



SUNDARI PAREHK:
WOMAN LEADER IN THE
GAMING WORLD AT UWG

MARIA JESUS MARTINEZ

Contributing Writer

Sundari Parekh, the Vice President of IT Security Risk at Activision, came to speak at the Richards College of Business on Thursday, March 2 for “Celebrating Women Making History.” Hosted and organized by the Women in Technology On-campus organization, the event celebrated the work of Parekh as a woman of color in the gaming world, a field majorly dominated by men.

“In the world of cyber security, there are only about 24% women that work in that field,” said Dr. Jeannie Pridmore, Director & Professor of UWG’s Management Information Systems Department (MIS), at the beginning of the conference. “When you look at women of color, it gets to 9%, so cyber security is a field that is in desperate need of diversity.”

Parekh was invited by UWG Alumni John Ramdath. They worked together at InComm, Parekh’s previous organization. After being introduced by Pridmore, Parekh was interviewed with four questions by Abrianna Warner, the president of UWG’s Women in Technology organization. The second half of the conference opened the discussion for anyone to ask questions.

This was Parekh’s first time being

Photo: Maria Jesus Martinez, *The West Georgian* invited to speak at a university. For Parekh, being invited by UWG was an honor and she felt pleased and humbled by the experience.

“I spend a lot of my career working in security, technology and fields that are male dominated and to be recognized as a woman in leadership and to be asked to speak at an organization like this, it’s a big deal for me,” said Parekh. “I really enjoy speaking and sharing my experiences, my stories. Collaborating with faculty is a totally different experience outside of the work world.”

Throughout the event, Parekh had different advice to students. One of them was to try to balance their time between work and life. Parekh feels that one of her challenges as a female leader is finding balance.

“There was a lecture a few years ago about juggling the balls and how you have to keep the balls all going at the same time,” said Parekh. “Sometimes your work ball is up in the air and family one is lower and you just have to keep juggling. And that resonated with me so hard because it is all a juggling situation. I want to be the best mom, the best wife, the best employee, the best everything.”

Parekh also mentioned the importance of diversity in companies and that every employee has something to contribute. Even as an Indian woman like herself, she may have a different social background or education.

“We should not be afraid to take a seat at the table. I think sometimes we ex-

THIS WEEK:

LIVING WEST

PAGE 1-3

Sundari Parehk: Woman Leader in the Gaming World at UWG

By Maria Jesus Martinez

PRSA Conference Arms UWG Students for Future Careers

By Jamie Cochran

The Blue Heron Art Studio Welcomes New Students

By Emma Swales

Get to Know UWG Police at Coffee With a Cop

By Rachael Brown

Oui Oui

By Jannette Emmerick

ENTERTAINMENT

PAGE 3

Cocaine Bear is Worth the Laugh

By Myles Williams

PRSA CONFERENCE
ARMS UWG STUDENTS
FOR FUTURE CAREERS

JAMIE COCHRAN

Contributing Writer

UWG students connected with public relations professionals from across the globe at the 17th Annual Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Conference in Atlanta on Feb. 24.

PRSA is a professional organization that brings public relations, communications and marketing practitioners together. PRSA provides professional network and developmental opportunities for students and professionals to continue their education in the public relations field.

The conference brought leading professionals to discuss the industry’s new challenges and provided expert advice to young professionals ready to jump-start their careers. This was an opportunity for UWG students to learn from industry leaders, share ideas and find new ways to grow within their future career fields.

Students were able to network and make new connections in their field of study. UWG student, Lauren Baker, was able to

network with public relations professionals for the first time. Baker passed out her resume and business cards for potential job opportunities while PR professionals provided her with insight, advice and feedback. Networking provided Baker with a foundation of contacts for future use.

“I enjoyed talking to everyone and asking them questions about their business. They gave me so much insight into starting my own business,” said Baker. “Everyone was so friendly and answered any questions I had.”

The conference had an organized agenda that enabled participants to navigate easily throughout the day. The event was filled with a variety of keynote speakers, including Dr. Candace Steele Flippin. She shared her expert advice about how a career is just a journey. She informed the students to be open to all opportunities after college and not be locked into a set career path.

“Dr. Flippin made me realize there is no set way to be in PR,” said Baker. “She gave me so much inspiration about my own career path.”

Janelle Cogan was another

pect the seat to be pulled out for us, and I don’t anymore,” said Parekh. “I sit down and I give my opinion, I am verbal about what it is that we need to do. I think as leaders at an organization and women in general we need to own that we are good in whatever our expertise is and provide that feedback.”

