

Front Page News Story Archive

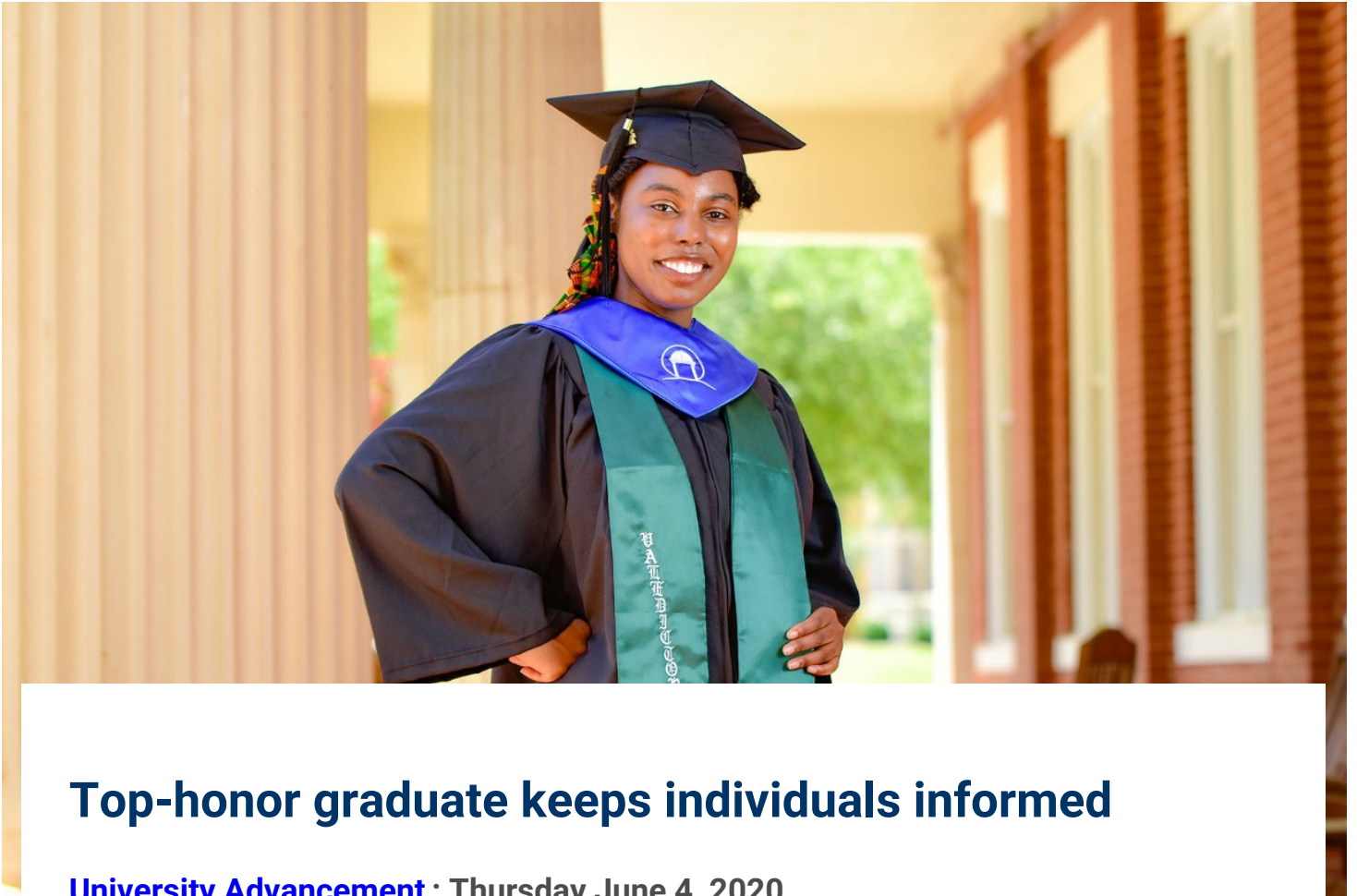
June 2020



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News Stories Posted Thursday June 4, 2020



Top-honor graduate keeps individuals informed

[University Advancement](#) : Thursday June 4, 2020

Valedictorian and International English Honor Society member Jonesha Johnson, '20, has a strong drive to educate others through the power of writing. The double major earned her degree in English and liberal studies in three years, with the help of dual enrollment and Georgia College faculty. Now, she is an upcoming digital entrepreneur, who wants to create her own organization for overlooked and underrepresented populations.

She would do this via YouTube called "ToMyPeople"—slated to launch in August. Her YouTube channel will offer visual storytelling in a hybrid documentary series blending poetry, music and film and interviews of rural residents.

"I'll take people behind-the-scenes on my creative process and my journey with literary journals," Johnson said.

Earning the rank of valedictorian, which means a perfect 4.0 GPA, wasn't easy. Johnson always tried to stay an assignment or two ahead. During her time there, she was homesick, so she confided in her professors.

“School has always been serious to me,” she said. “I never took one of Dr. Beauty Bragg’s classes, but I cried in her office,” Johnson said. “She was always willing to sit down and chat or give me a pep talk.”

Dr. Hali Sofala Jones was her poetry professor whose homey office had lots of books Johnson liked to borrow. Jones and Bragg helped Johnson meet Alice Walker at her 75th birthday celebration in Eatonton—“an event that changed my life,” Johnson said.

She credits Dr. Marty Lammon for providing genuine, professional advice. He gave Johnson enormous support during her senior seminar course, which capped off her undergraduate career. Associate Professor Laura Newbern taught that capstone course, opening the literary world of writers for Johnson.

“She taught me to send works to literary journals, whose content I actually like, that publish writers I can see my work next to,” Johnson said. “I definitely plan to do my research and submit to journals accordingly.”

