Less than a year later, he was instrumental in the University's decision to hire one of his favorite former players from the Phoenix Suns,

**Jerry Colangelo stands next to a display in the museum GCU built in his honor. It opened in September, and admittance is free.**



# FIND YOUR PURPOSE



Dan Majerle, as men's basketball coach. The Lopes have gone 81-46 in Majerle's first four seasons.

In 2014, the entire business college was renamed in his honor. It's no accident that the student-centric and Conscious Capitalism ideals of the Colangelo College of Business marry perfectly with its namesake's beliefs and practices.

University officials were so buoyed by his impact, they built the Jerry Colangelo Museum, standing sentry at the main entrance to campus, waving in more people to be educated by his ideals and achievements when it opened in September.

Dr. Randy Gibb, the CCOB dean, had grown accustomed to the rather amazing experience of having such a famous man suddenly sitting in his office, his arrival unannounced. But now Gibb got to work with Colangelo — or Mr. Colangelo, as he and other faculty members always refer to him — for a year and a half as they picked out artifacts for the museum.

"You know what's neat?" Gibb said. "With him and now the museum with his name and the fact that he's on campus all the time, it gives us this role model, this true servant leader, somebody to really look up to, to be proud of, and I think business students on this campus are proud to be in the Colangelo College of Business."

Even if they came all the way from Lancaster, Pa., as did Andrew Finley, a junior majoring in marketing.

**"I love being around young people. That helps keep you young."**

**Colangelo frequently speaks to business classes. "Most of everything I do is ad lib," he said. "I just try to speak from the heart all the time."**

"It was huge," Finley said. "Anybody who knows about sports knows about Jerry Colangelo just because he has built so many franchises and has helped with so many things. In a lot of ways, he seemed almost like family to me in his work ethic and his lifestyle."

It's all part of the teaching process. Colangelo has never taken that lightly, no matter whether he is running a sports franchise or mentoring a business school.

"Many young people have said to me on campus, 'I'm here because of you. I'm here because you really influenced me coming to school here because I know your background. I've read your books,' that kind of thing," he said.

"To me, there's a responsibility that I feel. That's why I'm so interested in what we do in the College of Business, because that's all-encompassing. Just as we want to be a top-25 basketball program, we want to be one of the top business schools in the country."

One of Colangelo's favorite sayings is "Life is relational," so it should come as no surprise that CCOB has constructed a culture of collaboration palpable to faculty and students alike. Call it biz-synergy. There's a lot to learn from it — which is the way things always have been with Jerry Colangelo.

## Sweet surprises

Life is indeed a box of chocolates, as Forrest Gump's mother famously told him, but so is a Colangelo speech. Yes, he has recurring themes,





**Dr. Randy Gibb, Dean of the Colangelo College of Business, introduces Colangelo on the day the college was renamed.**

based on the principles of his strong Christian faith, but you never know exactly what you're going to get.

"Most of everything I do is ad lib," he said. "I just try to speak from the heart all the time."

It's uncanny. Even people who have heard him speak dozens of times still pick up a little nugget amid his bedrock beliefs: faith, family, friends, community — displayed prominently and purposefully on the east side of his new museum.

"I've heard him speak pretty much every time he's been on campus and delivered a presentation, and it's always been something new and insightful," said Dr. Brian Smith, Director of the Sports Business school and Assistant Dean of CCOB.

"When he first got involved with our program and started speaking, some of his close friends told me, 'Jerry is the ultimate 35,000-foot guy. He sees things at a higher altitude — big picture and vision going forward.' There's no doubt that's very true. He's very observant. There always are insights and wisdoms that you learn every time."

That's particularly valuable for students. Even though it's not uncommon for Colangelo to speak to a CCOB class, students still find it remarkable that a man of his stature is willing to take the time to interact with them. "You don't get this anywhere else," said Dr. Mark Clifford, who teaches a golf operations and management class.

But he goes far beyond a quick give-the-elevator-speech-and-exit session. He stays apprised of enrollment and programs. He's at all of the CCOB advisory board meetings. He listens to student presentations and offers feedback. He even was sitting in the back of the class when Honors College students did a presentation on servant leadership.

There's a reason for that.

"Mr. Colangelo cares about what's taking place. He *cares*," said Dr. Rick Roth, a Sports Business instructor. "It's so enjoyable because he then answers questions from the kids. He's very transparent in the decisions that he makes, and he always comes back to those core principles."

Colangelo gives thanks for what he calls "a wonderful platform to help young people" at GCU. He keeps finding himself in these situations,

# What's the No. 1 thing you've learned from Jerry Colangelo?

Jerry Colangelo never stops teaching. Here are some of the things his colleagues and GCU administrators, faculty and students have learned. Note the wide variety of answers:

"I have learned the importance of relationships as well as keeping your priorities: faith, family, friends and community."

**DR. RANDY GIBB, CCOB Dean**

"He taught me to think differently than I ever thought in my life. I was an accountant by trade, and he taught me to think more visionary, more bold."

**RICHARD DOZER, former Phoenix Suns and Arizona Diamondbacks executive**

"There actually are two things. His practices in his professional life follow what he does in his personal life. That's always been a big encouragement to me. ... The second one is the influence from his book 'How You Play the Game.' One of the areas that he talks about is the development of a sense of history. That influenced me as a coach but also in other things I've done."

**DR. RICK ROTH, Sports Business professor**





## Jerry Colangelo Museum

*by the numbers*

**2,200** Square footage of the museum

**\$0** Admission cost to the museum

**40**  
Minutes in a Colangelo video conversation

**55** Hours of operation each week

**6** Trophies on display



**5** Gold medals on display

**10** Championship rings on display





a man God is using to spread His word, and Colangelo wants to be a faithful messenger.

"The wins, the losses, the successes, the failures — I want to be an encourager to people," he said. "Here's what I did. That doesn't mean that's the right way for you, but there are some basic things that I believe will help you along your journey."

He knows which chocolates are best.

## Constant collaboration

The CCOB building is an incubator of inclusiveness, an entryway into entrepreneurship. To borrow an old sports axiom, if you ain't collaboratin' (with the faculty in CCOB), you ain't tryin'.

"They're so approachable," said Catherine Xiong, a senior majoring in finance and economics.

"The level of support that is happening, I don't think it can be touched anywhere in the United States," said Braeden Scheer, a junior majoring in entrepreneurial studies.

Scheer was one of several students who received regular counsel from the CCOB faculty as they formulated a startup, Storage Together, that won the Canyon Challenge entrepreneurial competition as well as an international event in Spain.