On the other hand, Parekh has noticed a shift on diversity and inclusion of women in the technology world.

“In Activision we have hired more women in security and into the organization and I am seeing a shift,” said Parekh. “I think there is a younger population that is interested in gaming, whereas previously it was more of a male dominated thing. I do feel that more women are integrating into the organization.”

keynote speaker and is the global enterprise team editor of the Associated Press. Cogan offered her insights into the latest media trends, the best practices for pitching a story to the media and how to transcend a story to national news.

“From beginners to professionals, there was something there for everyone,” said Baker.

Students actively participated in the “Ask Us Anything” sessions where they sat one-on-one with PR professionals to ensure a lasting impression.

“This was my favorite part,” said Baker. “I could ask for any advice that I needed about my career path.”

The PRSA conference was an opportunity for all professionals and students to come together for networking and to build a community with other professionals in the field.

As PRSA members, students have access to a searchable digital library that provides an endless amount of opportunities to collaborate with PR professionals. Students also learned about new research and trends and met some of the most influential practitioners in the PR industry.

LIVING WEST

THE BLUE HERON ART STUDIO WELCOMES NEW STUDENTS

EMMA SWALES
Contributing Writer

The Blue Heron Art Studio in Carrollton now offers a range of pottery classes available to people of all ages three days a week.

The studio is located at 138 W. Center St. in Carrollton, Ga. and has been open since 1991. The owner, Melanie Drew, says that pottery is a great hobby to invest in. She encourages Carrollton locals to attend her pottery classes held at the Blue Heron Art Studio on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

“On Tuesdays, I have two day-time classes,” said Drew. “I split them up to fit into people’s different schedules.”

Drew values the importance of having a flexible schedule and letting people work at their own pace. The pottery classes begin at 4 p.m. allowing students to have time after school to attend.

The Blue Heron provides a class for children, teenagers, and adults. The children’s class is held at 4 p.m. and the teenagers follow at 6 p.m. The day finishes off with the adults, beginning at 7 p.m.

The classes are split by age group, but Drew explains that each class has a different personality and students are able to choose the one that fits them best.

Although the classes begin at sched-

uled times, Drew urges students to stay as long as they want and to always stop by to practice when they can. Students are welcome to drop by the studio even on days it is closed.

“I never put an ending time on the classes, I just tell the adults to lock it up on your way out,” said Drew.

The Blue Heron encourages everyone to join the pottery classes, regardless of age or skill level. The classes give people the chance to get involved and come together to meet new people and expand their creativity.

“I’ve started anywhere from 4 and my oldest student was 104,” said Drew.

There is a \$15 session fee for each class attended. Students have access to carving tools, throwing wheels, a kiln and other art materials. Students also have the opportunity to sell the work that they make.

“I like to encourage when someone is ready to sell their work,” said Drew.

The Blue Heron is involved with tons of events year-round in Carrollton. Drew, as well as her students, have sold pottery at the Cotton Mill Farmers Market, the Dream City Market and at the Art Festival of Carrollton.

“It is easier to create as a community,” said Drew. “People need to interact and have something to do with their hands.”

These classes bring people together and allow people to find new hobbies and skills. Drew describes pottery as a skill that takes time to master but is well worth the time and effort. The Blue Heron offers all the needs necessary in transforming students from novice to advanced.

Drew starts by teaching beginners how to hand-build with clay. This technique helps students become more comfortable making pottery and prepares them for the throwing wheel and upper-level crafting.

“It is definitely doable, and people really enjoy it,” said Drew.



Photo: Emma Swales, *The West Georgian*

GET TO KNOW UWG POLICE AT COFFEE WITH A COP

RACHAEL BROWN
Contributing Writer

“Coffee With a Cop” event takes place at the Starbucks in Ingram Library on Wednesday, March 15. Students will have the opportunity to have a conversation and free coffee with a cop.

“Coffee With a Cop” is an initiative for the community and police officers to get together, just to sit around and talk about common things, life or whatever is on the person’s mind,” said investigator Nakia Lewis, the officer organizing the event. “The goal of ‘Coffee With a Cop’ is to basically bridge the gap between law enforcement and our community. Especially here, on campus, a lot of students don’t really get to see a lot of us, so it’s a way for us to just sit down with no pressure.”

In this way, “Coffee With a Cop” allows students to speak to officers on campus outside of an emergency situation or a traffic stop. They will be able to ask questions and discuss any concerns or criticisms.

