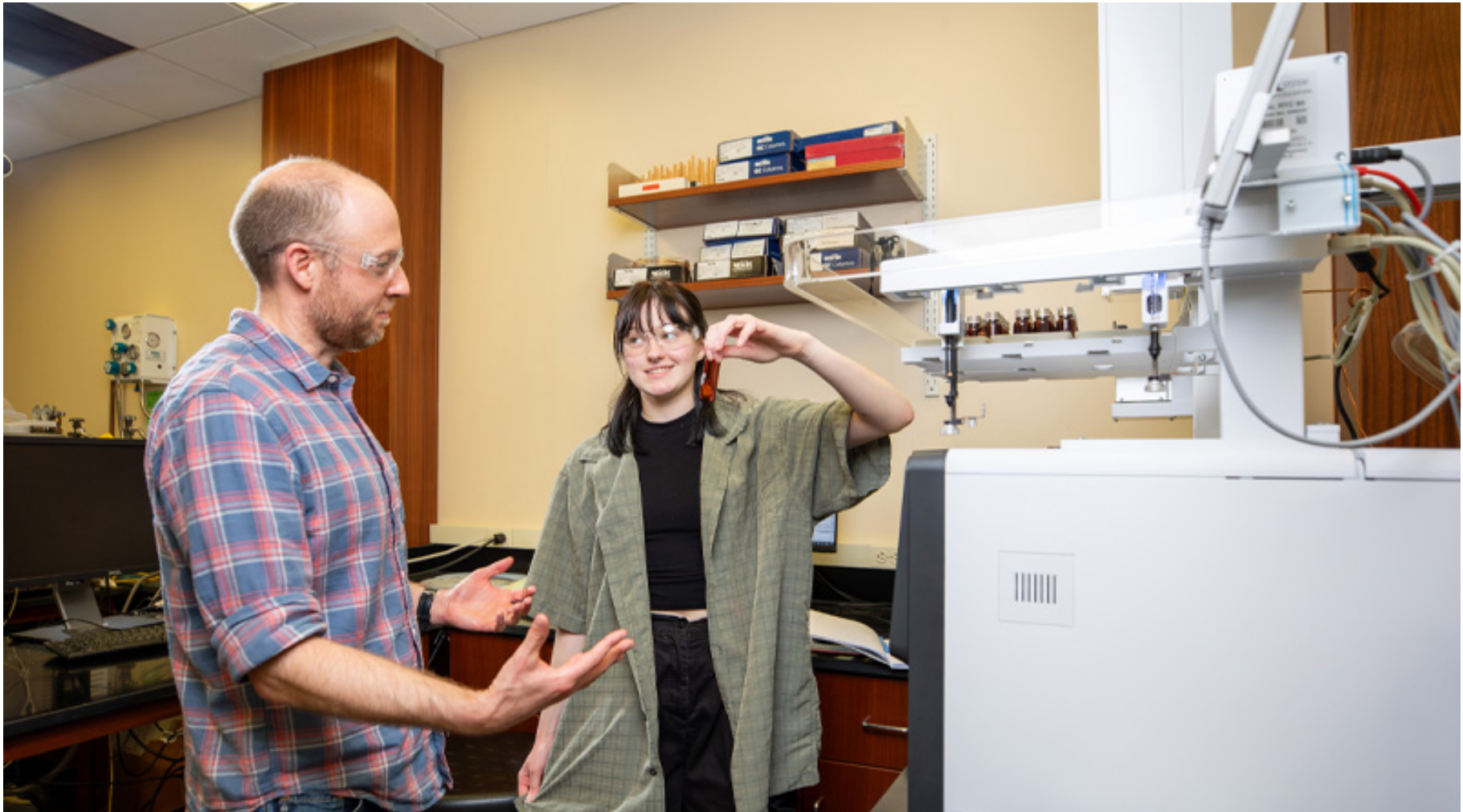


NEWSROOM

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WELCOME, NEW FACULTY!