The members of the team tell stories of faculty members being accessible at all hours, even at home, and doing whatever they can to help student-conceived businesses — and students — thrive.

"These people could get paid hundreds of dollars an hour for consulting, but they're teachers — you just go to them and get free advice all the time," said Jedidiah Woods, a senior majoring in business administration. "These personal relationships that I've made with these professors have been invaluable.

"When I see freshmen coming in, I tell them, 'This business degree will become priceless if you seek out all the opportunities that are here.'"

Most prominent in the entrepreneurial hub are three faculty members who have done it all in the business world — Tim Kelley, Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship and Economics, and instructors Paul Waterman and Jon Ruybalid. Leading the way is Gibb, who gained considerable operational experience during his 26 years in the Air Force.

"You can walk into Randy's office, you can walk into Paul Waterman's office, you can walk into Tim Kelley's office and talk to them about what's going on in your business," said Josh McGuire, a senior majoring in finance and economics. "I think that's what has helped Storage Together get to where it is now."

Everything in CCOB, with its emphasis on both co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, is geared toward real-world experiences that will put students in position to get internships and jobs. It starts — but doesn't end — in the classroom.

"I think we have two things going for us," Gibb said. "One, our teachers teach — they're not doing random research. Two, the amount of time and effort and passion that our faculty have for service in doing things with the students outside of class is incredible."

The list of CCOB clubs includes IDEA (Innovation, Development & Entrepreneurship Association), Sports Business,

"Mr. Colangelo has always set out to do the best and be the best at whatever position he was doing at the time and then put everything else in God's hands. As business students, we can be ambitious. We can be the next Fortune 500 CEO, but it's the guys who try to be the Fortune 500 CEO who sometimes don't end up where they want to be in life. Guys like Mr. Colangelo went out and pursued what God has for them and tried to be the best of where God has them in the moment."

**BRAEDEN SCHEER, CCOB student**

"Mr. Colangelo not only delivers, he over-delivers on everything he does. When you do that for 50 years with integrity and honesty, you see the incredible impact it has had on this community."

**BRIAN MUELLER, GCU President**

"To always do business with high integrity, treat people the way you would like to be treated. I would always say, 'Gee, what would Jerry do in this situation?' It made my life very easy because he was a great role model."

**TOM AMBROSE, former Phoenix Suns executive**

"Your word is your bond.' He says it consistently, pretty much every time I've seen him talk. Whenever he says that, it means a lot more than when somebody else might say it. I think that level of credibility is what stands out to me, as something I'd like to achieve, too."

**JOSH MCGUIRE, CCOB student**

"Jerry treats people with respect, and he's an optimistic guy who believes that you can get people to work together and accomplish great things. He cares about doing things for the right reasons, and he's pragmatic about it — you have to be. He keeps a sense of perspective in things he does, and that helps him build coalitions."

**PAUL WESTPHAL, former Phoenix Suns coach**





**Surrounded by friends and GCU basketball players at the gala in his honor, Colangelo holds the framed copy of a full-page advertisement in *The Arizona Republic* that the University placed to thank him for all that he has done.**

Canyon Business, Marketing, Finance and Project Management. There also is the Accounting Society and DECA, an international association of students and teachers.

Students even can get involved in TEDx GCU, the only student-run TED event in the world, and the New Business Development Center, which helps neighborhood startups get their footing.

Want to talk involvement? Xiong is president of IDEA. Finley is interim president of Sports Business. McGuire is the Project Management Club treasurer. Scheer was involved in four startups and 14 projects at the start of the academic year. Woods ran the first TEDx at GCU.

And there are places to go to get even more collaboration.

CCOB students can interact with their College of Science, Engineering and Technology peers in the Lopes Lab, which has a 3-D printer.

Newly opened this fall was the Lazarus Lab, so named because it is in the space that formerly housed GCU's cadaver lab. The Lazarus Lab brings ideas to life by giving entrepreneurs — both students and GCU graduates — a place to strategize. It should be no surprise that Kelley, Waterman and Ruybalid drop in frequently.

“They’ve dedicated that space to be an ecosystem for all entrepreneurs on campus, regardless of whether you’re a business student or not,” Scheer said. “We’ve seen, just in the small time that the Lazarus Lab has been open, that it’s going to be the catalyst for the Colangelo College of Business becoming the next flagship business school in the United States.”

Besides Storage Together, the list of CCOB-generated major startups in just the last two-plus years includes Great Pros (the 2015 Canyon Challenge winner under a different name) and Lectric Longboards (see Page 16). All that collaboration means still more biz-synergy, and all that starts with Jerry Colangelo.

## The museum, and more on the way

A 400-person gala in September, featuring an all-star roster of business executives and sports stars, was a celebration of the opening of the museum, but it also was a barometer of the Colangelo Effect on GCU.

Not surprisingly, the museum isn’t just filled with mementos of Colangelo’s career. It’s just as much a classroom filled with his wisdom.

It’s also not the last major CCOB project. On the horizon is a new classroom building on the east side of campus that will house the





### VIDEO ON [NEWS.GCU.EDU](https://news.gcu.edu)

Paul Coro talks with Jerry Colangelo about the stories behind the museum's contents

college. After collaborating with Colangelo on every detail of the museum, now Gibb gets to plan an entire building, right down to the shrubbery in front.

"He really wants to make a prominent statement and have our footprint and landmark — 'Here's where the Colangelo College of Business is, a prominent location on campus with business students flocking in and out,'" Gibb said. "We're excited about the curb appeal, the landscaping, the approach, a nice lobby, the relocated Colangelo Library. It's going to have its own Lazarus Lab."

Even at 77, Colangelo doesn't miss a thing.

"They call me a visionary," he said. "I enjoy building. I love to see things accomplished. When people have said to me, 'Well, you can't do that,' my response has always been, 'I can, I will and I'll show you how.' In other words, I always was willing to take risks — calculated risks — to try to accomplish something that is good."

Oh yes, he's done that at GCU. As Gibb put it, "He's all in on business as a force for good, as a force for free markets and higher purpose for prosperity. He loves the concept of running your business in a Christian manner and truly loving and caring for your employees."

It truly is a win-win. But the students are the biggest winners of all. **G**

"Even though he has such high status, he's always willing to share and willing to help and is a Christian leader in the field. I don't see many business leaders who also are very outspoken about their faith."

**CATHERINE XIONG, CCOB student**

"Being able to have a conversation with people, look people in the eyes, just be social and communicate with others. He's done a great job of communicating that to students."