“Officers are prepared to answer any questions,” said Lewis. “There’s no agenda to it, it’s an informal conversation where you can just come in and talk about whatever’s on your mind. We accept criticism. We accept the suggestions from the students. We’re not there to say, ‘Hey, no, we don’t want to talk about this’.”

On the other hand, if students are not interested or uncomfortable with speaking with the officers, they are still welcome to stop by and just grab a free cup of coffee.

“It’s a come and go style event where we will supply some coffee,” said Lewis. “My hope is to give out three free coupons for three lucky students to get either a free specialty drink or a food item, and just for them to come in and engage as much as they want to. Like a meet and greet, they don’t even have to have a conversation, they can just get to know the faces of the people who are serving them.”

“The coffee that will be served for free will be just plain coffee with cream and sugar,” Lewis continued.

Unfortunately, not ev-

ery student who attends will get a free specialty drink.

“Obviously, if the student doesn’t want the coffee that we’re supplying, they’re always welcome to go and get what they like,” said Lewis.

The event is intended to be a proactive measure to allow students to get comfortable with talking to the police, said Lewis.

“We don’t want them to be afraid of us,” said Lewis. “Because, you know, during college is the time where you have fun, you go out with your friends and you may make some decisions you probably shouldn’t make. But we’re here as that guide. Like, hey, we get it. We were once in college too.”

With that being said, Lewis also encouraged students who are in need of guidance to take advantage of the opportunity to speak to officers about making better decisions.

“But look, you got to get it together because after college is the real world,” said Lewis. “You won’t get these opportunities to rectify your behavior. It’s that proactive measure like hey man, what you got going on? Let’s talk about it.”



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LIVING WEST

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French Film Festival draws to a close with films “A Tale of Love and Desire” streaming online March 9-11 and “Mr. Klein” screening at 2 p.m. in TLC 1203. Since Feb. 9, International Languages and Cultures (ILC) in the Department of English, Film, Languages and Performing Arts has invited the community every week to explore French culture and cinematography with six films for the French Film Festival. “Next week, our final film is called Mr. Klein, or Monsieur Klein in French, and that is an official film from 1976. It’s a classic in French cinema,” said Dr. Robert Kilpatrick, Professor of French at UWG. “It engages with the question of the French state and French society’s involvement in a very dark period of French History which is during World War II, when France was occupied by Nazi Germany. “There were also significant collaborationist elements within French society and this film focuses on what was happening in Paris related to the Holocaust,” continued Kilpatrick. The screening will be followed by a faculty panel featuring German Professor Dr. Felix Tweraser, History Professor Dr. Timothy Schorer and Psychology Professor Dr. Jeffery Reber. Meanwhile, “A Tale of Love and Desire” is a romance between Tuniscian Farah and Algerian Frenchman Ahmed, who discovers erotic Arab literature he never knew existed. The film is available for streaming online for free until midnight on March 11 accessed through the event series website: <https://sites.google.com/westga.edu/uwgfrenchfilmfestival2023/home>. Lamine Lo, a student research assistant in ILC’s French program, introduces the film and includes a Faculty Q&A video. “[Our approach is] to bring together voices from different disciplines to talk about

these films, to help contextualize these films for students who attend them,” said Kilpatrick. “Beyond contextualizing them, so helping people understand what a French viewer would notice immediately but may not be apparent to us from a different cultural context.” The French film festival is an annual spring event, referred to as Albertine Cinémathèque, an education and grant program for universities. Coordinated by French Professors Claire Ezekiel, Lisa Connell and Kilpatrick, and provided by the French-American Cultural Exchange in Education and the Arts (FACE) Foundation in New York and in tandem with the U.S. French Embassy, UWG has been able to win the grant for five years in a row now. Along with the last two films, this Albertine Cinémathèque included titles “Nous, We,” “Antoine et Colette,” “Gallant Indies” and “The Monopoly of Violence.” Every screening involved engaging with the community and interdisciplines depending on the film. For instance, the “Gallant Indies” was accompanied by UWG music students performing. “With our second screening, it was a documentary about an adaptation of a Baroque Opera, a very famous Baroque Opera from the 18th century,” said Kilpatrick. “It’s about a modern production and staging of that [Opera] for a Multicultural France.” Valentine’s day eve’s screening, “Antoine and Colette” was part of an international language event featuring Dutch, Spanish and French short films. “Dr. Anca Koczkas from our Spanish program was the lead on that [event], called ‘LOL: Languages of Love,’” said Kilpatrick. “That featured three short films around the theme of love. And one of those was the French film [“Antoine and Colette”] introduced by Lin Anderson from our French Program.” The whole Film Festival has involved many different voices and efforts across disciplines. In particular, last week’s film screening of “The Monopoly of Violence” on March 2 featured a plenary panel including French professors Kilpatrick and Lisa Connell, Crim-