Other professors challenged her to think critically, as well.

“This skill is so pivotal for all writers, but especially for my primary genre, poetry, in which the slightest of syllables and line breaks matter indefinitely to the message, subject and being of the poem,” she said.

Although Johnson’s creative writing classes prepared her for her profession by building her skills in poetry, her literature-based English courses, Spanish courses and writing internships taught her one of the most instrumental lessons in developing as a person.

“My professors taught me how to formulate ideas into articulate meaning and to bend meaning and shape it to fit whatever it is I want to say,” she said.

“Becoming ‘a steward of the English language,’ in the words of my senior seminar professor, was the best decision I ever made.”

Johnson’s creative writing professors taught her that inspiration can be drawn from anywhere.



Jonesha Johnson writes in her journal.
Photo credit: Kevin Dantes courtesy of Black Farmers' Network

“So, whenever I go out to those back woods of Terrell County or flip by a watered-down picture about slavery on television, I write,” Johnson said. “I draw from all these different facets of life, including music, heritage, death and birth in my poems and will feature many of them in my ToMyPeople series.”

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“I didn't just get something nice to put on my resume; I got a support system of amazing women who look like me who make it their business to give back. I watched and learned and will do the same for my community in southwest Georgia.”

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Her time as a poetry editor for Peacock's Feet—Georgia College's undergraduate literary journal—also provided her with a good foundation for the working world. Last summer, Johnson was an intern for The Atlanta Voice—the largest audited African-American community newspaper in Georgia. Her feature “Unconventional Spending: Five unique ways Black families can cut costs in Atlanta” helped open more doors for Johnson.

“It felt surreal when I saw my story with my name on the front page,” she said. “It was my first-ever publication. I was so happy. I still have at least three copies of that newspaper.”

While at Georgia College, she was also a student researcher and writer for Black Farmers' Network where she compiled data, developed news stories and posted content on social media about the Black Belt Region, which includes her hometown of Albany.

“I enjoyed the warmth of belonging the most,” she said. “Dr. Womack and Kimberly Moore of Georgia College and Candace Dantes of the Black Farmers Network, gave me the welcome feeling I needed.”

“I didn't just get something nice to put on my resume; I got a support system of amazing women who look like me who make it their business to give back,” she said. “I watched and learned and will do the same for my community in southwest Georgia.”

Johnson also draws on her experience from an internship with University Communications, where she helped create podcasts and gained valuable experience in using cameras, microphones and editing equipment.

Johnson returned to her hometown and looks forward to informing individuals

around the world.

“At the end of the day, I'm making a difference by telling stories of my people to my people, and my people are anyone open to hearing,” she said. “Perhaps I can aid in people of all ages, helping them realize that majoring in English and liberal studies or any art is beneficial and are ‘real’ majors that can provide a ‘real’ and satisfying career.”

-Top photo credit: Kevin Dantes courtesy of Black Farmers' Network



A love of science leads to career with NASA

[University Advancement](#) : Thursday June 4, 2020

Growing up, Marissa Johnsey Stewart, '12, was fascinated with science. So much so that she wanted to work for NASA. With the education she received from Georgia College and plenty of on-the-job training, she became a contamination control engineer with NASA at the Kennedy Space Center (KSC) in Florida. Her journey at NASA began seven years ago, when she became a scientist.

"I wanted to be a scientist, because there are so many unknowns out there," she said. "Science helps us learn new things about the world we live in, and it is so fascinating to me."

Through the years, Stewart collaborated with multiple groups and worked on challenging projects to become the engineer she is today. She worked in a chemistry lab, biology lab, corrosion lab, electrical engineering lab and now works in a materials and processes lab.

"It's been amazing to be involved in so many different areas," she said. "I essentially worked my way through all these labs and became an engineer in the process."

As she grew up, Stewart always talked about working for NASA, but never actually imagined she would end up there.

“My main reason for wanting to work for NASA was because of the work they do,” she said. “No work NASA does is boring. It’s all about exploration and learning new things about this world and others in our solar system.”



Marissa Johnsey Stewart watches a rocket launch from the Kennedy Space Center press site. The Vehicle Assembly Building is in the background.

Stewart landed an internship with NASA working in a lab shortly after graduating from Georgia College.

“I worked on an amazing project with incredible mentors,” she said. “After the internship, all I wanted was to be back at Kennedy Space Center. I knew it was where I was meant to be, so I looked for jobs there, every single day.”

In December 2012, an entry-level chemist position at NASA opened. Stewart had met many workers during her internship. She emailed one of them about the position and told her friend at NASA she had applied for the job and was very interested in it.

“I thought, ‘This is it. If I don’t get this job, I may never work at NASA again,’” she said. “So, I let that really push me.”

She had two interviews for the position and started working full-time for NASA January 2013.

“One of the main take-aways from that hiring experience for me was it really matters who you make contact with and what kind of impression you leave on people,” she said. “I hate the saying, ‘It’s all about who you know.’ But, in this case it truly helped me, because this NASA employee recognized my enthusiasm and work ethic and knew I would be a good fit for the position.”

Stewart also credits the Career Center at Georgia College for refining her interviewing skills.

“The Career Center helped me significantly with my interviewing skills,” she said. “Without the initial interviews that it set up for me, I’m not sure I would have had enough practice to improve the interviewing process.”

Her chemistry classes, especially the lab, benefitted Stewart from the beginning. The hands-on experience taught her the basics of how to run experiments.

“I’ve worked with a lot of laboratory instrumentation and most of what I know I learned at Georgia College,” Stewart said. “I use an ultraviolet-visible spectrophotometer at work, which is one of the instruments I learned to use at Georgia College. I use my knowledge I learned there every single day at work.”