**DR. BRIAN SMITH, CCOB Assistant Dean and Director of Colangelo School of Sports Business**

"Instead of taking all the credit, he gives credit to God for his blessings. That is profound. That made a mark on me. Another thing I have learned from Mr. Colangelo is that there's no alternative for hard work. Throughout the years, he has been involved in so many industries in various countries. What hasn't changed was his focus on hard work and execution."

**MALIK RIVERS, GCU graduate**

"There is not a better boss in the world. He motivates people, he inspires people, he does things the right way. He's a guy that you want to do your best for to please him. He was a consummate motivator, and you wanted to do everything you could for him because he provided everything that you needed to be successful."

**TOM CHAMBERS, former Phoenix Suns player**

"My reputation will follow me everywhere I go. I have heard him say numerous times that our word is our bond and if people truly trust your character, opportunities will always come your way. Above all, Mr. Colangelo has challenged me to never take shortcuts and lead with integrity."

**DOM PACHUILO, CCOB student**



# Rollin', rollin', rollin'

Lectric Longboards thrives thanks to collaboration with CCOB faculty

BY RICK VACEK



**A**

s Levi Conlow sat in Tim Kelley's office, the "biz-synergy" of the Colangelo College of Business played out in one highly educational scene.

Conlow was at a key point with Lectric Longboards, the motorized skateboard business he and

another Grand Canyon University

student, Nathan Cooper, had created with considerable help from Kelley, Assistant Professor for Entrepreneurship and Economics. They were discussing distribution methods.

They soon were joined by the CCOB dean, Dr. Randy Gibb. Then Paul Waterman, another business instructor with a brilliant entrepreneurial

mind, poked his head in. He was followed by Jon Ruybalid – yep, another mentor for the students' venture.

"This was so cool," Gibb said. "We're right here talking about real business, making strategic decisions, not just doing an academic exercise."

This decision might have been the students' most strategic of all: Kelley suggested that they move production and distribution from offshore to campus, where teams of students (yet more biz-synergy) would be hired and a workspace would be created (typical of the support from the University) to assist in fulfilling the rapidly growing list of orders.

But Cooper and Conlow know that what's typical in CCOB is indeed unique.

"They've done a ton for us, especially in the move to manufacturing and assembling in the U.S.," Cooper said. "Tim, Paul and all those guys in the entrepreneurship program have always had an open door, and





**With the help of GCU faculty, Nathan Cooper (left) and Levi Conlow have turned Lectric Longboards into a thriving international business. PHOTO BY TRAVIS NEELY**

they encourage us to come in and ask them.”

Said Conlow, “Although we’re the owners, we almost have our own bosses. It’s good to have that, especially when we’re this young.”

Conlow conceived the idea for Lectric Longboards two weeks into the 2015-16 academic year when he was walking to class from his room in Ocotillo Hall and another student whooshed by on an electric skateboard.

“I thought, ‘Oh my goodness, this is a need, not a want,’” he remembered.

He quickly scanned the Internet for the price of one, and the lowest he could find was \$1,500. Then “the gears started to turn,” he said, “because if I want this and I can’t afford it, certainly there are other people who want it.”

Conlow’s solution was to make one for himself, and he mentioned the

idea to Cooper, a fellow Minnesotan and marketing major he had met at a mixer not long before.

“He wasn’t going to be able to do it alone,” Cooper said. “He knew I liked figuring out things with electronics and that I also was in CCOB. It was a perfect fit.”

Cooper also had considerable experience working with wood (“I absolutely love doing this – to me, it’s an art form”), so it was up to him to cut the deck into the proper shape and attach the motor. Conlow liked it, and they decided to make 20 more and advertise them on Craigslist for less than half the price of their competitors.

“We had a tough time selling them, but they eventually all sold,” Conlow said. “At that point we were a little lost because if it was hard to sell 20, how could we turn this into a real business?”

There would be more tough moments along the way and more tough love from Kelley and their other CCOB mentors. The turning point came in April 2016, when they formed the LLC in Kelley’s office, and that summer they were making skateboards in a shed at the home of Conlow’s grandfather in Sun City West. Cooper slept on the floor of the guest room.

“We survived the summer, and then it was just like, ‘Well, this is real now,’” said Conlow, who was taking 22 credits as the company got going and graduated last December after just 2½ years at GCU.

Along the way, they have remained focused on their simple goal: to create a community of riders. To make the skateboards safer on campus, they created a “Campus Cruiser” model that goes 18-20 mph instead of the usual 24-26. When an 11-year-old from Surprise, Ariz., asked if he could see one and told his friends about it, Cooper and Conlow brought samples to their young customers. They even brought pizza.

What makes Gibb happiest is that they created a program to give skateboards to foster children – an example of the Conscious Capitalism spirit that CCOB preaches. “They did that on their own,” he said.

That spirit has led to mind-blowing growth. They are on course to make their first million dollars by the end of the year, and the next step is to fulfill orders from as far away as Australia and China by reducing the time it takes to make one board from 45-60 minutes to 30.

Their success has turned them into CCOB celebrities who get lessons from many sources. For example, it’s not uncommon for an instructor to give Cooper advice right in front of the class.

“It just relates even more, which is cool to see,” he said. “It seems like every teacher that I’ve run into at GCU knows about us and wants to help us and always is giving us constructive criticism on what we should do.”

Kelley and Waterman have enjoyed a side benefit of their mentorship: They, too, ride Lectric Longboards around campus. But the coaching aspect is even more rewarding.

“For us, it’s fun. It’s why we’re here,” Kelley said. “Plus, we love riding the skateboards. Huge bonus.” **G**



# A BETTER LOSS

**Braun's faith  
defines  
him, and his  
determination  
drives him**

BY PAUL CORO





Joshua Braun's unabashed love for people and basketball did not arise just as his stature at Grand Canyon University surged.

Only his birthmark might have been a part of him earlier.

Braun plays basketball for GCU with a joy that heals his surgeries' scars. That glee was apparent at age 5, when he bounded across a court with a ball-wide smile even after his dunks on Fisher-Price hoops were banned.

Braun is an unselfish Lope. Those Fisher-Price league kids knew that when he went out of his way to set up shots for teammates who had not scored.

Braun is Mr. GCU, as bestowed by a 2016 contest, with popularity matched by his friendliness. That geniality reflects the kid in the Fisher-Price league who entered the opposing postgame huddle to greet each player.

"The bigger his platform has got, nothing changed," said Taylor Downey, a GCU graduate and Braun's best friend since third grade.