inology professors Gavin Lee and Neema Noori and Film professor Erin Lee Mock, . “[The Monopoly of Violence] was a French documentary set during the so-called Yellow Vest Protests, of late 2018 and 2019 that occurred in France, organized around or against economic disparities in the country,” said Kilpatrick. “The film explores the theme of the state use of force, what constitutes the legal or legitimate use of force by state actors and the police,” continued Kilpatrick. “It’s made up largely of videos shot by protesters themselves. Videos that weren’t shot with a documentary in mind, but were shot for social media. So, it’s a self-framing of the protesters.” The movie delves into commentary with interviewees including protesters, observers, activists and police discussing the different videos or the significance behind them. “[After screening, we draw] connections from what happens in these films and what we’re experiencing in U.S. society or in other societies around the world,” said Kilpatrick. “For example, in the “Monopoly of Violence,” we drew connections between [Yellow Vests Protests] and protest movements that the students in the U.S. are familiar with in recent years, in particular Black Lives Matter. We also talked about it in an international context with protests that are going on in Iran right now.” In recent years, foreign films outside of English-speaking media have become mainstream including Japanese and Korean motion pictures. For some, watching films in a foreign language might be daunting or troublesome, but overall the experience can invite hearing languages and seeing cultures outside the familiar in an authentic context. If you’re unable to catch either “A Tale of Love and Desire” or “Mr. Klein” viewings, ILC will host an international horror film event next fall, featuring German, Spanish and French horror films. “We’d be delighted if [the festival] could reach more people for this year, and then maybe they could look forward to it next year,” said Kilpatrick.

COCAINE BEAR IS WORTH THE LAUGH
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Contributing Writer

“Cocaine Bear,” is a pretty self-explanatory movie. It’s about a bear that’s on cocaine. The film was released on Feb. 24 and made approximately 23.1 million opening weekend. The film is inspired by the true story of an actual cocaine bear, which was an American Black Bear that ingested nearly 75 lbs of lost cocaine. The bear overdosed in 1985 but the movie decided to take a spin on a what-if scenario. The film’s overall plot is about a bear on cocaine but also has subplots within the movie. One plot deals with a drug kingpin named Syd White (Ray Liotta), who’s trying to find the remaining cocaine that was lost in Chattahoochee-Oconee National Park. The second plot deals with Syd’s son Eddie (Alden Ehrenreich), who is struggling after losing his wife. Eddie left his child with his father to recover the missing cocaine with his associate Daveed (O’Shea Jackson Jr.). The third plot deals with Bob (Isiah Whitlock Jr.) a local detective who’s also tracking the case of the missing cocaine. The fourth plot deals with Sari (Keri Russell) having to find her daughter Dee Dee (Brooklyn Prince) at the National Park af-

ter she skips school in order to find a waterfall with her friend Henry (Christian Convery). There are a few more subplots as well but they all tie into the main focus surrounding the bear on cocaine. The movie conveys strong horror elements by emphasizing blood, gore and missing human limbs in several scenes. It especially does an amazing job on utilizing jump scares. Certain locations were used to amplify this aspect by using dark hidden corners and in the woodsy environment to its advantage. However, the horror aspect of the movie wasn’t the only good part of this film. The comedy from this film was top tier. Watching a bear on cocaine is a different level of funny. One scene in particular that made me laugh so hard was when the bear snorted cocaine off of someone’s decapitated leg and went into a trance-like experience afterward. Many moments in this film were naturally hilarious. My favorite scene from the

movie was when ranger Liz (Margot Martindale), Beth (Kahyun Kim) and Tom (Scott Seiss) were fleeing from the bear in the ambulance and the bear was able to keep up with them while effortlessly doing parkour moves. Liz tried shooting at the bear while strapped down in a Gurney with the back door open and Tom right in front of her. She missed every shot and eventually the bear caught up to them. Liz went flying out the ambulance and face planted in the street while Tom tried his hardest to fight the bear but lost. Beth crashed into a tree and went flying out of the window all while ‘80s music played. Overall, the movie was better than expected. It’s a movie that gives a variety of themes within the plot from horror to humor. Despite the multiple subplots happening around the threatening bear, the movie balances them out well. This is definitely a film I would recommend watching with friends. It has a good replay value when you need a good laugh.



Photo Courtesy of Universal Pictures