



The end of the spring semester has been a busy time at USC Upstate! We started the month by celebrating the opening of the "Justice for All" exhibit at the Library, which runs through June 30. If you haven't yet seen it, I encourage you to go by and learn about some of the lesser-known stories of the civil rights movement. Just last weekend we co-hosted a national mental health summit with Denny's, which you can read more about below.



And now we are getting ready for commencement, the highlight of our academic year. Though our campus will be a lot quieter as our faculty and students leave for the summer, a lot will be going on behind the scenes as we continue work on the next strategic plan. I appreciate all the feedback many of you have provided as part of the process. As the semester draws to a close, I wish all of you a very happy summer and thank you for another successful academic year.



USC Upstate Congratulates the Class of 2023

USC Upstate will celebrate commencement at 6 p.m. Tuesday, May 2. Families and friends of the Class of 2023 will join faculty, staff, and graduates on the Upper Quad, where more than 700 degrees will be conferred. The ceremony will be livestreamed on the university's [website](#).



Denny's, USC Upstate Summit Explores Mental Health Issues

USC Upstate and Denny's, in collaboration with Meharry Medical College, hosted a national conversation on mental health on April 22, bringing a spotlight to issues that affect workplace well-being.

Keynote speaker Daniel Dawes, senior vice president of global health equity and executive director of the Institute of Global Health Equity at Meharry, highlighted the disparities in mental health care for communities of color, where people are frequently misdiagnosed, undiagnosed or simply unable to access care.

Journalist Roland Martin moderated with humor a panel discussion on mindful eating with Sharon Lykins, vice president of product innovation at Denny's; Dr. Shaneeta Johnson, chief of minimally invasive, robotic, and bariatric surgery at Morehouse School of Medicine; and Dr. Monique May, founder of "Physician in the Kitchen." Panelists noted the importance of not only eating well, but also taking the time to be present at mealtimes.

A second panel with Dawes; Kelli Valade, CEO of Denny's; **Chancellor Bennie Harris**; and Rebecca Bagley, president and CEO of The Kennedy Forum, talked about ways the workplace has changed since COVID, including the flexibility more workers are seeking after working remotely. Panelists shared ways to shake up daily routines with activities that

reinvigorate everyone, such as meeting outdoors or taking a meditation break, and pursuing better work-life balance.

The full event can be seen [here](#).



USC Upstate to Offer Bridge Program for Freshmen

A \$452,311 grant from the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education will enable USC Upstate to help current and rising college freshmen who experienced learning loss due to the pandemic. This summer and next, three cohorts of 20 students each will earn academic credit in math and English while also developing time management and study skills.

The first cohort will be made up of rising first-year students who earned less than Bs in high school English and math. They will enroll in a 3-credit-hour first-year experience course and receive a math refresher course to prepare them to succeed in their general education math class in their first year of college.

The second and third cohorts will consist of first-year students who did not earn their general education credit for English or math, respectively. Both cohorts will complete a 1-credit-hour study skills class, and attend class and study hall with an expert trained to help students apply study skills to academic content. Additional lunch programming will help students build support networks, learn about campus resources, and develop a sense of belonging.

Kim Purdy, assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs and dean of University College, and **Susannah Waldrop**, executive director of student success services, served as co-principal investigators on this project.



Upstate Marks Earth Day with Arboretum Celebration

Visitors to this year's Earth Day enjoyed rubber ducky races on Persimmon Creek, qi gong on the grass, free pizza and other fun activities. Representatives of local organizations shared information about outdoor recreational activities in the area and habitat conservation, and Upstate's own Watershed Ecology Center brought along some reptilian friends to greet people. See more photos [here](#).



Gibbs Center at Spartanburg Regional Hosts Promise Scholars

The final Promise Scholars luncheon of the year was held at the Gibbs Cancer Center and Research Institute in Greer. Representatives of Spartanburg Regional highlighted some of the exciting residential and commercial projects under development in Spartanburg County and encouraged students to consider a career in the area after graduation. Students also learned about different job opportunities within the Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System, from nursing to administration to IT. See more photos [here](#).



Graduates Honored at Student Affairs Awards Ceremony

Nine graduates were honored with USC Upstate service awards during the Student Affairs awards night earlier this month. **Kara Mason** and **Aja Shilo-Evans**, above, received the Earl Gordon Medal, USC Upstate's highest honor for student service. The Upstate 7 award, which honors students for leadership, involvement and service, was presented to **Kaitlin Bridges, Michael Feaster, Jamie Mejia-Delgado, Nolan Plyer, Stephinee Roper, Whitney Snead, and Delaney Suarez**. More photos can be found [here](#).

NEWS IN BRIEF

- **Jonathan Storm**, professor of biology, is the recipient of the 2023 Governor's Award for Excellence in Scientific Awareness. Storm was recognized for his 25 years of scientific outreach and education in the areas of biology and natural history. His [Southern Piedmont Natural History](#) page on Facebook shares a wealth of information about the flora and fauna of the region, and his handy field guide and coloring book can be downloaded [here](#).
- **Araceli Hernández-Laroche**, professor of modern languages, took part in a panel discussion on collaboration and community at the Scholarship and Social Justice Undergraduate Research Conference at Harvard University. She also participated

in the "Ethical Encounters: Research, Communities, and Repair" conference at the University of New Hampshire Center for the Humanities.

- **Ona Egbue**, associate professor in informatics and engineering systems, received the Theodore von Kármán Fellowship, which supports recognized international researchers to complete a research project at RWTH Aachen University.
- **Nick Kehrwald**, dean of students at USC Upstate, received the 2022-23 Service Award from the Southeastern Association of Housing Officers.
- "Party Pursuit: Everyone's Talking About Alcohol," a program developed by **Julie McMahon, Bri Yeldell, Jada Madden Jefferson, Randy Dinkins, and Narja Coaxum**, was honored as the top program in the wellness category at the North Carolina Housing Officers RA Drive-In Conference.
- USC Upstate hosted the 2023 Southeastern Immigration Studies Association conference on April 14 and 15. Conference co-chairs included **Michele Covington**, director of Greenville programs and associate professor of criminal justice, and **Araceli Hernández-Laroche**, director of the South Carolina Centro Latino and professor of modern languages. The theme of the conference was "Migrants, Labor and Activism: Pasts, Presents, and Futures."

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