Also, during her time at Georgia College, Stewart served as secretary of the Chemistry Club. It helped ease the once-shy Stewart out of her comfort zone.

“It doesn’t matter if you’re an astrophysicist or a logistics specialist, every person out there is working towards the same goal of going to space. It really connects us,” she said. “We want everyone to succeed, because we want to see more space travel and what innovations and good it can bring to us on Earth.”

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“We ran a lot of fun activities during National Chemistry Week, where we interacted with lots of children and students on campus,” she said. “This experience helped me become more outgoing.”

Dr. Catrena Lisse was Stewart’s research advisor and mentor. She teaches her students to be hands-on scientists. Stewart remembers opening one of the gas chromatographs to do a repair. She was a little nervous working with such an expensive instrument and learning how it functioned.

“Dr. Lisse coached me and believed in me all the way through graduation, even when I didn’t believe in myself,” she said.

Lisse also helped Stewart become comfortable with speaking in front of highly esteemed people. As part of her senior exit, she presented research to all her GC chemistry professors.

“I was worried that I would never graduate, because I couldn’t imagine speaking in front of this extremely intelligent group of people,” Stewart said. “Somehow, with enough practice and coaching from Dr. Lisse, I got through it and felt such a sense of accomplishment.”

“Today, I have to talk in front of my highly esteemed colleagues daily,” she said. “Without that baseline from Georgia College and Dr. Lisse, I doubt that I could be successful at it today.”

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“It doesn’t matter if you’re an astrophysicist or a logistics specialist, every person out there is working towards the same goal of going to space. It really connects us,” she said. “We want everyone to succeed, because we want to see more space travel and what innovations and good it can bring to us on Earth.”

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- Marissa Johnsey Stewart

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As a contamination control engineer, she ensures the KSC facilities stay clean for the sensitive hardware being processed there. She approves of materials being brought into the clean work areas, and develops work arounds if certain items are not permitted. She inspects for cleanliness of hardware and dresses in cleanroom garments, known as a “bunny suit,” that is necessary to enter certain facilities to do inspections. It’s exciting for her to inspect hardware that will eventually be going into space or to the International Space Station.

“It doesn’t matter if you’re an astrophysicist or a logistics specialist, every person out there is working towards the same goal of going to space. It really connects us,” she said. “We want everyone to succeed, because we want to see more space travel and what innovations and good it can bring to us on Earth.”

Stewart hopes to make a difference in her field.



Marissa Johnsey Stewart wears clean room garments (aka: a bunny suit) in one of the Kennedy Space Center facilities, next to a payload fairing.

“I hope in some small way, by keeping our facilities clean for flight hardware, I can help us keep moving forward,” she said. “and learning more about space and what it has to offer.”

News Stories Posted Friday June 5, 2020



Physician's connections with patients and students prove vital to success

[University Advancement](#) : Friday June 5, 2020

Dr. Thomas Wells, '90, knows the power of connecting with patients and students. After all, he is a "people" person. From the age of four, he dreamed of becoming a doctor.

In the fifth grade, he wrote a book about becoming a professional football player and going to medical school. Years later, Wells' professors at Georgia College not only solidified his career choice, but provided a nurturing learning experience for him to draw upon as an internist.

"Now, I'm at a place where I feel I can make a connection with people and develop those life-long relationships that have the potential to change people's lives," he said. "That is really appealing to me."

These interpersonal skills grew at Georgia College.

"From my studies in biochemistry to microbiology, this experience gave me a solid

foundation of knowledge from which to build upon and get through medical school,” Wells said. “The classes I took taught me how to study and be successful in school. You need to learn those study skills. That class structure was very helpful to me.”

The small sizes of his classes maximized Wells’ learning experience.



Dr. Thomas Wells

“I think smaller, more intimate classrooms made it easy to form relationships,” he said. “I can remember being in Dr. Saladin’s classes when it was just me and one other student. It was nice to have a lot of individualized attention. It was one of the things I enjoyed most about Georgia College.”

Dr. Doris Moody, who led the preprofessional program and taught microbiology, was another one of Wells’ favorite professors. She provided him with a great deal of reassurance.

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“As professionals, it’s important that we not be passive bystanders in our community. Georgia College teaches to be active participants in what happens in the world around us.”

- Dr. Thomas Wells

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“Her classes were great, but more than that, she was really just a source of encouragement to me,” he said. “As a transfer student, I was trying to fit in. She helped me learn what Georgia College was all about and helped me find my way.”

“My professors spent time reaching out to me,” he said, “and their classes also helped shape me as a self-learner, which prepared me for the rigors of medical school.”

In his profession, Wells sees himself as a physiological medical detective.

“With internal medicine, I work with adults with health and chronic medical conditions,” he said. “There’s a lot of internal activity with the different organs at times and different medications. And this is one place where I can put all those pieces together and collaborate with people to integrate, solve and work through these issues.”

Effective communication is paramount in Wells' profession as a primary care representative with Piedmont Healthcare system.

For over two years, Wells has been instrumental in coordinating a program in pediatric telepsychiatry for the providers and patients for Piedmont Healthcare in the Athens area.

"Pediatric psychiatry is important, because it reaches an underserved population with behavior health issues that need to be addressed in our pediatric population," he said.

Over the years, Wells took what he learned from Georgia College about developing relationships in an academic setting. As an assistant professor of medicine with the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University, he's doing the same with his students. He also has fourth-year medical students rotating through his office for their ambulatory training.

As the regional medical director for Piedmont Healthcare in the Athens area, Wells trains interns to provide value-based care to patients. He hopes his students enjoy their medical career as much as he does.

