

EMORY WEEKEND

Traditions and activities turn students into alumni.

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BRITAIN AWARD

Evan Dunn started honing his skills as a leader at Oxford College.

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167th Commencement celebrates graduates who are stepping into a changing world



EMORY PHOTO/VIDEO

Entering as freshmen during the depths of the financial downturn, the Class of 2012 is going out into an economy that is considerably improved.

By **KIMBER WILLIAMS**

A theme of transformation is the common thread within Emory's 167th Commencement ceremony this year.

From an improving job outlook for new graduates to the keynote speaker's inspiring story of personal and professional transformation and a "changing of the guard" for a long-standing ceremonial tradition, change is in the air.

The Class of 2012, which convenes for Commencement exercises on Monday, May 14, began their Emory experience amid one of the nation's starkest economic downturns. They graduate into a much different world.

Not only have the new graduates witnessed hopeful transformations within the U.S. economy during their time at Emory, they've seen improvements in the

overall marketplace for job-seeking seniors.

"This year's graduates have experienced an economic climate change since they began at Emory, and they commence into a world full of challenges," observes President Jim Wagner.

"But Emory has prepared them well, and we can take heart from their eagerness and capacity to meet those challenges," Wagner adds.

The ceremony for about 4,200 graduates will attract around 15,000 people to the Quadrangle to witness the pageantry of an academic tradition rich in symbolism and regalia, with roots stretching back to medieval times.

This year's keynote speaker is acclaimed neurosurgeon and humanitarian Benjamin Carson, a professor of neurosurgery, plastic surgery and pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

Carson, who has directed pediatric neurosurgery at the Johns Hopkins Children's Center for more than 25 years, won international attention in 1987 for the first and only successful separation of craniopagus twins joined at the back of the head.

Known for changing lives through his surgical skill and support of scholarship, Carson is also noted for overcoming his own troubled youth growing up in Detroit to become a gifted, pioneering neurosurgeon.

The Commencement speaker will also receive an honorary doctor of humane letters degree (see page 7).

According to tradition, the ceremony begins precisely at 8 a.m., as the stirring sound of bagpipes and drums from the Atlanta Pipe Band herald the procession that

brings faculty, graduates and dignitaries onto the Quad.

Leading the procession for the last time will be chief marshal Larry Taulbee, associate professor in the Department of Political Science, who will retire later this year.

Taulbee, who has served as a faculty marshal, deputy university marshal and chief marshal, says he will miss the rituals and regalia, as well as the meaning behind Emory's Commencement ceremony.

"The day itself is one of the most important events in the life of the university and a celebration of what we're all about," Taulbee says.

Replacing him will be Bobbi Patterson, professor of pedagogy in the Department of Religion and current chief marshal for Emory College of Arts and Sciences. Patterson is the first

Driving spirit marks winner of McMullan

By **BEVERLY CLARK**

Senior Mariangela Jordan is the recipient of the 2012 Lucius Lamar McMullan Award, one of Emory's highest student honors which also comes with \$20,000 — no strings attached.

The McMullan Award, endowed by Emory alumnus William L. Matheson in honor of his uncle, is given to a graduating senior who exhibits "outstanding citizenship, exceptional leadership and rare potential for service to his or her community, the nation and the world."

An immigrant from Romania, Jordan grew up under the country's brutal Communist regime. That experience pushed her to pursue the opportunities available in the United States, where she has gone from starting out as a janitor to now preparing for graduation from Emory.

"To receive this award is very humbling. It's been a long difficult road. This phase of my life feels like a bonus lap," she says. "I felt no hope as a kid in Romania. Being free is still amazing, every single day."

Described by a nominator as having "the intellect of a scholar, the creativity of an artist and the voice of a poet," Jordan has maintained a near-perfect GPA as an anthropology major in Emory College of Arts and Sciences since transferring here in 2009 from a community college in South Carolina.

She has worked extensively with the local Atlanta refugee community as a tutor and advocate through the International Rescue Committee as part of Emory's Ethics and Servant Leadership program.

