FACS graduate program: Training the best and brightest to make real-world impacts
Rob Nielsen and his colleagues may have more in common with Mark Richt, Georgia’s high-profile football coach, than it might seem, salary and endorsement deals notwithstanding.

Like Richt and his staff, Nielsen, the graduate coordinator in the FACS department of financial planning, housing and consumer economics, and his fellow faculty and staff members are responsible for recruiting talent to Athens. He looks at GREs and GPAs, pores over statements of purpose and attends recruitment fairs and poster sessions to meet prospective FACS graduate students.

When he encounters that special student, he uses phrases like “put the presses on” to describe the recruitment process.

“One someone has been identified as that great Ph.D. student, you have to give them a lot of attention,” Nielsen said. For Nielsen and his colleagues, those efforts continue to pay off. In the FHCE department alone, applications to graduate school have more than tripled in the last two years, from 16 in 2013-14 to more than 60 (and counting) this year.

“It’s been a determined effort by staff, current students and faculty that has brought us our most professionally accomplished and academically capable incoming class yet,” Nielsen said.

Across all four departments, the FACS graduate education programs are known for launching careers, be it in industry, academia, government or entrepreneurship. Where are they working? All over the U.S., it turns out, from a food lab in California’s San Joaquin Valley to a college classroom in Storrs, Conn., and seemingly everywhere in between.

A graduate degree from FACS can lead to a career as a museum curator, a financial planning professional, a marriage therapist or, in the case of foods and nutrition graduate program grad, Dr. Chip Ogburn, a successful career as an orthopedic surgeon (see page 23).

“Professional fields require a greater volume of information to know,” FACS dean Linda Kirk Fox said. “The complexity of issues our graduates will address requires a greater level of understanding.”

“Students who complete a graduate degree in FACS go on to any number of diverse fields where they work directly to address the world’s most pressing needs.”

Here’s a closer look at just a handful of graduates, as well as a couple of current students, of the FACS graduate education program:

**DIPESH GANGOPADHYAY**

**Ph.D., 2015, Financial Planning, Housing and Consumer Economics**

Gangopadhyay came to Athens from India, where he worked for the National Sample Survey Organization, the world’s largest sample survey operation.

While dealing with a vast pool of socioeconomic and demographic data, the seeds for a dissertation on poverty measurements in the U.S. were sown.

Gangopadhyay’s dissertation proposes an alternative methodology for measurement of poverty. Currently, the U.S. uses an income-based methodology that many consider to be lacking.

“Academics and policy makers have longed for a better measure of poverty that more fully captures people’s circumstances,” said Nielsen, Gangopadhyay’s major professor.

Gangopadhyay’s did exactly that, Nielsen said, incorporating different types of measurements such as hardships involving food, housing, education, for example, that potentially could have significant policy ramifications if adopted.

Since graduation, he has moved back to India and has taken a position within the NSSO.

“He’s technically very sound, so his understanding of data and how to extract the appropriate information out of very large, complex data sets is more advanced than anyone I’ve seen before,” Nielsen said. “What comes through with Dipesh is he has both personal and professional experiences that brought him to a place where he can write about poverty measurement better than anyone I’ve read.”

**COLETTE MILLER**

**Ph.D., 2014, Foods and Nutrition**

Miller, now a post-doctoral research associate with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, was originally attracted to FACS largely because of the research of the late Dr. Clifton Baile, a widely respected researcher who headed up the UGA Obesity Initiative.

Miller received her master’s degree in nutrition from UNC-Greensboro and was interested in continuing her research of menopause. Miller’s dissertation looked at the prevalence and effects of fatty liver disease.

At the EPA, she studies the effects of air pollution on obesity and metabolic disease and performs basic molecular research.

She credited the department’s multidisciplinary approach and the freedom she was granted to perform exploratory research for preparing her for her current position.

“They gave me my own space and opportunity to find myself as a researcher,” Miller said of Baile and other mentors. “I wanted to figure out what that relationship was (between diet and health) and how our behavior as consumers affected our health.”

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**KRISTI-WARREN SCOTT**

**Ph.D., 2015, Financial Planning, Housing and Consumer Economics**

Scott, a native of Chicago, enrolled at UGA having received her undergraduate degree in agricultural business and applied economics from Ohio State and her MBA from Benedictine University.

Scott’s research on the relationship between obesity and food access was born out of a personal interest in addressing issues within the African-American community.