"The first day I met him, I was outside playing. This goofy, lanky kid walked up. He had the goofiest smile. Literally, nothing has changed to the Josh we know now who is super-caring and super-nice."

Braun is seemingly in the right place at GCU, where he has been longer than most buildings.

The Christian university fits a faith fortified through injuries and not contained to campus. His mother, Kathy, recently was told that he stopped to pray with a neighborhood woman enduring family issues.

GCU kept Braun near his roots in Anthem, a community 27 miles north of campus, and provided an ideal basketball scenario. By redshirting his first year, Braun's senior year coincides with GCU's first tournament-eligible season and the transfer of childhood teammate Casey Benson.

Braun is considered the Western Athletic Conference's best player, a status not easily attained since becoming Dan Majerle's first recruit in 2013.

Braun, the son of college volleyball and soccer players, played basketball at age 1 and hit Wiffleballs over the house by age 2. Basketball turned serious at 11 on a traveling club with Benson, but he did not stop playing other sports until colliding facemasks broke his hand in eighth-grade football.

Braun won a state basketball championship as a freshman but relentlessly aimed to improve, working on his high-rising jump shot and developing guard skills while playing the post.

The recruiting letters of his dreams came. Offers followed. Before his senior year, he tore one knee's anterior cruciate ligament. After rehabilitation, he was playing in a spring tournament in front of a Pac-12 coach when he tore the other ACL.

The game video ended there. Braun's younger brother, Justin, was too upset to keep recording.

The college offers stopped.

"Are you sure you want to keep playing?" Kathy asked Josh.

"Don't give up on me," he told her with the determination that sent him into a cholla to catch his dad's pass years earlier. "This is going to happen."

The injuries transformed Braun's faith. Until then, basketball defined him – good or bad.

"God got ahold of me and showed me that I'm much more than a basketball player," Braun said. "My glory and my identity can't hinge on basketball. I wouldn't wish ACL surgeries on anybody, but I'm thankful they happened. I wouldn't be the same man. I'm a better player, too, because it showed me how to do other things besides relying on athleticism."

That spring, Majerle was hired at GCU to navigate a four-year Division I transition. Shown Braun's video, Majerle saw a tough, versatile, classy facsimile of himself.

"I fell in love with him," Majerle said. "It was perfect for both sides. He's been everything and more as a player and person."

Braun, who got Majerle's autograph as a boy, committed on his first GCU visit. A year later, Braun rarely played in his first six games until a teammate's injury opened time at Central Michigan. Braun made 7 of 10 shots, scored 21 points and has started ever since.

It was the same Braun verve he showed as a kid when he ran down a hallway and leaped in hopes of flying in Superman-caped pajamas.

"He always had a positive, competitive attitude," said his father, David. "Even when something didn't go his way, he kept fighting. Attitude was the biggest thing."

That attitude is often beloved. Justin knows it well as a GCU sophomore who often gets asked about Josh or mistaken for him.

"It takes an extra 30 minutes to get someplace on campus with him," Justin said. "He's genuinely an amazing guy. He's a wonderful brother. He's just as loving to strangers. He doesn't do it for show. God just blessed him with a talent for making friends."

Even off campus at a coffee shop, an elderly woman recognized Braun and invited her senior group to meet him.

"It turned into a scene," Braun said.

He embraced it like every sold-out game, any random chat or his master's program. He adheres to Philippians 1:6: "He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

"He's never done with me," Braun said. "I'm thankful that He's always making me a better man of God, a better Josh." **G**

**"God got ahold of me and showed me that I'm much more than a basketball player. My glory and my identity can't hinge on basketball."**



**VIDEO ON  
NEWS.GCU.EDU**

Joshua Braun's  
GCU evolution

**Joshua Braun, Coach Dan Majerle's first recruit at GCU, has become one of the top players in the Western Athletic Conference. PHOTO BY TRAVIS NEELY**



# Staged Right

Behind the scenes during the making of Ethington Theatre's 'Tartuffe'

BY LAURIE MERRILL   PHOTOS BY SLAVEN GUJIC






Lighting director Tarnim Bybee and scenic designer Keeli Rodriguez exaggerated the colors in the "Tartuffe" stage to give it an asymmetrical, hall-of-mirrors effect.







The seven students selected as designers for the set of “Tartuffe” paid rapt attention as Claude Pensis, Dean of the College of Fine Arts and Production, took a seat at a meeting last summer.

He started the session with a single question: “Did everybody look up ‘deconstructionism?’”

The students shifted in their seats. It was William Symington, COFAP Assistant Dean and Scenic Designer, who shattered the quiet.

“One of the ironies of what we do is there is a language here,” Symington said. “You have to talk. Theatre is collaborative. We all work together. We have to talk. A lot. You may not know where to start, but start you must.”

Start they did, with drawings, screenshots, construction paper cutouts – and ideas, lots of ideas. The tongue-tied beginning gave way to fluid communication and glamorous costumes, ornamental props, spectacular steel-and-wooden scenery and more.

In short, the fledgling impresarios who commenced in June with scarcely more than their titles gave birth in October to a grand, full-scale production brought to life by a cast brimming with energy and talent: Moliere’s “Tartuffe,” Ethington Theatre’s second production of the season.

Here are some scenes from their journey.

### **It’s not just hair – it’s status**

Wigs of the period, fashioned with varying degrees of fanciness, were a reflection of status, sex and age. Some were simple and short. Others were spectacularly coiffed, curled and adorned with glittering gems, silk flowers and fancy ribbons.

But perhaps their greatest significance is that they were the painstaking, handcrafted result of meticulous trial-and-error by junior Trustin Adams, the hair and makeup designer.

Each of the 12 wigs required about 25 hours of labor, Adams said.

“And they all started as swimming pool noodles,” he said.

Not only the wigs, but every aspect – the lighting, scenery, costumes, props and more – required a profusion of creativity as well as significant labor from a small army of craftsmen.

“We build everything from scratch for everybody,” said Nola Yergen, COFAP costume designer. “It’s a huge undertaking.”

Undergraduates were tapped as designers for “Tartuffe” because it’s a criterion for competing in the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, which showcases the finest regional productions.

Students were assigned roles of dramaturg, stage manager, lighting, scenic, costume, props and hair-and-makeup designers.

“Tartuffe is the biggest show we’ve ever student-designed,” Adams said.

It was also the first time Pensis directed a Kennedy Center production.

### **Deconstructing deconstructionism**

Deconstructionism has been described as that which challenges the fixed nature of assumptions and things.