Jordan is currently conducting independent research in Clarkston, Ga. She will continue her research

Please see **CLASS OF 2012** on page 4

Please see **JORDAN** on page 7

GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Senior swimming toward U.S. Olympic trials

By **KIMBER WILLIAMS**

When Claire Pavlak appears as a student marshal for Emory College at Commencement, observers will see a strong, confident scholar — an anthropology major and global health minor with a job already awaiting her.

What they won't see are the hours — countless hours, dutifully logged in chlorinated water — that have propelled her toward a goal that once seemed only a dream.

Beyond the academics is the athlete: a standout swimmer who has earned nine individual NCAA championships — more than any swimmer in the program's history — and 20 All-American honors — the second-most by any athlete in Emory's history. This spring, the co-captain's talents helped the Emory women's swimming and diving team win its third-consecutive NCAA Division III Championship.

Now, she's poised to go where no Emory swimmer has gone before.

In March — on a last-minute impulse — Pavlak qualified to attend the U.S. Olympic Team Trials to be held this summer in Omaha, Neb., where she'll compete in the 50-meter freestyle for the chance to join the 2012 U.S. Olympic team.

The opportunity to qualify for the Olympic swim trial came suddenly. At the conclusion of the NCAA championship meet, held in Indianapolis, Ind., organizers decided they had enough interest — and the requisite 50-meter pool — to conduct a time trial.



EMORY PHOTO/VIDEO

Please see **GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT** on page 3

Claire Pavlak

Commencement

EDITOR'S NOTE

Commencement coverage online

Emory Report offers more Commencement content online, including web extras like in-depth stories and related videos.

Visit news.emory.edu to:

- See photos from the 2012 ceremony.
- View videos, including interviews with graduating seniors and time-lapse scenes.
- Get social, with live updates via Twitter and more.
- Find out who won faculty awards and read highlights from school diploma ceremonies.
- Hear PhD recipients describe their research and post-graduation plans.

Check www.emory.edu/commencement for all Commencement-related information, including schedules, answers to frequently asked questions, logistics, maps, inclement weather contingencies and more.

Can't attend the ceremony? The main ceremony will be streamed live online at www.emory.edu/commencement.

Keep up with campus news this summer

To keep up-to-date with campus news this summer, visit the Emory News Center at news.emory.edu and look for the Emory Report eBulletin in your inbox each week.

Thanks for reading

Congratulations, graduates! We've enjoyed sharing your stories—may your accomplishments, endeavors and aspirations during your college career serve you well.

Kim Urquhart, editor
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EMORY report

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JEFFERSON AWARD

Barlett put Emory on path to sustainability

By CAROL CLARK

Peggy Barlett has this advice for graduates: "Don't listen to the people who say 'conform to the rules and stay practical.' Listen to your inner wisdom about where this country needs to be and what you can do to help it get there."

Barlett, the Goodrich C. White Professor of Anthropology and faculty liaison for the Office of Sustainability Initiatives, embodies that advice. She is the recipient of this year's Thomas Jefferson Award, the University's premier honor for significant service to the institution through personal activities, influence and leadership.

Barlett joined the Emory faculty in 1976. The campus, the city and the world had a much different mindset. Many people appreciated natural beauty and worked to maintain it. But broad-based approaches to sustainability were largely confined to specialists like Barlett, who studied the intersection of economic, ecological and demographic change among farmers.

Entering the 21st century, amid growing awareness of the greenhouse effect, attitudes began shifting. A pivotal moment at Emory occurred in 1999, when the decision to build a shuttle route in Lullwater forest sparked controversy.

"I began to see more energy on campus around environmental concerns," Barlett recalls. "I decided to take a year off from research and spend that time seeing if we could galvanize some of that momentum."

It was a risky move, since sustainability work on campus didn't fit into the conventional role of faculty. "I thought I was going to run into a brick wall," Barlett recalls. "One person urged me, 'Just keep calling the meetings, Peggy. Things will change.' To my surprise, people started showing up and expressing interest, at all levels. A lot of people who love Emory wanted to help create a better future."

Barlett began serving as the sustainability point person for faculty, staff, administrators, students and alumni, planting the seeds for Emory to become a nationally recognized green campus. The Piedmont Project, for example, infuses sustainability into the curriculum across disciplines, and has become a model for the country, inspiring hundreds of others.

