

# Congratulations

## 2020 Valdosta State University Distinguished Alumni and Graduate of the Last Decade (GOLD) Award Recipients!



**2020 College of the Arts Distinguished Alumna of the Year**

**Miss Gala Jackson**

*'06 Bachelors of Fine Arts in Speech Communications*

*'08 M.Ed. in Educational Leadership*

Miss Jackson is a certified Executive Career and Leadership Coach and is the founder and CEO of InterviewSnob, a boutique consulting firm designed to elevate women to senior and executive leadership positions within Fortune 500 organizations. As a national keynote speaker and workshop facilitator, she has been on stages at 250+ conferences, events, and programs throughout the country. With a commitment to community service, Gala served on the VSU Alumni Association Board of Directors for 12 years, becoming the youngest board member to serve. Miss Jackson currently resides in Metro Atlanta with her family.



**2020 College of Nursing and Health Sciences Distinguished Alumnus of the Year**

**Mr. Jeremy Gough**

*'10 Bachelor of Science in Exercise Physiology*

Mr. Gough currently serves as Human Anatomy & Physiology teacher, Upper School Physical Education Department Head and teacher, and as the first full time Director of Strength and Conditioning at The Walker School in Marietta, GA. Upon graduation from VSU, Gough completed a Sport Performance internship with the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee in Colorado Springs before serving as graduate assistant strength and conditioning coach at Kennesaw State University. Since receiving his Master of Science in Applied Exercise and Health Science from KSU (2012), Gough has received a plethora of experience in the field of human development including serving as a Sport Physiology Fellow with the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee. He and his wife currently reside in Atlanta, GA.

General Assembly. Carter began her career as a Business and Office Technology Instructor at Valdosta Technical College and served as a teacher at Lowndes High School for more than 16 years. She currently resides with her family in her hometown of Valdosta, Georgia.



**2020 College of Science and Mathematics Distinguished Alumna of the Year**

**Mrs. Rachel Robertson Johnson**

*'13 Bachelor of Science in Chemistry*

Mrs. Johnson serves the cosmetic industry as a Cosmetic Chemist specializing in the analysis of raw material and technology in order to formulate innovative systems that positively impact the beauty industry. Johnson formulates skincare and color cosmetics for over 500 brands providing cutting edge solutions for clean, organic, and natural formulations. Johnson's work has greatly impacted the Indie Beauty community as well as improving the daily lives of black, indigenous, and/or people of color (BIPOC.) Johnson uses her placement to co-create beauty products that address common consumer issues for BIPOC like hyperpigmentation and inclusive foundation shades. She currently offers custom formulation consulting to boutique and masstige beauty brands as The Charismatic Chemist. Mrs. Johnson is a fierce advocate of STEM careers spearheading a program built to bring specific awareness to public school students about the cosmetic chemist profession. She currently resides in New York with her husband and son.

District 155 representing Irwin, Ben Hill, Tift, Turner, Coffee, Telfair, Wheeler, Wilcox and Jeff Davis counties in the Georgia General Assembly. Roberts resigned his position in the Georgia House of Representatives in May, 2015 when Governor Nathan Deal appointed him to the distinguish position of Director of Planning for the State of Georgia at the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). He was tasked with the planning of the State's Transportation projects including developing and implementing the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). Jay left the GDOT in 2019 to serve in his current role at GeorgiaLink Public Affairs Firm. Jay and his wife currently reside in Irwin County and have two children.



**2020 Harley Langdale, Jr. College of Business Administration Distinguished Alumnus of the Year**

**Mr. Kevin Bell**

*'79 Bachelor of Business Administration degree and commission in the United States Air Force*

Mr. Bell served over twenty-six years in the United States Air Force attaining the rank of Colonel and member of the Acquisition Corps. Under his leadership with support from Air Force colleagues and industry partners, he successfully directed numerous research, development and production programs fielding leading edge aeronautic capabilities. Following Air Force retirement, Kevin shifted his focus to the national security industry employed for fifteen years by Northrop Grumman Corporation in Dayton, Ohio. He completed his company career in September 2020 serving the last six years as Corporate Lead Executive to senior Air Force leaders at Wright Patterson Air Force Base and state, local and community officials in the Dayton region. He currently resides in Ohio with his wife, also a VSU Graduate. They have two sons and six grandchildren.



**2020 Dewar College of Education and Human Services Distinguished Alumna of the Year**

**Ms. Amy Alexander Carter**

*'93 Bachelors of Science in Education*

Amy Carter serves as the Deputy Commissioner, Rural Georgia Initiatives, for the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD). Carter was appointed to this role by Governor Nathan Deal in March 2018. She leads state efforts to help rural Georgia communities become more competitive for economic development projects and identifies new strategies for attracting jobs and investment. Most recently, Carter served as Executive Director of Stewardship and Development for the Technical College System of Georgia. From November 2006 until December 2017, Carter represented House District 175 which includes Brooks County and parts of Lowndes and Thomas counties, in the Georgia



**2020 College of Humanities and Social Sciences Alumnus of the Year**

**Mr. James Hugh**

**"Jay" Roberts**

*'93 Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice*

Mr. Roberts serves as a partner at GeorgiaLink Public Affairs Firm. From January 2003 until May 2015, Roberts represented House



**2020 Graduate of the Last Decade (GOLD)**

**Dr. Jana' Laster Sparks**

*'16 Doctor of Education in Leadership*

Dr. Jana' Sparks is an Assistant Professor of Instructional Leadership in the Department of Counselor, Leadership, and Special Education in the College of Education at Auburn University at Montgomery. Dr. Sparks transitioned to higher education after seventeen years in the public school system. In the public school setting, Dr. Sparks served as a Principal, Assistant Principal, New Teacher Mentoring Program Coordinator and has taught a variety of grade levels throughout K-12. Dr. Sparks teaches a variety of graduate and Educational Specialists level courses that provide opportunities for future leaders and instructional leaders to enhance their personal and professional career. Dr. Sparks is currently serving as the Program Chair for the Instructional Leadership program at Auburn University at Montgomery. Dr. Sparks currently resides in Montgomery, Alabama with her husband and two children.

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