Juniors Tarnim Bybee, lighting designer, and Keeli Rodriguez, scenic designer, likened it to asymmetry.

Bybee imagined a stage illuminated with sparkly orange, blue and pink hues in a hall-of-mirrors effect.

“It’s beautiful – but it’s off its rocker,” she said. “I wanted to exaggerate it in an unhinging way.”

**The status of the family matriarch, Madame Pernelle (Sarah Schalick), is reflected by her coiffed, powdered and towering hair design (by hair and makeup designer Trustin Adams) and the fine ribbons, pearls and lace in her gown (by costume designer Marija Petovic).**







**Every detail on the costumes worn by Orgon (Cameron Cluff, left), and Cleante (Jeremy Carr) — from their embroidered shirt cuffs to their silk cravats — is true to 18th-century France.**

Rodriguez described the set, inspired by the Palace of Versailles, as where “deconstruction and asymmetry connect.”

Senior James Coblentz, props designer, suggested putting a different feather duster – one a powder puff on a stick, another elaborately fluffy, yet another a single feather – in the housekeeper’s hands each time she appeared. Coblentz crafted as many as six such tools.

Adams scrupulously researched hair-and-makeup trends under the reign of King Louis XIV. As late as rehearsals in early October, he could be seen perusing makeup-application videos on YouTube.

### **Views of two main characters**

For the character of Orgon – the wealthy head of household whom the hypocrite Tartuffe plans to defraud – Adams proposed “a fantastic mustache and eyebrows.” One hairy eyebrow could be askew.

“I wanted to show him as a very intelligent human being – but he’s gullible, he’s able to essentially sign away his life to a man he shouldn’t trust,” Adams said.

Pensis warned against making Orgon seem too foolish.

“I don’t want him to be laughed at,” Pensis said. “Orgon has to be an attractive man.”

As for Tartuffe, Pensis said, his inner scoundrel should peek through.

“It’s a practiced look so that he looks pious when in fact he is not,” Pensis said.

To help attain that look, senior Marija Petovich, costume designer, dressed Tartuffe in a long, dark, green waistcoat – but then added mismatched buttons.

Rodriguez’s scenery included hanging large, green-and-gold windows on each side of the stage leading up to an even larger door – built by students from beams of hollow steel – in the center.

“The doors are the biggest, most eye-dropping piece on the stage,” Rodriguez said. “People will be on the edge of their seats wondering who is going to come through them.”

Of course, at one point it was Tartuffe.

“When Tartuffe enters, he will cast a long shadow,” Bybee said. “His site color will be green because he’s greedy, he’s a thief.”

Other lighting was intended to illuminate the extraordinary wealth of the family.

“I want it to look so grand that the audience knows that they – the family – have a lot to lose,” she said.

Harkening back to the relatively mum start of preproduction, Symington encouraged the designers to practice putting zest into presentations.

“For the Kennedy Center, you have to be excited,” Symington said at one meeting. “It’s a sales pitch. Something like a thesaurus is your friend.

“It’s not a tomato,” he added. “It’s a vine-ripened, locally sourced, organic tomato.” **G**



# Helping hand

Abandoned as a teen, former Army firefighter David Lewis has spent his life in service to others and to his education

BY LANA SWEETEN-SHULTS

“Those Lewis boys. They’ll never amount to anything.” Those words — they’ll never amount to anything — have been the sticks and stones that have driven David Lewis’ life.

The Missouri-based Grand Canyon University online student, who is working on his Doctor of Education degree in Organizational Leadership, didn’t have it so easy growing up.

He was just 14 when his parents divorced — when his world ended.

“My mom moved back to Europe with my youngest brother,” said Lewis, who grew up an Army brat. His father subsequently moved David and his younger brother to Odessa, Texas.

And that’s where his father — who

struggled with alcohol problems, left them.

“He said he was going to Wyoming.”

Lewis and his brother? They had nowhere to go.

A rescue mission took them in, but, “it was not a family rescue mission. It was all men — lots of drunks and winos.”

Separate families took in the brothers. Lewis, who was placed with a single mother and her three children, was able to complete his sophomore year in high school, but then the world started calling.

“After 10th grade, I decided to go on my own,” Lewis said. “... I lied about my age and started working on a drilling rig.”

He worked in the oil fields until he was 17 and then ran into the family he had left. When they said they were moving back to Alabama,

Lewis rode with them and ended up working a much sought-after job in the shipyards before taking yet another big life turn.

This time, he did a stint in the Marine Corps Reserve, where a gunnery sergeant sat him down and pushed him to finish high school and complete his general education degree.

It was the first time Lewis realized the importance of education.

His Marine Corps Reserve career was short-lived. With his GED in hand, he returned to Texas, where his journey began, and to the oil fields.

It was when he almost was killed while working on a drilling rig that he decided to make a change.

He was just 22; he had lived a lifetime. He returned to the military, this time



---

“I guess I’ve been a public servant in so many ways. ... I enjoy giving back. Had it not been for people helping me in my life, I don’t know where I would have been.”

— David Lewis, GCU online student

---

serving as a firefighter in the Army, where he served for 21 years, responding to hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes and mass casualties.

“I really enjoyed the camaraderie among the firefighters. ... I loved it. I loved the fact that people always saw you as welcoming.”

And he spent some time in Mogadishu, Somalia, too.

“I saw how horrible and poor the world was,” Lewis said. “When I see on TV some of the things people are protesting ...”

He finished up his military career as an instructor at the Louis F. Garland Fighting Academy at Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo, Texas. He supervised up to 10 instructors and was responsible for all the training in his section.

Not that retiring from the Army meant Lewis has ever stopped.

Not even close.

He delved into a resident training course to become a police officer while holding down a full-time job. Until recently, he volunteered as a reserve sheriff’s deputy.

He now works for the Army as a government employee. He is chief of the Directorate of Training and Leadership Development’s Compliance Department at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

As if that weren’t enough, Lewis has been reaching for even more.

“My current wife (Tammy) said I had a lot of potential. So I started going back to school.”

He was 39, an age when most people have settled into that one career and have started looking toward retirement.

In 2001, Lewis returned to school and, a few years later, had completed not one but three

associate’s degrees – in arts, fire science and instructor of technology and military science from the Community College of the Air Force. He went on to earn a bachelor’s degree in Public Safety Management and two master’s degrees from GCU, in Executive Fire Service Leadership and Leadership with an Emphasis on Disaster Preparedness and Crisis Management.

Now he’s back at GCU as an online student to earn his doctorate.