Meanwhile, she published prolifically. "Sustainability on Campus: Stories and Strategies for Change," co-edited by Barlett, offers firsthand accounts, both inspiring and practical.



Peggy Barlett, Goodrich C. White Professor of Anthropology

Barlett also helped develop the Sustainability Vision for Emory, adopted by the President's Cabinet in 2005 as a core principle of the University's strategic plan. The vision called for an Office of Sustainability Initiatives, and laid out clear and ambitious goals to achieve by 2015. Among them: Reduce average campus energy use by 25 percent, reduce the total waste stream by 65 percent, and procure 75 percent of the food for campus dining facilities from local or sustainably grown sources.

"Ultimately, the goal is to help prepare students to be leaders in a different world," says Barlett, who doesn't take a pessimistic view of the sustainability challenges they face. "This is an exciting time to be part of change, so much is happening. Businesses, governments and nonprofits are moving dynamically. Whole new professions are emerging around sustainability."

Emory Weekend unites graduates, new and old

By TANIA DOWDY

This time of year is often bittersweet for graduating seniors. "I'm looking forward to every event during Commencement Weekend," says Lindsey Bomnin, an Emory College senior majoring in Spanish and journalism. "It's my last opportunity to spend time with my friends, so I'm taking advantage of every moment."

The Emory Alumni Association will celebrate Emory's 167th Commencement exercises May 10-14 with a weekend full of festivities for Emory's oldest and newest graduates.

Emory Commencement Weekend events include traditions such as the Candlelight Crossover for graduating seniors and the Corpus Cordis Aureum induction ceremony for alumni celebrating their 50-year reunions.

As part of the Corpus Cordis Aureum induction ceremony, the Jake Ward Golden Heart Award will be presented to Dean Minor '38Ox-'40C. Established in 2010, the Golden Heart Award seeks to recognize Emory alumni who have demonstrated the values represented tirelessly by Judson "Jake" Ward '33C-'36G.

Among the Emory Commencement Weekend highlights is "Man v. Food" host Adam Richman '96C, who will speak to seniors at Class Day on May 10.

"It's great to have an Emory alumnus speak to the seniors this year. It will be very inspiring," says Gloria Grevas, director of alumni and student programs.

The Emory Alumni Association's Student Alumni Board President Anna Ross will speak at the Senior Class Reception, which includes the Coke Toast, an Emory tradition. "This is a great opportunity for students to share the Emory Alumni Association's messages," says Grevas.

Following the reception, students will cross the Houston Mill Bridge to the Miller-Ward Alumni House, symbolizing their transition from students to alumni during the Candlelight Crossover ceremony.

Stay tuned to the EAA's blog, Facebook page, and Twitter profile for updates throughout the weekend.

See the full schedule of Commencement Weekend activities at www.alumni.emory.edu.



Baccalaureate



Candlelight Crossover



Class Day

Commencement

SCHOLAR/TEACHER AWARD

Freeman values lifelong learning, patient listening

By MARY LOFTUS

Whether dealing with decisions about hormone replacement therapy, heart transplants, or end-of-life issues, Sarah Freeman has learned to listen to her patients. "Once I hear my patient's



EMORY PHOTO/VIDEO

Sarah Freeman, Betty Tigner Turner Clinical Professor of Nursing

stories, everything starts to make perfect sense," says Freeman, the Betty Tigner Turner Clinical Professor of Nursing at the Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing. "Even research findings that I didn't anticipate."

As this year's recipient of the 2012 University Scholar/Teacher award, selected by Emory faculty on behalf of the United Methodist Church Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Freeman specializes in women's health and chronic disease management, and has been instrumental in establishing national accreditation for advanced practice nursing programs.

"Early on, I became convinced that treating people after they become sick was not the best way to go," Freeman says. "I want to give them the tools they needed to try to stay healthy or to manage their chronic disease, to be further ahead in the game."

Freeman firmly believes that everyone can have a degree of wellness in their life, no matter their level of disease. "It's a continuum. How do you maximize your health? That's what I'm interested in," she says.

Freeman's research interests include how to apply the outcomes of evidence-based medicine, and ethical decision making. She is a faculty fellow at the Emory Center for Ethics.