"I hope they become self-learners," he said, "and realize being a doctor is a life-long career. It's something that's a part of you. Part of the Hippocratic oath is to help train the next generation of physicians."

As a member of the College of Arts and Sciences Advisory Board, Wells sees the value of community service. Wells stresses to his students they will need to make sacrifices to succeed as a physician—and this includes becoming active participants in their community.

"As professionals, it's important that we not be passive bystanders in our community," he said. "Georgia College teaches to be active participants in what happens in the world around us."

Wells hopes his students and patients take their wellness seriously.

"I hope I help improve their health, but mostly I just want to be a part of their lives," he said. "I also hope they know that this is a place where they can bring their problems and tell me what's going on without judgement, and that they know that we're in this together."

News Stories Posted Wednesday June 10, 2020



Message to the campus community from the new College of Business Dean

[College of Business](#) : Wednesday June 10, 2020

[Message to the Campus Community from Dean Micheal Stratton, Ph.D.](#)

News Stories Posted Thursday June 11, 2020



Meet the Faculty: GC grad now teaching economics

[Economics & Finance, Department of](#): Thursday June 11, 2020

Dr. Brent Evans, assistant professor of economics, came to Georgia College in 2004 as a first-year student. He “fell in love with the campus” as he worked through his undergraduate degree.

Not sure exactly where his career path would lead, he decided jump right into a Ph.D. program.

“I went to Mississippi State straight out of Georgia College for my Ph. D.,” said Evans. “I majored in economics at Georgia College, and just based on how much I loved it, I really wanted to be a professor, but frankly I wasn’t sure if I had the math ability.”

Hard work and determination pushed him through the program and helped him land his first teaching job at Dalton State.

Then a position opened up at his alma mater. He considered it his “dream job” so he and his wife Kendra— also a Georgia College graduate—took the leap of faith and moved back to Milledgeville.

“I knew I would love the job, but the question was ‘do we want to live in a small town or not,’” said Evans. “After being here just a few months, it was very clearly the right decision.”

"I'm absolutely so happy that I made the decision to come back. I love the job, and we really like the community."

Most days you can find Evans in Atkinson Hall where he is highly-engaged with his economics students.

"My research is often on doing things either I find interesting or that I think students will find interesting," said Evans. "Ultimately, I'd like to do something that helps craft my skills and gives students a reason to connect with me. That's why I started doing sports economics research."

His past research focuses on topics like the relationship to Wonderlic Test scores, draft position and NFL productivity or the evidence of skill and strategy in daily fantasy basketball.



Brent and his wife is Kendra are both alumni who work in the College of Business. Their children are Simon and Lucy. Photo by Rachel Linder.

"What I find is students are often interested in those things, so it's a really nice avenue to teach students how to do research and how to manage data."

Although his research interests have slightly shifted, he's still a resource for students looking to do their senior capstone research project on sport economics, and many do. Evans says courses like econometrics (the math of economics) and the capstone research project help give Georgia College students a top-notch experience.

"From the economics students I see over and over again, they're really exceptional," he said. "We send usually two or three students to Ph.D. programs every year."

"We also go to a research conference with them in February, and about six or seven of our students go," he said. "It's so obvious that our students are more qualified to give research talks, and they have well developed economics skills."

It's those extraordinary students he works with each day and his fellow faculty members in the department that solidified he's right where he needs to be, guiding students in the program he also is a product of.

"It makes it really fun to go to class when the students want to know how the world works and are willing to be flexible with their mindset when they're analyzing things in economics," he said.

"I think our economics faculty is really strong, and I'm really thankful to be in the economics and finance department."



Meet the Faculty: For biology professor, the world's a splendid splash of color

[Biology & Environmental Sciences, Department of](#): Thursday June 11, 2020

[Dr. Ellen France's watercolors.](#)

Dr. Ellen France has a hobby that allows her to 'go with the flow.' The flow of water, that is, creating amazing effects almost as if by chance.

France paints watercolors in her spare time—a delicate art that has won her ribbons and local praise. Mastering watercolors is more an act of 'letting go,' giving pigmented water the freedom to creep and seep on its own, winding and dripping in unintended directions.

It's a world completely different from France's day job, teaching and guiding experiments in the molecular cell biology lab at Georgia College. There, exactness is crucial, and hypotheses often lead to more questions—not a beautiful finished product grand enough to hang on a wall.

"I am happy when a painting turns out the way I thought it should, when I can see what I hoped for in a chosen subject," France said. "Finishing a painting gives a sense of accomplishment and challenges me in a different way."

France lives in Milledgeville with her husband, Physics Professor Dr. Ralph France, their daughter and a calico cat. She was born Yen Kang Cho in South Korea and migrated with her family to New York City (NYC) at age 16. Coping with a new language was difficult. France recalls not understanding much of her high school



Child eating from a rice bowl.

lessons the first few years.

The competitive education environment in South Korea, however, prepared France for the rigors of learning. She had an “intense, deep curiosity about everything” and soon excelled in math and science. But she also liked extracurricular subjects that demanded less language skills and more creativity. France joined the high school art club, then went on to major in biology at CUNY Queens College in NYC with a minor in studio art. She got her master’s and Ph.D. from the department of molecular cellular and developmental biology at Yale University in Connecticut.

College’s biology faculty. She teaches molecular and cellular courses like genetics, cell biology, cell signaling and cancer biology. It’s a “dynamic, interdisciplinary field that keeps changing and moving forward,” she said.

When students visit her office, France asks them what interests they have outside of school. She tells them she likes to cook and paint. This helps her connect with students, showing them “scientists aren’t just boring nerds.”

In 2006, France joined Georgia



Dr. France painting at home.