CNU'S NEWEST EDUCATORS ARE READY TO CONNECT AND INSPIRE

by [Kelley McGee](#) | August 20, 2025

Read time: about 5 min

Exceptional new scholar-teachers are joining the CNU faculty, ranging from an expert on DNA to a finance whiz. They arrive on campus with a wide range of academic expertise and perspectives that will inspire and challenge students.



Dr. Sara Arribas Colmenar

[Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures](#)

Dr. Sara Arribas Colmenar, PhD in Spanish and Visual Studies, Penn State, specializes in early 20th century Spanish literature, dance, and digital humanities. Her interdisciplinary research explores the intersections between literature, performance, and visual culture, with a focus on gender studies, social network analysis, and archival approaches. She has worked on a range of digital projects, including digital editions ([Cartas de Busa](#)), data art ([String Art Visualization: Social network analysis \(SNA\) of the Concurso de Cante Jondo \(1922\)](#)) and digital storytelling ([Bailando la literatura](#)). She enjoys integrating her research and digital skills into the classroom, creating story maps about Spanish culture with her students.

"I'm really excited about collaborating with new colleagues at CNU, and

engaging with students in the classroom,” said Dr. Arribas Colmenar. “I look forward to learning from my students and seeing what type of cool things we can do together.”

Fun fact: Despite loving computers and data, sometimes Dr. Arribas Colmenar says she just likes to take a break from it all and create art.



Dr. Margaret Gustafson

[Department of Biology, Chemistry, and Environmental Sciences](#)

Dr. Gustafson grew up in Virginia and New Jersey and went to college at the University of Richmond. She's lived up and down the East Coast (Ithaca, N.Y., at Cornell for grad school all the way down to Durham, N.C., at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) for her postdoc, and most recently spent a couple years in San Antonio. She specializes in biochemistry and cell, molecular, and structural biology. The “Gus Lab” will work on defining the molecular conversations that ensure mitochondrial DNA gets copied correctly. She's looking forward to teaching biochem and biochem lab at CNU this fall, where she can bring her passion for inclusive, student-centered learning to her classrooms.

“I am really lucky to get to teach biochem, because it's a course where students have the satisfying experience of tying biology and chemistry together and we all have a lot of fun doing that together,” said Gustafson. “I am also looking forward to developing valuable relationships with colleagues across campus – I love learning about what other people have set their brilliant minds to!”

Fun fact: Dr. Gustafson is an amateur language nerd. In addition to biochemistry, she also majored in Spanish (specifically Latin American and Iberian Studies), and really enjoys learning how other languages relate to Spanish, meaning – she says– she knows a bit of all the romance languages and a smattering of others. Bonus fun fact: during COVID she decided to try to teach herself Korean, with some modest success and says she can now understand a few sentences in every scene of a K-drama!



Dr. Taylor McGee

[Department of Psychology](#)

Dr. Taylor McGee earned her BA in Psychology from UCLA before returning home to Atlanta to complete her MS and PhD in Educational Psychology at Georgia State University. Most recently, she went back to California, for two years as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Southern California. Now she's back on the East Coast and excited to continue her research, where she draws on critical and strengths-based theories and methodologies to explore the impact of school-based, race-related experiences on Black students' academic experiences and outcomes. She also examines the racial dynamics of formal online learning environments and tools and investigates how cultural practices contribute to the development of strengths and coping mechanisms among Black students. Her goal is to translate these insights into more equitable educational practices and policies.

"I am most looking forward to the community at CNU. Everyone I've met thus far has been very welcoming, kind, and helpful. I have a sense that CNU is a place where you really get to know the people around you," said McGee.

Fun fact: Dr. McGee was a fashion designer for a few years during her time in Los Angeles.



