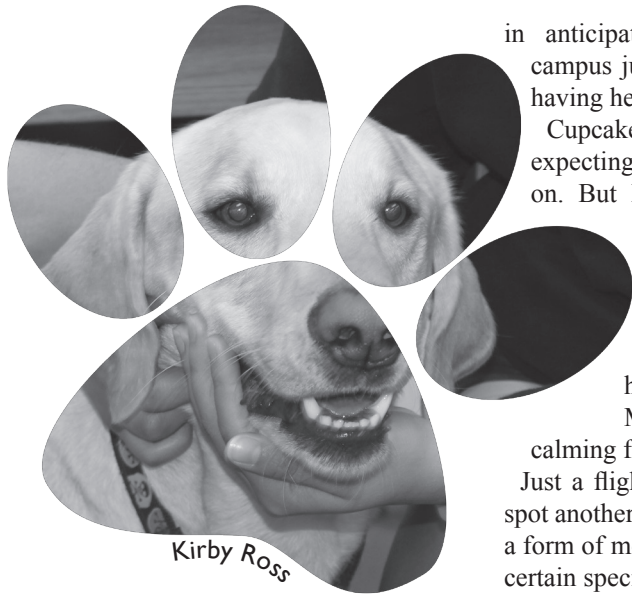


Paws across campus



Kirby Ross

By Taylor Forrest
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You can find them trudging up and down the iconic 77 steps. You can find them lounging around the lawns of our 88-acre campus. You can find them wandering the halls of Mossman, Beech, and Christy. You can find them congregating in the computer lab, campus life office and classrooms.

No, I'm not talking about students. I'm talking about dogs. Short, fat, long and tall. Black, brown, and gold. We have them all.

Upstairs in the Beech Science Center you will often find four year old Cupcake, a rescue terrier mix that belongs to Tamara McEwen, assistant professor of biology, sitting in "her chair" in Tammy's office waiting for students to come by and greet her. Although, once in a while Cupcake will wander her way to Mossman in order to get a dog treat from Pam Olney, faculty assistant.

McEwen has brought Cupcake to campus for about two and a half years and said she decided to bring her because she felt guilty leaving her in a crate at home and students loved seeing Cupcake when she had brought her onto campus those few times. "She now anticipates our ride to campus," said McEwen. "She will whine and whine

in anticipation. She loves being on campus just as much as students love having her here."

Cupcake often approaches students, expecting to be petted and loved on. But McEwen says that students reciprocate the love just as much as Cupcake expects it.

"Many students miss their own dogs that are at home with their parents," said McEwen. "Petting her is very calming for many of them."

Just a flight of stairs away, you might spot another four-legged friend pranking, a form of movement usually only seen in certain species of antelope where all four legs are used to jump and propel straight in the air, with excitement while greeting students in the halls of Beech. Kirby, a large but fun-loving yellow Labrador, claims Pat Ross, professor of biology, as his owner.

Kirby is constantly embraced by students and wanders around the classrooms in which Ross teaches. When Kirby isn't in class students will often beg Ross to bring him back. Ross said that students even come to his office solely seeking out some Kirby time.

"Although I do my best to reach out to students, Kirby is way more cuddly and approachable," said Ross.

"Several times a week, I will have students stop by looking for a bit of 'Kirby Therapy.'"

Kirby's debut on campus was in the fall of 2012. Ross said it just made sense to bring him on campus because he was a very sociable dog and eventually students just wanted Kirby to come as a stress reliever.

"If he can make their loads a little bit lighter, then it is worth the fuss to bring him to campus a couple of times a week," said Ross. "Now he expects to come to school with me and leaving him alone with an evil cat all day just seems cruel."

In our own newspaper staff room you might find another dog of large proportions. He often lumbers along like a big black bear with his Pepto-Bismol pink tongue lolling out in a wet and sticky greeting. With one lick greeting he'll sit at your feet waiting to be petted. That's

when you know that it's not a bear, but Bentley, a sweet Bernese mountain dog. Bentley belongs to Pam Thompson, Collegian adviser, and Peter Heckman, academic dean.

Thompson often walks Bentley all across campus and most students that meet him fall in love with him instantly. This instant love often results in students offering to dog sit in order to get to spend time with him and get to know the big guy.

"When I walk Bentley around campus, students are always coming up to us and asking if it is okay to pet or hug him," Thompson said. "He's a big, loveable dog who adores attention so I am delighted when students want to meet him. I'm always looking for reliable pet sitters, too."

While Cupcake, Kirby and Bentley are well-known in their separate divisions and buildings, one dog in particular is something of an icon on campus. When someone says the name Geoffrey, everyone knows exactly who they are talking about.

He's one of the very first things that students encounter here on campus. Freshmen head over to get their laptops working and they meet the laptop mascot weighing in at "who-cares-I'm-super-loving-and-fluffy." The flaming red four year old Chow Chow and German shepherd mix has become a permanent fixture in the SC Laptop Help Desk Lounge. Geoffrey claims Anthony Gropper, manager for laptop and support services, as his owner.

Gropper first started bringing Geoffrey on campus as a puppy at about eight

weeks old, but started making more of a regular appearance since 2014. Gropper said that Geoffrey couldn't be happier about coming to work with him.

"I brought him to socialize and to help entertain people waiting to get things done with their computers," said Gropper. "The students get to sit back while their laptops are being serviced and be entertained by Geoffrey's silly antics."

Geoffrey now has a new playmate for the Helpdesk Lounge, his sister Casa, a four year old Husky and German shepherd mix. Students receiving help with their laptops will often encounter Geoffrey and Casa playing a game of tag and running after one another.

At times it seems that everywhere you look on campus there is a furry four-legged friend waiting to greet students and brighten their day.

If you try and imagine a campus without Kirby and Cupcake wandering the



Geoffrey Gropper

halls of Beech Science Center, Bentley taking a walk across campus, or Geoffrey and Casa lounging at the Computer Helpdesk Center, the campus seems just that much smaller. These dogs, these mini-mascots, that have licked us, nudged us with a wet nose, and waited patiently to be petted, have taken hold of our hearts and become a part of the Builder Family.

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