France enjoys passing on her love of science. In the lab, she guides students in the study of protein and lipid transport in cells. Her artistic eye helps France use graphic analogies and prepare visually appealing lectures. This, in turn, helps students prepare visually effective oral presentations in class. France also developed digital story boards for animations in a genetics textbook.

To France, science and art don't seem all that different.

"Biology is such a visual world, whether you're looking at organismal or molecular fields," she said. "Any kind of art form often starts from careful observations of life. So, artists are good observers of the world."

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In order to paint, you have to have a keen eye for careful observation. But it also requires good eye-hand coordination—just like molecular experiments require careful observation and eye-hand coordination. Doing one definitely helps the other tremendously.

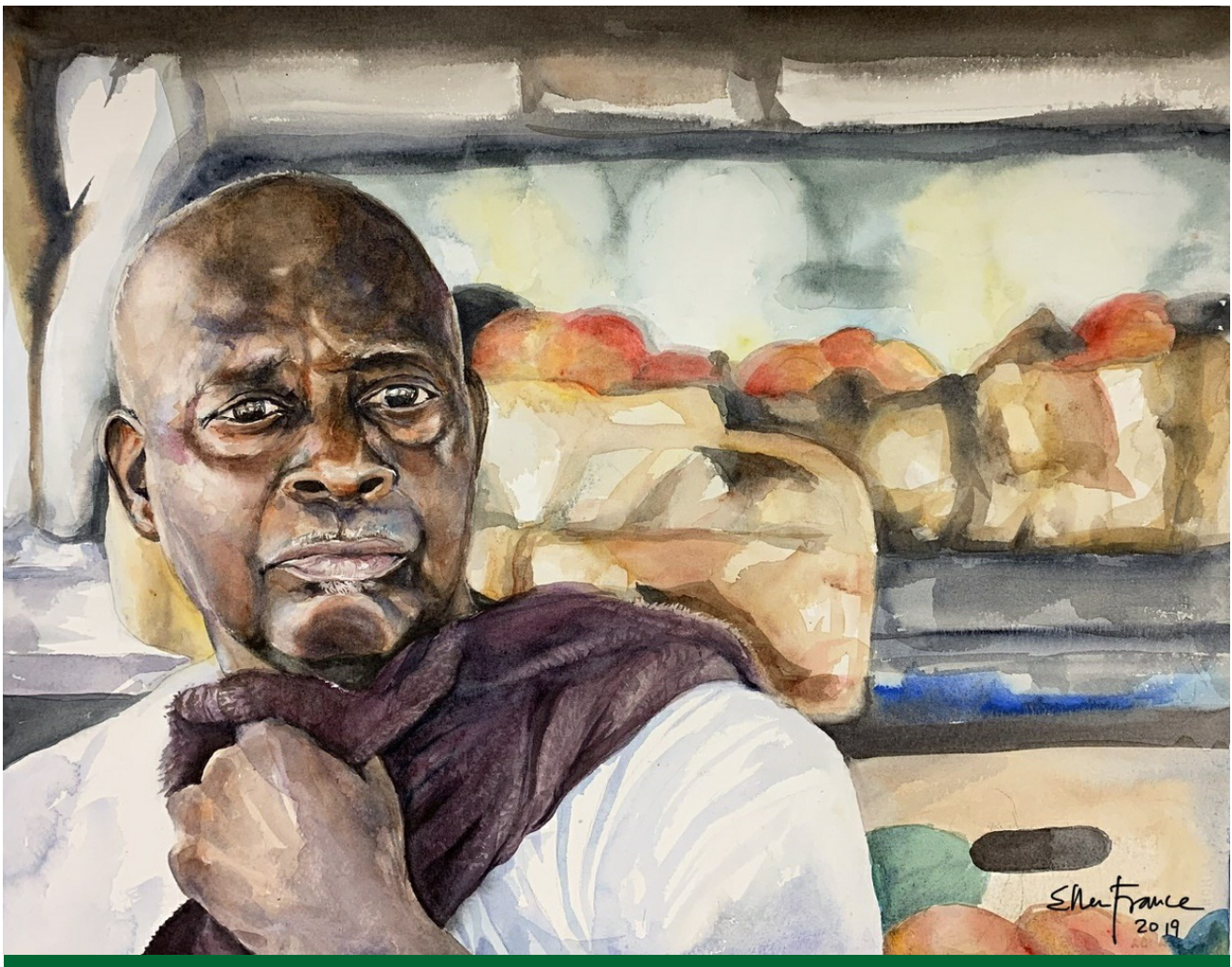
- Dr. Ellen France

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"In order to paint," France said, "you have to have a keen eye for careful observation. But it also requires good eye-hand coordination—just like molecular experiments require careful observation and eye-hand coordination. Doing one definitely helps the other tremendously."

In high school, France experimented with various mediums like ceramics, acrylic and tempura painting. She explored more in college: 2D design, oil painting, sculpting and illustration. But she always found watercolors to be the most difficult, because mistakes can't be corrected or obscured with more paint.

"It's a very challenging medium, and I never felt good when trying to learn it on my own," France said. "Watercolor really isn't that forgiving, so I think everyone feels the pressure of doing everything perfectly the first time every time."



Man at peach stand.

France rediscovered watercolor five years ago by taking a workshop with Dana Thompson through Allied Arts in Milledgeville. She liked it so much, she stayed. France completes a watercolor each week during the 2½-hour class—about three or four paintings a month. That’s roughly 200 artworks since 2015.

Allied Arts displays watercolors from Thompson’s classes at group shows and its annual Oconee Art Exhibition. France has won ribbons at the Georgia National Fair Amateur Fine Art Division.