Dr. Justin Preddie

[Department of Psychology](#)

Dr. Preddie earned his BA in Psychology at Hampton University and his PhD in Social Psychology at the University of Kansas. His research is broadly oriented toward issues of impression formation, person perception, stereotyping, and identity. His current projects work to answer questions like: (1) how do we perceive and evaluate group members with intersecting marginalized identities (e.g., gay Black men)?; (2) what is the relationship between national identity, perceived threat, and immigration policy?, and (3) why do people from different social groups define allyship differently and how does this difference impact collective action within political movements?

“I am looking forward to helping students deepen their understanding of the connections between psychology and other humanistic disciplines, e.g.

law, media, politics, gender/ethnic studies as well as building interdisciplinary collaborations with faculty across the University,” said Dr. Preddie.

Fun fact: Preddie minored in music in college and took voice lessons every single semester in grad school.



Dr. Joshua Turner

[Department of Political Science](#)

Dr. Joshua Turner is a lecturer in the Department of Political Science, teaching courses in public law, international relations, and political theory. His research focuses are in international law, judicial politics and courts, American foreign policy, and philosophy of law. Turner did his graduate work for his PhD in Political Science at the University at Buffalo, and also earned an MA in International Relations from American University and a BA in Philosophy, Government and Politics, and History from Utica College. He has two dogs, a cockapoo named Hudson and a cavapoo named Hooper, and enjoys tennis, golf, chess, and reading.

“I am looking forward to helping CNU students become the best possible citizens by having thoughtful discussions and debates in the classroom, helping students become better critical thinkers and writers. Teaching is

something I love and am passionate about. Additionally, I will have a focus on helping prepare students for law school by serving on the Pre-Law Council. I will be collaborative and hard working both in the classroom and with my fellow faculty; contributing to the already strong sense of community and collegiality here at CNU a high priority for me,” said Turner.

Fun fact: Dr. Turner used to be a tennis professional and still plays competitively in tournaments and USTA leagues.

Dr. Nima Vafai

[Luter School of Business](#)

Nima Vafai holds a PhD in Finance from the University of Texas at Arlington and earned an undergraduate degree in engineering. Vafai’s primary research focus is asset pricing, with several papers published in leading field journals. He also explores topics in mutual funds, crowdfunding, capital structure, political finance, and money market funds.

“I’m excited to continue my research and deliver high-quality teaching at CNU, and especially to serve as the Captains’ Educational Enrichment (CEE) Fund faculty advisor—helping students manage a real-money portfolio and develop investment skills that will serve them long after graduation,” said Vafai.



Fun fact: Dr. Vafai loves playing basketball, and spent time as a lifeguard at his university's pool during grad school. He's a proud dad of one daughter, and says they are eagerly awaiting their second child this November.



Dr. Bora Yunn

[Luter School of Business](#)

Dr. Yunn completed her BA and MA at Korea University and PhD at University of Minnesota. Yunn's research interests are in macroeconomics and international trade.

"I look forward to meeting the students and collaborating with faculty in this welcoming academic community," said Dr. Yunn.

Fun fact: Dr. Yunn grew up in this area until moving to Korea when she was seven years old. "Now, I am back here again after all those years!"



Md Akib Zaved Khan

[Department of Engineering and Computing](#)

Dr. Khan earned his PhD in Computer Science from Florida International University in July 2025. He also earned MSc and BSc degrees from Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh. His research interests include educational data mining (EDM), learning analytics, recommender systems, deep learning, and natural language processing. Dr. Khan has developed several course recommendation systems to support personalized academic advising for undergraduate students. He also designed a predictive tool to assist academic administrators in planning course offerings more efficiently. Looking ahead, Dr. Khan intends to continue advancing research in the EDM domain, with a particular focus on developing adaptive and intelligent tutoring systems to improve students' learning experiences at the course level.

"I look forward to expanding my research and collaborating with the exceptional faculty at CNU, while also mentoring students to help reshape the higher education landscape through the integration of AI," said Dr. Khan. "I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to innovative, student-centered solutions and to develop practical AI-driven applications that enhance learning outcomes and foster meaningful educational transformation."

Fun fact: Khan enjoys watching soccer and movies, and he is a proud official member of Real Madrid CF.