

CONQUER & PREVAIL

WOFFORD COLLEGE



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Jessica Scott-Felder's work on Southside Cultural Monument celebrates Spartanburg's Black history



Jessica Scott-Felder, assistant professor of studio art, has a mockup of the Southside Cultural Monument on a wall in her home studio. She's worked on the project for five years with the Spartanburg African American Heritage & Culture Committee.

Joy and perseverance.

That's what Jessica Scott-Felder, Wofford College assistant professor of studio art, says the Southside Cultural Monument will represent.

"It was important to focus on joy," says Scott-Felder, who designed the monument while working closely with the Spartanburg African American Heritage & Culture Committee. "The monuments that signify pain carry pain when you're experiencing them. I want people to experience joy, affluence and accomplishment when viewing this."

The monument, which celebrates Spartanburg's Black history, is scheduled to be unveiled on Juneteenth. It's a \$1 million project.

The college's Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion presented the committee with a donation in February. Funds from the college's Crafting Democratic Futures Grant from the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) have also supported the monument. Crafting Democratic Futures explores various forms of the meaning of reparations.

"How do we repair and reconcile aspects of history today," Scott-Felder asks. "As an artist, I see a monument as a way to reconcile that. History is a way to interpret memory."

The monument, which is under construction at the intersection of South Converse Street and Hudson Barksdale Boulevard, will serve as a gateway to the city's Southside. The Southside was the home of the community's Black business district before urban renewal. In 2020, Spartanburg City Council was among the first municipalities in the United States to extend an apology for "racial injustices and long-lasting inequities" stemming from policies, practices and investments that led to racial disparities.

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Dr. Alysa Handelsman winner of first Sullivan Foundation Award



Dr. Alysa Handelsman, assistant professor of sociology and anthropology, right, meets with students Drew Wilson '23 and Sarah Buckmaster '24 outside an abandoned home in the Una community in Spartanburg County. The research project to identify abandoned and condemned properties in the area helped earn Handelsman the first Sullivan Foundation Award.

Dr. Alysa Handelsman arrived on the Wofford campus four years ago with a mission: to teach students the value of service, leadership and community engagement by creating community-based learning and research opportunities across her sociology and anthropology courses.

Last summer, Handelsman and a group of Wofford students, in collaboration with Dr. Jennifer Bradham, assistant professor of environmental studies, and neighborhood leaders, canvassed the Una, Saxon and Arcadia neighborhoods in Spartanburg County to identify and map abandoned and condemned properties. They presented their findings to Spartanburg County Council, which is now using their research to create a revitalization plan and will spend \$1 million to demolish some of the buildings.

Results like that are one reason Handelsman, assistant professor of sociology and anthropology, has been named Wofford's winner of the first Sullivan Foundation Award. The award, created to celebrate the foundation's 100th anniversary, recognizes a faculty or staff member who has "worked diligently with students to teach concepts of service, leadership, community engagement, and innovation and entrepreneurship in addressing community problems."

She will receive the award at the first Sullivan Showcase, which will be held Friday, March 24, in Charlotte, North Carolina.

"This award recognizes the collaborative work we're doing with the backing of the provost and the president," Handelsman says. "It shows how community-based learning and the research that students, community partners, other faculty and I are engaged in remain a part of the Wofford vision. I'm honored and excited that our collaborative, bridge-building work is being recognized and supported."

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Dwight Perry named head men's basketball coach



Dwight Perry has been named Wofford's head men's basketball coach. He has served as the interim coach since Dec. 5, 2022.

Dwight Perry has been named the head coach of the men's basketball program. Perry has spent the last four seasons at Wofford, two as an assistant coach and two as associate head coach. He has been interim head coach since Dec. 5, 2022.

In his four seasons with Wofford, the team has posted winning records in all four campaigns. He has seen six different players earn All-Southern Conference honors, along with coaching five players who earned All-Freshman team accolades.

"We are pleased to have Dwight Perry as the head coach of the men's basketball team," says Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford's president. "He understands and feels strongly about upholding the values and integrity of the athletics program here at Wofford. Over the course of this past season, he has risen to the challenge of leading a young and committed team with great dignity and enthusiasm."

According to Richard Johnson, director of athletics, Perry has earned this opportunity. "He did a great job during the past season of bringing stability to the program and building a culture of teamwork, grit and competitiveness. We look forward watching the program move forward under his leadership."

"I am thankful for Dr. Samhat and Richard Johnson for their belief in me," says Perry.

"Wofford is a special place. I am looking forward to building off the many great coaches and players that are part of the tradition here who built that foundation of Wofford basketball. We

are going to move the program in a positive direction both on and off the court with these student-athletes. I am ready to get to work.”

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Prema Samhat surprised by group’s gift to scholarship fund



Prema Samhat was surprised and touched when the group she led on a tour of India gave \$10,000 to the William and Latika Rajpal Endowed Scholarship Fund, the scholarship Samhat established to honor her parents.

Prema Samhat was at the President’s Home on March 9, waiting for a knock on the door. She was told to expect a photographer from the Old Gold and Black who would take her picture for an International Women’s Day feature.

When the knock came, Samhat was surprised to see eight people from the group of 30 she led on a tour of India in February.

Then came the real surprise.

The travelers decided to show their appreciation for the experience by making a \$10,000 contribution to the William and Latika Rajpal Endowed Scholarship Fund, the scholarship Samhat established in 2017 to honor her parents.

Stacy McBride of Spartanburg suggested the idea of a gift for Samhat.

“Originally it was just going to be a nice spa day,” says McBride. “But people were really generous, and it continued to grow. Prema put a lot of time and work into making the trip an incredible experience. It wouldn’t have been half as special without her.”

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Upstate Forever to recognize Joe Lesesne

Dr. Joe Lesesne, Wofford’s ninth President, will be recognized by Upstate Forever for his conservation efforts in the Upstate and beyond. Lesesne has served on the board for the nonprofit and as its board chair. He’s described as a voice for common-sense approaches to land and water conservation throughout the state. Lesesne will receive the Brad Wyche Extraordinary Achievement Award on April 24 during the ForeverGreen Luncheon in Greenville.

Athletics updates

Baseball earns 8-5 road win over Georgia Tech.

Lilli Horn tabbed SoCon Women’s Golfer of the Week.

Mike Ayers selected to South Carolina Football Hall of Fame.

Alex Horn named SoCon Men’s Tennis Player of the Week.

Galanie garners SoCon Player of the Week honors again.

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