Her paintings are intricately detailed, true-to-life portraits, stills of animals and flowers and sweeping landscapes. France’s subjects invite you in—like a little child eating from a rice bowl, the woman collecting laundry from a clothesline or a man in front of an peach stand.

Time spent painting is her own; it helps her de-stress and relax.

“My day job requires constant thinking and troubleshooting,” France said. “For me, painting means meditation. I honestly don’t think about anything when I paint. It just goes blank.”



Seaside watercolor.

"I'm grateful to have a day job as a science professor," she said, "so I don't have to rely on my painting for financial support. I simply get to enjoy it."

“

My day job requires constant thinking and troubleshooting. For me, painting means meditation. I honestly don't think about anything when I paint. It just goes blank.

- Dr. Ellen France

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News Stories Posted Tuesday June 16, 2020



Meet the Faculty: Library science professor fosters student success

: Tuesday June 16, 2020

Anyone who has spent time in the library at Georgia College will recognize Kell Carpenter, associate director for access services and assistant professor of library science. He is a fixture at the circulation desk, and can always be found assisting library patrons, from both the Georgia College and Baldwin County communities.

Carpenter, a Milledgeville resident since relocating from north Georgia in 1985, graduated from Georgia College with a major in English and has spent his career in libraries. He served 18 years at the Mary Vinson Memorial Library in Milledgeville before joining the faculty at Georgia College.

“

It's sort of appropriate that I gravitated to libraries; I grew up in one, practically. I can remember quite clearly the time that librarian, Mrs. Pitner, devoted to me then. I hope that I have been able to do the same thing for

someone along the way.

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While a career in libraries seemed like an obvious career path for Carpenter, having joined the faculty of his alma mater strikes him as surreal.

“I never in my life expected to have that role, nor that I would teach any kind of college-level course. Life throws you some interesting curves.”

A self-professed Rush superfan, and a lover of comics and crime/mystery novels, Carpenter’s commitment to Georgia College students runs deep, and the most rewarding aspect of his job is working closely with students.



Kell Carpenter

“I love that I get to help them when they have questions, when they need to find a resource, just about everything.”

The library employs a dedicated team of student workers, some of whom stay on with the library for their entire time at GC.

“Those are really special experiences. It’s honestly like seeing your own kid grow up, find their way and set out on their own,” said Carpenter. “Even better is when they end up back at GC and you get to see how they’ve grown, and then continue to grow while working here. I really love it.”

As with any career, librarianship has its rewards and its challenges, and Carpenter champions compassion as a means to overcome any obstacles that may present themselves.

“There are always times when you have conflict or there’s a problem, and I find that sometimes the best response is compassion,” said Carpenter. “It’s easy to get wrapped up in what seems like a non-negotiable set of circumstances and think you have no power outside of that. Sometimes flexing those rigid spaces lets you give grace and opens up opportunities for growth and learning for yourself and others. I need to remember that more often.”

This mindset also informs some of the lessons Carpenter hopes to impart on the students he works with, both in the library and in the classroom. He encourages students to really dive deep to explore their interests and ambitions during their

four years at Georgia College.

"I was not really sure I knew who I was in high school, or could even really do a lot about it. At Georgia College, I really found out who I am and how to be myself, and that made quite a difference in my life," he said. "I was encouraged by some of my teachers back then to 'find myself,' and I hope we're all still doing that."

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Rural Studies Institute : Friday June 19, 2020

A joyful, bubbly administrative assistant, Moore makes every person who walks into the Rural Studies Institute (RSI) or her previous job in the Office of Inclusive Excellence (OIE) feel as if she's known them all her life.



"I am a naturally happy person, and I'm a natural talker," Moore said. "Being in a

support staff role can mean listening. Support can be, 'Oh, girl, let me go get you a cola.' It's just trying to figure out what each particular person needs."

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It can be draining, but, at the end of the day, I would think there isn't one person that ever could say they came into our office and didn't feel better when they left.

- Kimberly Moore

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Moore went to school at Georgia Military College. She's a hometown girl—born and raised in Milledgeville, who can't imagine thriving anywhere else. COVID-19 caused a delay in her wedding plans—but she'll soon marry her better half, Jeff, who's as quiet as she is vibrant. This is best, she explains, because she “likes to do all the talking all the time.”

They have three children, ages 18, 14 and 12—the “three stooges” as Moore calls them. It's her family that keeps Moore rooted.

She started working at Georgia College in 2012 as a scholarship coordinator and financial advisor in the Office of Financial Aid. Then, she worked in accounting and ended up trying something new four years ago as an administrative assistant to Dr. Veronica Womack in OIE.

It was a big change for Moore. Something she had never done before. Prior to managing an office, she had been a “numbers cruncher.” But the diversity office was intriguing, so she left her comfort zone to give it a try.

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Kimberly is more than an administrative assistant, constantly going above and beyond.

- Dr. Veronica Womack, director of RSI

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It was “something new every day and exciting.” But dealing with diversity issues meant helping faculty, staff and students who came in with concerns. Moore learned to compartmentalize troubling things and keep her sunny disposition.

She keeps a close eye on Womack's busy calendar, making sure her boss is where

she needs to be at the right time. Womack says Moore is “more than an administrative assistant,” constantly going “above and beyond.” She became so indispensable that Womack brought Moore along, when she became executive director of RSI.

The two women complement each other. Womack is a vivacious leader on campus but admits she’s not a people person. Moore is a talker, who thrives on being around people. They sometimes have different ideas, but Moore said Womack is “the easiest person to work with.” Someone who listens, accepts suggestions and doesn’t mind making concessions.

One concession was allowing Christmas decorations at OIE. From the first small piece of décor, OIE soon became one of the most festive offices on campus.