Looking at his life as an Army firefighter, reserve sheriff’s deputy and Marine, he said the common thread he has noticed is that, much like one of the core beliefs of GCU – to serve – he indeed knows his purpose.

“I guess I’ve been a public servant in so many ways. ... I enjoy giving back,” he said. “Had it not been for people helping me in my life, I don’t know where I would have been.”

No one in his family has a degree, he said, though one brother is in college now.

“I will say one thing. The women in my life have had the biggest influence on me. ... I just didn’t want to let them down.”

But more than that, the 54-year-old father of five, grandfather of six and great-grandfather of one said he remembers those biting words from his youth.

“I was always the kid you didn’t want to go out with your daughter. ... School was one of the things I pushed myself to do,” he said.

“There is one more motive. As I was growing up, my brother and I were always looked at as those kids that would never do anything with themselves. ... They’re never going to be nothing.”

They were wrong. **G**



**David Lewis knows what it's like to serve -- he has been an Army firefighter, reserve sheriff's deputy and Marine Corps Reserve.**



## Women's Basketball

Washington  
Dec. 10, 2017

## Men's Basketball

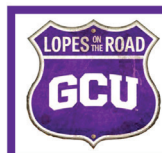
Seattle U  
Jan. 6, 2018

## Men's Basketball

Boise State  
Dec. 13, 2017

## Men's Soccer

Air Force  
Oct. 22, 2017



2017-18  
LOPES ON THE ROAD  
**DESTINATIONS**

## Men's Basketball

Chicago State  
Jan. 18, 2018

## Men's Soccer

San José State  
Oct. 8, 2017

## Baseball

Cal State Fullerton  
Mar. 15-18, 2018

## Men's Basketball

Morgan State (Las Vegas)  
Dec. 27, 2017

## Women's Basketball

Northern Arizona  
Dec. 14, 2017

## Men's Basketball

New Mexico State  
Feb. 10, 2018

## Men's Basketball

UMKC  
Jan. 20, 2018

# Supporting evidence

It's a unanimous decision: Lopes on the Road judged a success

BY JEANNETTE CRUZ

**J**ohn Thornton is already making plans for the fourth season of Lopes on the Road — a chance for Grand Canyon University alumni, students, faculty and fans to cheer the Lopes to victory nationwide.

The Seattle resident, who is studying online for his doctoral degree at GCU, remembers his first Lopes on the Road experience — a year

ago, when the men's basketball team played at Seattle University, a 30-minute drive from his home. His online experience has made a GCU fan out of Thornton.

"It's to the point everybody I know gets a GCU pen from me," he said. "My wife is even changing careers and went to GCU. My son is a high school senior, and he has just been

accepted at GCU as a ground student."

Thornton and his family attended the game together, and it made him even more excited when he saw a couple hundred more Lopes in the crowd.

What started in 2015 with 86 participants has grown to 1,382, and GCU hopes to continue expanding Lopes on the Road. The joint



venture, operated by GCU's Department of Athletics and Office of Alumni Relations, has scheduled events in 11 cities for games featuring four of GCU's teams — six games for men's basketball and two games apiece for baseball, men's soccer and women's basketball.

While Lopes on the Road provides a support system for athletes, it also creates a sense of camaraderie among alumni and nontraditional students.

"Being an online student, it's hard to get a feel for the campus and the Lopes sporting events, but after my first Lopes on the Road, I was sold," Thornton said. "I even had a friend — a Seattle U. alum — who was at the same game and came by and said, 'Wow! I've come to a lot of games, and you never see this many alumni from any other school.' That was an amazing feeling."

Mike Vaught, GCU's Vice President of Athletics, said the Alumni Relations and Athletics departments aim to deliver the best experience at every city they visit by bringing GCU fans together with fellow Lopes, coaches and administrators. He said it's even more important to consistently deliver the spirit and community of GCU to the fans and alumni.

Although it is not unusual for cheering, screaming, GCU purple-clad fans to take up an entire section at the opposing team's arena, Vaught said the

atmosphere is inspiring because some fans will drive for hours to attend a game and then drive back home.

"Their presence tells us how passionate people are about GCU and what it stands for, our campus, our mission, our leadership, (President) Brian Mueller," Vaught said. "To see that kind of support pumps our team up, and it's exciting. We certainly are going to continue growing the program, especially as we move through the Division I process."

Charlita Berry, from Chicago, attended three basketball games with her family and said she enjoyed seeing familiar faces in the crowd.

"It was nice to see continuity because some of the students I met at the games had gone through my program, and they were able to give me the support I needed," Berry said. "Interacting with the alums made me feel a part of something greater."

GCU alum Erik Adams lives in Bakersfield, Calif., and said he did not know

about the Lopes on the Road events when he met a GCU representative during his first Lopes men's basketball game.

"I was just getting ready to graduate and it was our first year in the probation period for the Lopes to transition from NCAA Division II to I, so I went to watch a game," he said.

Adams immediately decided to sign up to be part of Lopes on the Road.

"I knew I wanted to support the University and get involved as much as I could," he said. "My hope is that as the number of alumni continues to grow in my area, we will be able to start our own chapter in Bakersfield."

Every year, Adams said, he sees the number of GCU supporters grow. "It's a good feeling because I want people to know that it's a great school."

Liz Conwell, Alumni Relations Manager, said fans remain loyal and are a testament to GCU's community-minded spirit.

Conwell recalled being at one soccer game and seeing that, despite rain and freezing temperatures, 80 Lopes fans devotedly showed up while the opposing team had none.

"To see that makes it really special," said Conwell. "You just know when GCU is there."

Vaught had his own special memory to share, too.

"There was one basketball game where all of the GCU people were seated behind the goal, and it was perfect because every time they showed someone shooting a free throw on TV it looked like a GCU home game," he said. "There were fans wearing their GCU T-shirts all over the place, and I was so glad they gave us those seats." **G**

**The Lopes on the Road events attract GCU fans of all sizes, but they have one thing in common — passion for a certain color.**







**Nate Whitsett**  
uses raps, songs  
and chants to get  
students excited  
about learning.

## Building rap-port

### Whitsett's 'Think A+ Tour' takes a rhythmic approach to learning

BY JEANNETTE CRUZ

**W**hen Nate Whitsett taught elementary school students in metro Detroit, the notion of becoming a rap artist was not on his radar. Life, however, has a funny way of pointing you where you need to go.

Whitsett recently resigned from teaching in the classroom and developed the "Think A+ Tour." He travels the nation on a mission to impact change using rap as a tool to motivate and educate students.