Around the time she began researching graduate programs that addressed some of these health-related issues, several parents of friends of hers began dying of chronic illnesses.

“I wanted to figure out what that relationship was (between diet and health) and how our behavior as consumers affected our health,” she said. “It was purely personal. I was fed up with seeing so many young people of color in my neighborhood falling ill.”

The FHCE department, she said, turned out to be the perfect home for her to conduct this research. During the course of her studies, Scott said she decided to “live my research.”

“I came up with this motto: ‘Don’t write about it, be about it,’” she said.

As a result, Scott drastically altered her own diet, becoming a vegan and developing different habits as a consumer, which had a profound effect on her parents’ lifestyles as well.

Since defending her dissertation, she has accepted a position as a prevention effectiveness fellow at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, working with the National Center for Environmental Health conducting research on the effectiveness of food safety interventions in restaurants.

“Being a researcher is a lot like being in sales,” Scott said. “You have to believe in what you’re doing because that’s how you end up connecting with other people.”
Martin Seay
Assistant Professor of Personal Financial Planning, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS
BSFCS in Housing and Consumer Economics, Major: Housing, 2007
“I came into FHCE an unmotivated slacker, content with sliding by. The faculty challenged me, demanded my best and refused to settle for anything less. They molded me into the person I am today, and for that I will be eternally grateful.”

Clovece (Trey) Sanders
Sr. Food Scientist & Registered Dietitian, Research & Development, Wonderful Pistachios & Almonds LLC, Bakersfield, Calif.
BSFCS in Consumer Foods & Dietetics, 2009
M.S. Foods & Nutrition with Dietetic Internship, 2017
“In my time at FACS, I was able to find a balance of gaining extensive knowledge and presenting that information in a simple, concise way. Combining that with the warm family environment of FACS professors & staff makes for a very special experience that I would hope for all students!”

Sara Marcketti
Associate Director, Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching and Associate Professor, AESHM Department, Iowa State University
B.A. Art History, 2000, M.S. Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors, 2002
“My love for learning was born in the classrooms at the University of Georgia. Dr. Patricia Hunt-Hurst helped me realize my potential as a university professor. Other TMI faculty members – Dr. Ian Hardin and the late Dr. Nolan Etters – helped to show me how satisfying and fun an academic career could be.”