“

I’m crazy around Christmas. I love the whole gift-giving thing ... It’s the one time of the year, when literally everyone seems to be in a nicer mood. For a little while, you see more smiles. You see happiness.

- Kimberly Moore

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“I’m crazy around Christmas. I love the whole gift-giving thing. I live to see people’s faces when they open my gifts. It’s the one time of the year,” Moore said, “when literally everyone seems to be in a nicer mood. For a little while, you see more smiles. You see happiness.”

Moore also got involved outside the office by serving two years on the university Staff Council. She joined as the treasurer and staff development chair were both resigning. Moore took on both positions. There were no formal instructions, nothing written down. She just jumped in and went with it—becoming, as usual, indispensable.

Her chirpy demeanor at staff council events—like ice cream socials—helped other staffers feel special and important.



Moore works on jigsaw puzzles at home to relax.

It's not that Moore doesn't have bad days. On campus, she talks all day, answering the phone and communicating by email. It can be demanding. But she's anchored in what matters, her family, and has hobbies that relax and calm her. She loves giant 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzles. It's her time, when Moore is content to be quiet and alone.

Her advice to other staffers is: Find an outlet and let problems dissolve.

"It's not personal. It's your job," Moore said. "That's something I can truly say Dr. Womack taught me. You've got to remove 'you' out of it. Everybody has their job and the agenda they need to do. So, it's not really about you. Don't take it home with you."



Physics professor only U.S. educator to receive prestigious fellowship

[Chemistry, Physics, & Astronomy, Department of](#): Friday June 19, 2020



Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge instructs a student on solar panels.

Georgia College Physics Professor Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge has been named a 2020 Fellow of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSoTL). He was one of nine educators—and the only U.S. applicant—to receive the prestigious lifetime award.

“This is a very competitive international fellowship and a great honor. I think it speaks

highly of both Dr. Mahabaduge’s hard work and Georgia College’s commitment to excellence in teaching and learning,” said Dr. Jordan Cofer, associate provost for Transformative Learning Experiences.

“

What a fantastic honor! It's a wonderful reflection of Dr. Mahabaduge's commitment to undergraduate education and teaching excellence.

- Dr. Eric Tenbus, dean of Arts and Sciences

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Dr. Eric Tenbus, dean of the College of Art and Sciences, offered his congratulations too, saying, “What a fantastic honor! It's a wonderful reflection of Dr. Mahabaduge's commitment to undergraduate education and teaching excellence.”

Other winners this year were from Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Ireland and the United Kingdom. Normally, fellows are recognized during the ISSoTL annual conference. But, due to COVID-19, the October event in Perth, Australia, was canceled.

Mahabaduge's group is the second cohort to be awarded this honor, since the ISSoTL Fellowship was established in 2019. Its vision is “to empower communities of learners committed to scholarship, mentorship, leadership and engagement,” according to ISSoTL. Fellows seek “new ways of thinking, doing and learning” and strive for “holistic, meaningful, intentional approaches to higher education.”

Being named an ISSoTL Fellow is a lifetime title. Fellows are expected to impact the scholarship of teaching and learning at local, regional, national and international levels—demonstrating a particular commitment to mentoring emerging and junior scholars. They also support the development of emerging regions.

“This international scope and diverse perspective on higher education will definitely benefit me to grow as a professor,” Mahabaduge said. “I can bring in successful teaching strategies used by educators around the world to my classroom that will benefit our students.”

“International collaborations can also lead to creating study abroad experiences for our students,” he said. “I took one of my students to China on a



Mahabaduge and physics major Bo Cavender at the Great Wall of China in December 2019.

research abroad experience last year, and I hope to develop similar partnerships that will directly benefit our students.”

The ISSoTL Fellowship is just one thing on a busy schedule—something that highlights the career of a faculty member who’s always thinking creatively and engaging students in new ideas.

Mahabaduge has secured several fellowships, since joining Georgia College in 2016. That year, he was named a Russell Library Faculty Fellow. He moved from the university level to get a SoTL Fellowship with the University System of Georgia (USG) in 2017 and participated in the Governor’s Teaching Fellows Program at the University of Georgia in 2019.

“

As a personal feat, winning this fellowship makes a complete set for me in terms of fellowships. Each of the fellowships helped me to develop as a researcher and as an educator.

- Dr. Mahabaduge

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Earlier this year, Mahabaduge was also the 2020 recipient of the USG’s Board of Regents Felton Jenkins Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award—bestowed for “a strong commitment to teaching and student success.”

This year’s international fellows “represent diverse models of excellence,” according to ISSoTL. All applicants went through a rigorous review. One appraiser said Mahabaduge’s “excitement and commitment to teaching really shines through.”

“As a personal feat,” Mahabaduge said, “winning this fellowship makes a complete set for me in terms of fellowships. Each of the fellowships helped me to develop as a researcher and as an educator.”

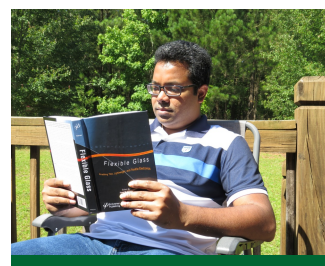


Mahabaduge with physics students Catherine Boyd and Bo Cavender at Posters at the Capital in January 2020.

Mahabaduge was a prime candidate, due to his willingness to engage students in his own solar cell research and advocate in the community. He started an annual Renewable Energy Day for local elementary students and, last summer, traveled to India to teach Tibetan monks about physics. Mahabaduge has also connected his physics classes with university students from his home country, Sri Lanka.

Currently, Mahabaduge's taking a course, "Incorporating Transformative Experiences in the Classroom," through GC Journeys and the Center for Teaching and Learning. That center and Georgia College's Office of Grants and Sponsored Projects reviewed Mahabaduge's file and helped edit his application for ISSoTL.