Whitsett graduated with a bachelor of science from Eastern Michigan University and, in 2011, a Master of Arts in Teaching from Grand Canyon University. His education coupled with the experiences of being raised in a low-income, single-parent household pushed him to become a self-proclaimed "college kid with a street degree."

On his tour, Whitsett combines raps, songs and chants to "get students hyped up for learning and testing and to build self-esteem

in the student population."

His message to district leaders, administrators, teachers and students is clear: It's time for a change.

The former elementary school teacher said he became disenchanted when his school asked him to follow a scripted classroom program.

"I started reading the script, and it felt so unnatural to me," he said. "I was frustrated, and each time I picked up the script the students would get antsy and off task."

Struggling to spend several hours a day reading a script to his students, Whitsett had a lot to think about. He reached out to the school's principal, seeking guidance, but her response only shaped his decision to leave.

Whitsett explained how this "cookie-cutter" design in the education system hinders teachers from bringing out the best in every child. He emphasized the need for educators to build rapport around student interests.

In his pursuit to improve education, Whitsett said the experience has been "positive and liberating."

Whitsett's "Think A+" song encourages students to think positively when the odds are against them. In "Take Heed," Whitsett tells how as a child he hated reading and later found the value in gaining knowledge through reading.

But it's not all music and hip hop. Whitsett is also the author of "The Answer: Finding Purpose and Building Relationships in the Classroom." The book follows Jameka, a student with major behavior problems who ultimately finds her purpose and talent with the help of her teacher, Mr. Whitsett. The book is a spinoff to his own story.

"My mom gave me a challenge when I was younger because I was always rapping. She said, 'If you did your schoolwork the way you rap around here, you'd be an all A student,'" Whitsett recalled. "So I began to do just that." **G**



# CLASS NOTES

What's  
new with  
you?



Send your class notes and a high-resolution photo to [www.gcu.edu/classnotes](http://www.gcu.edu/classnotes).

## 2000s



**Jeff Baird, M.A. in Teaching, '02**, is an English teacher at Brighton High School in Cottonwood

Heights, Utah. Baird has taught for more than 20 years and has written multiple pieces for professional journals on English and education.



**Rob Carnahan, M.S. in Nursing with an Emphasis in Leadership in Health Care Systems, '08**, is

the new Chief Executive Officer at Banner Churchill Community Hospital in Fallon, Nev. Carnahan previously served as the Chief Nursing Officer for four years.

## 2010s



**Jeff Ogne, B.A. in Christian Studies, '10, and M.S. in Psychology with an Emphasis in**

**Industrial and Organizational Psychology, '12**, was named Dean of Students of Oaks Christian Online School and the Online Christian Consortium, based in

Westlake Village, Calif. Ogne previously was an admissions manager at GCU.



**Phyllis Abbott, M.S. in Leadership with an Emphasis in Disaster Preparedness and**

**Crisis Management, '10, and M.A. in Christian Studies with an Emphasis in Urban Ministry, '16**, founded Lady Veterans Connect in Lexington, Ky., a nonprofit organization that provides a transitional housing and rehabilitation program to veterans and women exiting the military. Participants in the program receive counseling, health care, financial-planning classes, life skills and self-esteem classes, and job preparation, with a focus on restoring relationships with their families.



**Danny Skelly, B.S. in Marketing, '11**, recently appeared on TLC's reality TV series "The Spouse

House." Skelly is a personal trainer in Chicago.



**Robert Collar, M.Ed. in Education Administration, '11**, was appointed

principal of Scott's Branch Middle/High School in Summerton, S.C. Collar has had a long career working with at-risk youth and special education students and in education administration.



**Tari Sexton, M.A. in Teaching with an Emphasis in Teacher Leadership, '11**, has co-authored a series

of six early childhood education resource books, "STEAM Design Challenges." The books are intended to offer a year's worth of lessons that promote an interactive learning environment in the classroom.



**Todd Johnson, M. Ed. in Educational Administration, '12**, is the new principal of Cowles

Montessori School in Des Moines, Iowa. Johnson previously served as a reading coach, school

improvement leader and dean of students in the Des Moines Public School District.



**Heather James, B.S. in Psychology, '12, and M.S. in Professional Counseling, '16**, is a

licensed professional counselor and independent therapist for the office of River Park Psychology Consultants in Wichita, Kan. James credits her career as a counseling practice owner to her GCU education.



**Rob Koonce, Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership, '12**, served as lead editor and co-

author of a new book, "Developing Leaders for Positive Organizing: A 21st Century Repertoire for Leading in Extraordinary Times." Koonce is an affiliate faculty member at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., where he serves as the doctoral Course Director of Followership.



## SPOTLIGHT

Lindsey Fatherley, '14

### Move to Ford got career in gear



Leadership is in Lindsey Fatherley's genes. One of her grandfathers was a business executive, and she can trace back "a family history of leadership in many different industries."

So it wasn't a surprise when the former college softball player from Tonganoxie, Kan., decided leadership would be her path.

"My passion has always been in leadership and being a good steward of people," she said, and she decided to incorporate that passion by pursuing her GCU degree in Business Management.

Within three years, Fatherley has risen in the Ford Motor Credit Co. ranks — as a customer service team leader in Mesa before moving on with the company to Greenville, S.C. Since July, she has worked as a business development manager for Ford in Chicago.

One of her career highlights is being chosen in 2016 as an inaugural Ford Thirty Under 30 fellow, which involved taking a yearlong corporate leadership course run by the Ford Motor Company Fund.

Outside of work, Fatherley enjoys playing slow-pitch softball, volunteering and just keeping things simple.

"Enjoy the journey and relationships GCU has to offer," she said. "It's a special place!"

— LANA SWEETEN-SHULTS

Jonathan "J.D." Dravecky, '10

### The right tools for a happy ending



Jonathan Dravecky would have tried a do-over if he could.

The son of former Major League Baseball pitcher Dave Dravecky dropped out of college to go into real estate — "That was a horrible choice to make," he said — and also got married and had his first child during that time. He was working at Nordstrom selling women's shoes.

Then GCU Admissions Manager Jeff Abramson called and told him about the University's accelerated degree program. A year and a half later, Dravecky had earned his bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

His first job out of college, selling an app for restaurants, didn't work out. But then, through a family friend, Dravecky heard a business owner was looking for someone young to take over the company. Dravecky moved his family to "nowhere Central Valley, California," and he, his wife and two children have been there for six years.

He is now the CEO of that company, Swenson Shear, which manufactures heavy-duty metal roof-cutting tools and all-in-one finishing tables for roofing and construction contractors. The company has seen a 57 percent growth since his arrival.