"Nursing is a practice discipline and a dynamic field," says Freeman, who also worked as a labor and delivery nurse for many years. "It doesn't take long to lose validity with your students or to fall behind. A large part of teaching is role modeling what it means to be a practitioner."

The most valuable lesson she imparts to students, Freeman believes, is a love of lifelong learning. "There is no way you're going to know about every scenario that is going to come up," she says. "Developing a student's inquisitive mind is one of the most important things a teacher has to do."

Student nurses must also appreciate the research/practice loop. "Always look for what's different, or what needs to be done. Health care will not progress without research," she says. "There's not that sharp a demarcation between the clinician and the researcher—that's where the questions arise."

Nurses, says Freeman, must be grounded in the hard sciences and compassionate and caring in their clinical work, but to be great nurses, they must also have the traits of integrity, courage and curiosity. "When you choose health care as a profession," she says, "you take on the responsibility to look after the welfare of others."

Torn between becoming a nurse or a teacher after high school, Freeman soon discovered she could do both. After spending 30 years as a family nurse practitioner, she can't imagine giving up her clinical practice, and continues to work one day a week at the Feminist Women's Health Center in Atlanta.

The nurse practitioner movement has its roots in serving the underserved, looking after women who could not get care anywhere else, and helping women prevent unwanted pregnancies. "Nurse practitioners provide a way of filling in the gap," she says. "I like to say that everybody deserves the care of a nurse practitioner."

GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT: Training excellence expands pool of athletes

Continued from the cover

"I'm a senior, and I'd always thought the nationals would be my last meet," Pavlak says. "But I thought I'd give it a try."

Conditions were far from ideal. Pavlak had competed in 13 races over the past four days, anchoring three relay teams. An awards banquet on the final day kept her out past midnight. The time trial would be early the next morning.

"She's very much a classic overachiever," says John Howell, head swim coach. "It was one of those events where she had nothing to lose."

Pavlak went in expecting little, but knowing that she performs best when she can clear her mind and simply swim. "I had no feel for where the wall was," she recalls. "I just put my head down and went."

Her instincts paid off. To make it to the Olympic trials, she had to beat a time of 26.39 seconds. Pavlak finished in 26.29 seconds — a personal best.

Following Commencement, she'll remain on campus this summer to continue training, along with eight other Emory swimmers who hope to qualify for the Olympic trial at later meets. "To represent Emory [at the Olympic trials] gives us an unprecedented level of exposure," Howell says. "I think we're charting some territory right now that's unique. There's not really a blueprint for it."

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CLASS OF 2012: Change is in the air for graduates

Continued from the cover

woman in Emory history to step into the role, which she will fill for the next three years, an opportunity that she embraces.

“For me, this day is about a recommitment — a time for us all to come together to remember the deepest commitments that draw us to this place,” Patterson says. “I see it as an opportunity to look toward the future while standing in this beautiful capsule that we call the present.”

For detailed information for graduates and guests, including inclement weather information for each school’s ceremony, visit www.emory.edu/commencement.



EMORY PHOTOVIDEO

Oxford College ceremony

Emory alumna Zoe Hicks, chair of the Oxford Board of Counselors, will be the keynote speaker during Commencement exercises for about 300 graduates at Oxford College on Saturday, May 12.

The ceremony begins at 10 a.m., as a bagpiper leads the procession onto the Oxford College Green. A reception will follow on the lawn at Haygood Hall.

Oxford College recognizes students who have successfully completed their sophomore year in preparation for continuing on to Emory’s Atlanta campus.

Immediately following Commencement, guests are invited to a groundbreaking for the new Library and Academic Commons.

For information, visit oxford.emory.edu.

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Commencement

BRITAIN AWARD

Service shines spotlight on Dunn

By BEVERLY CLARK

Senior Evan Dunn spent much of his time in college involved in the type of behind-the-scenes service and quiet leadership not likely to attract the spotlight. That is, until now.

Dunn is the 2012 recipient of Emory's highest student honor, the Marion Luther Brittain Award, which is presented each year to a graduate who has demonstrated exemplary service to both the university and the greater community without expectation of recognition.

Candidates are required to demonstrate a strong character, meritorious service and sense of integrity. The award comes with \$5,000.