Vikram Dhende
Polymer Scientist, Voith Paper, Summerville, S.C.
Ph.D., Textile Science, 2011
“My stay in TMI was a memorable one. I was fortunate to have Dr. Ian Hardin as my Ph.D. advisor and mentor. The department helped me hone my skills as a researcher, which has helped me immensely in my current position in the industry. I was able to do exciting and fulfilling research and had the opportunity to do interdisciplinary research in chemistry with Dr. Jason Locklin, my co-advisor.”
Carlson, whose research involves childhood and inter-familial
Ph.D. candidate, Human Development and Family Science, 2017
an integral part of Sharma’s lab, which
pursue her passion of teaching.
Soon after being accepted, she was able
department head.
she got immediate responses from the
student at Colorado State University,
and Interiors, 2017
research interests and
website, she found a professor, Dr. Suraj
about the doctoral program in the FACS
department of textiles, merchandising
and nutrition during her days as a grad
she found a professor, Dr. Suraj
and Interiors. 2017
Ph.D. candidate, Textiles, Merchandising
and Interiors, 2017
I
I teacher assistant
busing tables, cook line – I can cook a mean crepe – tending
he said. “It’s an area where there’s still a lot of work to be done.”
Carlson’s passion for clinical work was born during his
days at the University of Kentucky, where he received both his
bachelor’s and master’s degrees.
He has continued that work through his involvement
as a marriage and family therapist with the ASPIRE Clinic, a
resource within FACS that provides holistic counseling and
education services to the UGA and Athens community.
“I’ve found that I was more effective with clients who had
seen traumatic scenarios and had lived through them, but it
was still something that was impairing their life,” he said. “That
process of repairing that trauma was really where I felt there
was a home for me.”
On the research end, Carlson said investigating childhood
trauma and attempting to find early intervention points
remains a chief focus.
He said he tells his peers who are shopping for Ph.D.
programs to give FACS a serious look.
“I tell them basically everyone here is a master in their field,”
he said. “We have amazing things on the qualitative end and
amazing things on the quantitative end. If you want to get into
something, there’s a likelihood that someone’s doing it or it
has already done it and it is really good at it, and you can come here
and pursue it.”
Matt Carlson
Ph.D. candidate, Human Development and Family Science, 2017
Carlson, whose research involves childhood and inter-familial
sexual abuse, has an interest in both clinical work as well as
continued research on the academic side. At FACS, he is able to
pursue both.
“Parent-child abuse isn’t new, but it’s under-studied and I
think a lot of studies show that it’s drastically under-reported; he said. “It’s an area where there’s still a lot of work to be done.”
Chip Ogburn was living sort of a dream life for himself in
a Colorado ski resort.
He was in his early 20s, a recent Stanford graduate,
working odd jobs and enjoying the view and amenities of
the idyllic valley nicknamed Ski Town USA.
But something was missing.
“We had a really good friend who was just about to turn
40 and had saved up enough money to buy his first condo,”
Ogburn recalled. “I remember thinking ‘I don’t want to be 40
years old and buying my very first condo.’ That was not what
I wanted out of life.”
At the time, Ogburn was managing a health food store,
which meshed nicely with a lifelong interest in fitness
and nutrition. Feeling a pull toward higher education, he
eventually discovered Dr. Rick Lewis’ lab within the FACS
department of foods and nutrition, moved back to his
native Georgia and completed the program in 1999.
After attending medical school and an orthopedic
residency in Augusta, followed by a trauma fellowship in St.
Louis, Ogburn and his wife Kjirsten moved back to Athens
in 2010, where he now works as an orthopedic surgeon
specializing in trauma and reconstruction with Athens
Orthopedic Clinic, performing an average of 25 surgeries a
week.
Tell us a little about some of the jobs you had in
Colorado.
“I worked every facet of the service industry. Waiting and
busing tables, cook line – I can cook a mean crepe – tending
bar, bar manager, painting, construction. I worked in a grocery
store deli for probably a year. You name it, I’ve done it.”
How would you describe your experience as a graduate
student with Dr. Lewis?
“More than anything he was just a great life mentor in
terms of how to try and balance your activities. I think that’s
what health and wellness is about mostly: not just the
determination and the food you eat, but the balance you
bring to your life. The years I spent with him were wonderful.”
How did the grad school process prepare you for your
career?
“From an academic standpoint, pushing through the stress of
thesis work and grant proposals is harder than doing anything
else really in terms of studies and testing and all that. It’s a
significant trial to put yourself through. Going through that
academically prepares you to do anything you want to do … if
you can push through a thesis in that amount of time, you can
pretty much tackle anything.”
How do you describe your job?
“I mostly fix broken stuff as a trauma guy and take care of all
kinds of urgent problems: lots of infections, lots of urgent
fracture work, car wrecks, hip fractures, you name it.”
Any misconceptions about the life of a trauma surgeon?
“Most people think trauma (is) you just show up and whatever
comes in the door you just kind of fly by the seat of your pants.
The reality is I spend a significant amount of time preparing
for all these cases we do and the forethought is what brings
success to the actual surgery, not whether you’ve got good
hands or the right tools or you’re good on the fly.”
What is one of the highlights of your work?
“You do have those handful of patients who are so grateful
and gracious and it seems like the timing is just right [that]
when you’re kind of getting beat down and you’re getting
tired and you have the salt of the earth that’s not being too
kind to you, that you’ll find that one person who says just the
right thing to kind of brighten up your day and make you feel
better. That helps.”
Graduate programs are offered in each of our four departments. With students, our faculty shape academic fields through interdisciplinary and translational research in financial planning, housing and consumer economics; foods and nutrition; human development and family science; and textiles, merchandising and interiors. Students are positioned for careers in research, education, government, and industry upon graduation. Accelerated B.S.F.C.S./M.S. programs allow students to get a head start on their advanced degree.

Graduate Programs

**Accelerated B.S.F.C.S./M.S. Options**
- Consumer Economics
- Consumer Foods
- Dietetics
- Financial Planning
- Housing
- Nutritional Sciences

**Master of Science (M.S.)**
- Financial Planning, Housing and Consumer Economics
- Foods and Nutrition
- Human Development and Family Science *(Child Life emphasis option)*
- Textiles, Merchandising and Interiors *(four areas of focus)*

**Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)**
- Financial Planning, Housing and Consumer Economics
- Foods and Nutrition
- Human Development and Family Science *(Marriage and Family Therapy emphasis option)*
- Polymer, Fiber and Textile Sciences *(International Merchandising emphasis option)*

**Online**
- M.S. in Financial Planning *(non-thesis)*

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