— LANA SWEETEN-SHULTS



**Ivan Nechunaev, B.S. in Finance and Economics, '12, and M.S. in Accounting, '14,** recently was

accepted into the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, which is tied with Harvard University as the No. 1 business school in the country, according to US News Rankings. He is the first GCU graduate to ever be accepted into the prestigious business school.



**Dean Dick, EMBA, '13,** will lead the crude oil gathering business for

Tallgrass Energy Partners, LP in Guernsey, Wyo. Dick has nearly 30 years of experience in crude oil transportation services, including trucking, gathering, terminals and Department of Transportation regulations.



**Penny Dixon, M.S. in Addiction Counseling, '13,** is a parent-child interaction therapy

(PCIT) practitioner for the Institute for Child and Family Well-Being at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. Dixon provides PCIT and trauma therapy to at-risk children and training to the people who care for them.



**Felicia Lee, B.A. in Christian Studies, '13,** is an onsite account analyst for

GetixHealth in Glendale, Calif. Lee received the 2016 Acts of Human Kindness award from Dignity Health Glendale Memorial Hospital and Health Center. She was recognized for her composure and patience in handling patient billing.



**Corey Triassi, M. Ed. in Educational Administration, '14,** was named principal of Starline

Elementary School in Lake Havasu City, Ariz. Triassi served as interim principal for four months before being selected for the position. She has 30 years of teaching experience and is a 30-year resident of Lake Havasu City.



**Keith Smith, B.S. in Sports Management, '14,** was hired as the assistant women's

volleyball coach at Providence (R.I.) College. Smith previously served as the graduate assistant coach at McKendree University in Lebanon, Ill., and played for the GCU men's volleyball team from 2011 to 2014.



**Tara Bethell, EMBA, '14,** was named to the Phoenix Business Journal's 2017 class

of 40 Under 40 award winners. The award recognizes 40 business leaders under the age of 40 who are making an impact in the Phoenix area. Bethell is the Senior Vice President of Human Services/Risk Management at Beatitudes Campus in Phoenix.



**Margaret Carter, B.S. in Sociology, '15,** has dedicated herself to community advocacy in the

greater Phoenix area. Carter works with the Tanner Community Development Corporation (TCDC) as the assistant chairperson for Helping Enrich African American Lives (HEAAL) coalition. Carter began as a volunteer and has worked with TCDC for a little more than four years.





**Ally Nill, B.A. in Communications, '15**, was promoted to Communications Coordinator for

First Community Credit Union in Jamestown, N.D. In her new role, Nill will manage internal and external communications, media relations, advertising, press releases, the company newsletter and social media.



**Brandon Chandler, M.S. in Leadership, '16**, graduated from basic military training at Joint

Base San Antonio-Lackland (Texas) with the U.S. Air Force. As an Airman First Class, Chandler completed an intensive eight-week program that included military discipline training, Air Force core values, physical fitness and basic warfare principles and skills.



**Kara Seratte, B.A. in Communications, '16**, competed in the International Cheer

Union (ICU) China Cheerleading Open in Nanjing, China. Performing as Team USA, Seratte and her partner, former GCU student Zaryn Manier, finished first in Hip Hop doubles and second in Pom doubles.



**Brian Platz, M.S. in Leadership with an Emphasis in Disaster Preparedness and**

**Executive Fire Leadership, '16**, was selected to be the first full-time fire chief of North Liberty City (Iowa). Platz has served on the Iowa City Fire Department for 24 years and most recently was its deputy fire chief. He is responsible for

coordinating and directing emergency operations, maintaining facilities, managing special projects and serving as the department's accreditation manager.



**Lucas de Jong, B.S. in Sports Management, '17**, is a group sales and hospitality account

executive for Phoenix International Raceway. A two-time national champion with the GCU lacrosse team, de Jong married fellow GCU alum Brenna Roth this summer.



**Aaron Koehne, B.S. in Accounting, '17**, is a candidate for selection as an officer in the U.S.

Army. Koehne says his desire to become an officer comes from wanting to serve his nation and do his part to defend the country.



**Emily Rios, B.S. in Early Childhood Education, '17**, started her first year of teaching at

Lucile S. Bruner Elementary School in North Las Vegas, Nev. Rios has 20 first-grade students in her classroom and is the youngest teacher at the school.



**Rachael Owojori, B.S. in Nursing, '17**, is a gospel singer and songwriter who recently released an

original single, "Let's Praise Him." Owojori was the first choir director for The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Stellenbosch, South Africa.

## GCU NEWS



The artists on 2017 Canyon Worship include (from left) Desiree Aguilar, Casey Moreno, John Rowe, Kristyn Marie, Jessi Sams, Katie Brown, Nick Buckle, Courtney Welker and Lade Kolawole.

## Students earn experts' raves for Canyon Worship album

Geoff Hunker is the founder and lead singer of Satellites & Sirens. He has worked in Nashville, aka Music City, for a long time.

That made it a head-turner when Hunker spoke at an open house for 2017 Canyon Worship, the new album that features songs written and sung by students in Grand Canyon University's Center for Worship Arts. Hunker, a guest producer for the album along with Billy Smiley, a core member of White Heart, said the music "rivals stuff I've heard in Nashville."

Smiley was equally effusive in his praise.

"These kids – their heart, their energy, their excitement – they pushed me," Smiley said. "... Their passion for what they love to do is unbelievable."

The album, available on iTunes, is the third release by the Worship Arts program, and the consensus of the students and their mentors is that it is their best work yet. Even more important, it features a variety of genres, from southern rock to jazz.

"The quality of this year's selection of songs is a testament to the growth of the students who wrote them and the instructors in the Worship Arts program that are guiding their education along the way," said Eric Johnson, Manager of GCU's recording studio and also one of the album's producers.

"The students are the best examples of GCU students in their humility, grace, leadership, contribution to their communities and ability to communicate the message of a loving God."

—RICK VACEK





Grand Canyon University  
3300 W. Camelback Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85017



# UPCOMING EVENTS



TICKETS AVAILABLE AT [GCUARENA.COM](http://GCUARENA.COM) | 602-639-8979 | GROUP DISCOUNTS CALL 602-639-8972

*Looking for a place to stay? Book your reservation at [GCUHotel.com](http://GCUHotel.com)*

Grand Canyon University Arena Box Office Monday - Friday 10 am - 5 pm | 3300 W. Camelback Road, Phoenix, AZ 85017



/GCUArena



/GCUArena