"I am humbled and honored to receive this. I hope I can live up to the expectations of this award, and give back as much as I can in my life," says Dunn, a political science and history major in Emory College who grew up in nearby Cobb County, Ga.

His service and leadership development began at Oxford College with the Bonner Leaders Program, a "definitive experience for me that set the stage for everything else I've done," Dunn says. The Bonner Leaders Program gives students leadership training and opportunities for ongoing, in-depth service work, as well as a scholarship stipend to provide financial support in place of a job.

After transitioning to Emory College, he interned with the International Rescue Committee, working as a tutor and helping refugees navigate the health care system. He is co-founder and program manager for a refugee GED program in Clarkston, Ga., and leads a weekly Volunteer Emory service trip to the program for other students.

On campus, Dunn serves on the Honor Council and led the Emory College Council's Committee for Academic Integrity. He has also served as an orientation leader and captain and currently works with the Oxford Continuee Association. In addition, he works as a student manager in the Student Activity and Academic Center.

After graduation, Dunn will teach high school math in Atlanta as part of Teach for America for two years. He plans to return to school to earn a law degree and masters in public health to pursue a career in policy making and health care.

In addition to earning scholarships, Dunn is a recipient of Emory Advantage, a financial aid program that replaces eligible loans with institutional grants. The aid allowed him, and his younger sister who just completed her freshman year at Oxford, to attend Emory.



Evan Dunn is the 2012 recipient of Emory's highest student honor, the Marion Luther Brittain Award.

EMORY PHOTO/VIDEO

CUTTINO AWARD

Rusche comes full circle as mentor and role model

By LESLIE KING

English professor Harry Rusche says that receiving the 2012 George P. Cuttino Award for Excellence in Mentoring is special, "because when I first came to Emory, George Cuttino was my mentor. He was one of the best influences on my career."

Established in 1997 by trustee John T. Glover, the mentoring award was named in honor of the late George Peddy Cuttino who was known as a guide and counselor beyond the classroom.

Cuttino became a model for Rusche. "I watched the way George interacted with his students and colleagues. When dealing with students early in my career I would often ask myself, 'What would George do?'" he says.

"I was working on history and literature and he helped me with my first two important articles in *The English Historical Review*," Rusche continues. "He always asked me to serve on committees with him. He, my wife Sue, and I became close friends."

Rusche's teaching and research interests are Shakespeare and current trends in recent poetry.

"As for my own work, an important aspect was the beginning of digital scholarship when several of us won a Culpeper Grant that allowed us to set up summer programs for faculty and graduate students," he says. "The program not only introduced the faculty to teaching with computers, but prepared a number of graduate students to leave Emory for [positions at] other colleges with skills in technology and teaching."

He has three ongoing projects, all of which are online: "Shakespeare and the Players," a survey of the many English and American actors who played Shakespeare's characters for late Victorian and Edwardian audiences; "Shakespeare Illustrated," exploring 19th century paintings, criticism and productions of Shakespeare's plays and their influences on one another; and "The Great War, 1914-1918," a collection of pictures and poetry in collaboration with Emory Libraries' Beck Center.

The 2012-2013 year will be Rusche's 50th year of teaching. Among his honors are the Emory University Outstanding Award early in his career in 1968, the Emory Williams Distinguished Teaching Award in 1987, and his appointment to the Arthur M. Blank Distinguished Teaching chair in 1992.



Harry Rusche, professor of English

EMORY PHOTO/VIDEO

"One of my earliest awards for teaching was, I am sure, the result of [a nomination from] George Cuttino," he says.

Rusche says he attends most Commencements, "even when I don't march," as he enjoys meeting the parents of students he has taught or advised. "It is always a pleasure when I have a chance to congratulate parents on what a splendid job they did in raising bright, enthusiastic kids."

Tips for graduates

Thanks to the Emory community members who answered a question posed on Emory University's Facebook page: What is your advice for graduating seniors?

Here's a sampling:

- Think about the personal qualities that you developed while at Emory and trust them to carry you into the rest of the world.
- Don't borrow what you can't pay back and only lend what you can afford to lose.
- Take a stroll or jog in Lullwater Preserve before you graduate, if you haven't done so already . . . beauty and peacefulness hidden right on campus!
- Remember, as graduates, you still represent the university in your personal and professional lives.
- Chase your passions now . . . and when they change, chase those too.



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Commencement

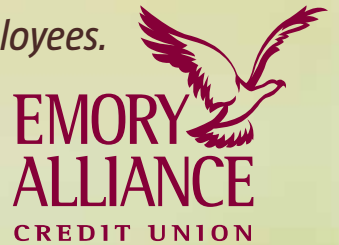


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Commencement

HONORARY DEGREES

Multi-talented honorees excel in arts and sciences

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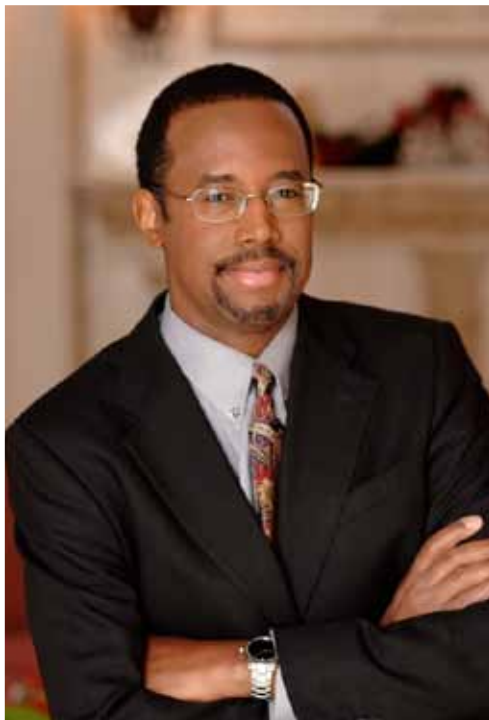
Benjamin S. Carson Sr., the 2012 Commencement speaker, overcame challenges of poverty, poor schools and low self-esteem to become a full professor of neurosurgery, oncology, plastic surgery and pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. As the inaugural recipient of a professorship dedicated in his name, he is now the Benjamin S. Carson Sr., MD, and Dr. Evelyn Spiro, RN, Professor of Pediatric Neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins.

Carson's achievements include pioneering medical procedures for conjoined twins. He has written several books.

Among his many honors, Carson has been named one of the nation's 20 foremost physicians and scientists and a Library of Congress "Living Legend"; and he has received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Carson will receive an honorary doctor of humane letters degree at Commencement.

Camille Billops, artist, will receive an honorary doctor of humane letters. Billops



Benjamin Carson will receive an honorary doctor of humane letters degree.

is a sculptor and printmaker, writer, publisher and filmmaker. She and her husband James V. Hatch founded the Hatch-Billops Collection, an archive of African American cultural materials that they have donated to Emory's Robert W. Woodruff Library. The collection includes interviews with about 1,400 minority artists of all disciplines.

James V. Hatch, writer, will receive an honorary doctor of letters. The author of several books on African American theater, Hatch is an emeritus professor in the graduate theater program at City University of New York.

Together with his wife Camille Billops, Hatch established the Hatch-Billops Collection of African American cultural materials, which they have donated to the Robert W. Woodruff Library.

He has received a number of awards for contributions to the arts.

Catharine R. Stimpson, a leader in the advancement of graduate education, will receive an honorary doctor of letters. She is

dean emerita of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of New York University.

The scholar of gender studies and feminist theory has authored and edited many works, including novels, numerous essays, stories and reviews for a wide range of publications. Stimpson was the founding editor of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, in the field of gender studies.

Muhammad Yunus, known as the father of the microloan, will receive an honorary doctor of letters. He established the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh in 1983, an endeavor that helped to establish the microcredit movement across the developing world, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2006.

He also established the Yunus Centre to disseminate his philosophy and practices. Council for Sustainable Economic Development, and the U.N. Expert Group on Women and Finance. He is a member of the board of the United Nations Foundation.

Yunus will be the keynote speaker for the Rollins School of Public Health diploma ceremony.

—From staff reports

JORDAN: 'Being free is amazing every single day,' says McMullan winner

Continued from the cover

with political refugees both in Clarkston and in the Mizoram region of India, when she begins a graduate program in anthropology at Cornell University this fall.

"My time at Emory was challenging academically but also gave me the opportunity to practice and apply social justice and

serve the community. I did not sleep much," she adds.

As president of the Ethics and the Arts Society, a student arts organization exploring the role of arts as a tool for social change, Jordan organized multiple events on campus highlighting the intersection between creativity and ethics. She was a member of the



Mariangela Jordan is the 2012 recipient of the Lucius Lamar McMullan Award.

EMORY PHOTO/VIDEO

"My time at Emory was challenging academically but also gave me the opportunity to practice and apply social justice and serve the community."

Emory College Honor Council, the Omicron Delta Kappa Leadership Honor Society and a member of the Emory Leadership Executive Roundtable.

She was named the Emory Alumni Board Leadership Scholar in 2011 and selected for the Unsung Heroine Award by the Center for Women this year. She received the Phi Theta Kappa Reynolds Scholarship for Poetry in 2009 and the Outstanding Junior Award from the anthropology department in 2011. She also managed to co-found Purple Mind Productions, a Romanian-based independent television production company she runs with a journalist in Romania.

When Jordan first came to the United States, she took any and all jobs, working as a janitor, as a roofer, and in a gas station. "It took me a little while to figure out the American

system, but I knew that in order to succeed I would need more education," she says.

To offer herself "the gift of education," Jordan hit the road and crisscrossed the country as a big rig trucker driver for one year, saving up for her education while sending money home to Romania to support her mother and grandmother.

"Emory University is amazing. I'm not sure if my peers really understand the access they have here: to be able to walk into a library with millions of books by the simple swipe of your student card and to work directly with faculty interested in your success," she says. "Not to mention the unlimited opportunities to develop individual potentials, no matter what their interests are, that Emory offers its students."

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Commencement

Volunteers help the day run smoothly for people and events

By KIMBER WILLIAMS

As a contract coordinator for the planning, design and construction unit of Campus Services, Robin Mitchell thrives on the frenetic energy of a campus that is constantly changing.

So during Commencement, you'll find her where she's most comfortable — amid the adrenaline-stoked pool of amateur shutterbugs clustered near the central stage in a space known as "the photo pit."

For most of her 14 years here at Emory, Mitchell has served alongside the 150 to 200 campus volunteers who help make Commencement flow smoothly each year. In fact, those volunteers are the critical behind-the-scenes fuel that help run the event, says Michael Kloss, executive director of the Office of University Events.

From ushers, ambassadors and "way-finders" to a posse of "chair wranglers" who set up, arrange and break down some 14,000 chairs on the Quad, Emory's volunteer workforce strives to help graduates and families have a "flawless experience," Kloss says.

"So many people are working well before sunrise to make sure that nothing gets in the way of an ideal graduation

experience that has been building, in some families, for generations," Kloss says. "People really want to help — many of our volunteers come back year after year."

Mitchell coordinates a team of volunteers who manage the photo pit, where guests and family members will gather to nab a snapshot as Emory College graduates return to their seats after diploma presentation.

Think controlled chaos: thousands of parental paparazzi assembled in alphabetical order craning to get a glimpse of their graduate. Even though Mitchell assures that a professional photographer will get a great shot, she understands the urge to capture the moment themselves.

The job requires a delicate balance — make parents feel as welcome as possible, while letting them know there's a system. "It's got to be a very smooth-running machine, and most of the time, it goes beautifully," she adds.

Frenzied though it seems, Mitchell finds satisfaction in the work. "For me, it's very gratifying and grounding to annually remember why I'm here, and that is service to students. It's nice to be reminded that this is an important starting point for young people's lives."



EMORY PHOTO/VIDEO

Emory College staff member Laura Papotto is one of the many volunteers who help make Commencement flow smoothly.

Visit news.emory.edu/rodeo to watch a time-lapse video of the annual "chair rodeo," in which volunteers set up 14,000 chairs to prepare for Commencement.

Photo Hunt

Can you spot the five differences between these two photographs?

Visit news.emory.edu/photohunt to check your answers, or use the QR code reader in your smartphone to scan the code to the right.



ORIGINAL IMAGE

ALTERED IMAGE



EMORY PHOTO/VIDEO