As an experimental physicist, Mahabaduge couldn't continue normal research with students last spring or this summer, due to COVID-19. But he used the time at home to work on a research manuscript and help take care of his 2-year-old son. In the fall, he plans to begin new undergraduate research on flexible glass through a partnership with Corning, Inc.



Mahabaduge at home during COVID-19.

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The Georgia College administration has always extended their support for my SoTL work and, most importantly, created an environment which encourages innovation in teaching and research.

- Dr. Mahabaduge

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News Stories Posted Tuesday June 23, 2020



Georgia College bids farewell to Ginkgo tree

[Facilities Management](#) : Tuesday June 23, 2020

For many Georgia College campus community members, the great Ginkgo tree outside of Russell Auditorium has been a sight to behold. Its striking transformation in the fall from green, supple leaves to bellowing bright yellow leaves has marked the beginning of the season for decades.

Unfortunately, the Ginkgo tree has been struggling for more than five years due to a root disease that overtook its underground roots long before the tree began to show symptoms above ground. Smaller and fewer leaves began to spark from the tree. More limbs died and it was evident that the whole crown and central trunk was infected.

Several attempts were made from the Grounds Department in Facilities Management to save the tree including sampling and testing for insects, alleviating stress on the tree by no longer planting flowers near it and sending disease samples from twigs, leaves and roots to a lab at the University of Georgia. Lab results confirmed it was Phytophthora, a root rot disease, caused by the Ginkgo tree's intolerance to an over-abundance of water that had occurred over a six-year

period of excessive rains in Milledgeville.

In June 2020, the Grounds Department began to remove the brittle center of the tree. Currently there are plans to re-plant another Ginkgo tree near the vicinity of Russell Auditorium by fall, if not sooner.



The Ginkgo tree near Russell Auditorium

News Stories Posted Wednesday June 24, 2020



Walker garners Black Caucus American Library Association award

[Ina Dillard Russell Library](#) : Wednesday June 24, 2020

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r. Shaundra Walker has a mission to make information discoverable through the power of the library. She's the Interim Director and Associate Director of Instruction and Research Services at the Ina Dillard Russell Library. She's spent nearly 20 years in library systems in both academic and public spheres.

Her career in libraries began when she started her Masters of Library Science at Clark Atlanta University. While pursuing her degree, she started working for the Dekalb County Public Library.

"At that time, they were doing some really innovative, creative things," she said. "They were providing materials in Korean, Chinese and Japanese. They also had a really strong ESL program. It was just such a different library experience from what I knew growing up. The combination of the curriculum at Clark Atlanta and the experience that I was having at my job was really impactful."

Walker realized what inclusivity could do for a library system. As part of the Black Caucus American Library Association for 20 years, she also learned best practices in bringing communities into the library to both share and discover information. Recently, Walker won the 2020 Demco Award for her work in promoting African-Americans and other people of color in the library profession.



Dr. Shaundra Walker recently garnered an award for her work in promoting African-Americans and other people of color in the library profession.

This passion of the library profession took Walker to Mercer University after earning her masters. There, she pursued her doctorate in educational leadership with a concentration in higher education administration. As a graduate of two HBCUs, Spelman and Clark Atlanta, her research began to look at trends in those universities when it came to library science.

“I became interested in the fact that African-Americans were excluded from most library education programs,” she said. “I wasn’t aware of that history when I was attending those HBCUs. As I got more experience in the profession it was something that was always really interesting to me. I was doing this research while I was also working at the Dekalb Library so the combination of the curriculum and experience that I was having at my job was really impactful.”

Walker has been at Georgia College for almost nine years. She’s made a place for herself in the profession by applying critical race theory to the field of librarianship. Her work examines libraries as they relate to aspects such as race, class and power.

“People really think of libraries as being very neutral apolitical institutions,” she said. “And really nothing could be further from the truth. I like to give people a different perspective by exploring issues of equity and diversity in the life of a library.”

Walker teaches a course on cultural competency for library professionals. She shares her expertise on how to communicate, understand, interact and create programming that develops relationships with underrepresented communities in library systems.

The issue is really important because there's not a lot of diversity in our profession.

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“Regardless of whether it’s an academic institution or public library, our communities are becoming more and more diverse so there’s a real need for cultural competency in library systems,” she said.

In the beginning of 2019, the Russell Library was granted a \$12,000 National Endowment for the Humanities Common Heritage Program. Walker said the grant has started to fill a shortage in local African-American history in the Georgia College library collection.



Walker during a Common Heritage event on campus.

“Based on conversations with my colleague, Nancy Davis Bray, I became aware that there was an absence of information about the local African-American community,” she said. “I just want to have a truer, more accurate history of Milledgeville in our collection. I hope that it’s through this project that we can develop a template that we can use with other underrepresented communities.”

Bringing communities into the library system to take part of inclusive programming, while also building a staff that is culturally competent has been the framework of Walker’s career. She poses that the role of the library may be shifting, but the importance and need is ever-present.

“I think personally that libraries are central to a functioning democracy,” Walker said. “You need free and unfettered access to information. Our responsibility is to make that available. Our society will always need an institution like the library.”

News Stories Posted Monday June 29, 2020



Class of 2024: Girl Scout looks forward to new experiences

[College of Education](#) : Monday June 29, 2020

Kayla Ashton Pritchett

From: Grovetown, Georgia

Why Georgia College? I chose Georgia College, because I loved the campus and city!

Major: I am currently undecided in my major, but I'm contemplating Library Media.

High school activities: I was involved in Varsity Volleyball, Beta Club and the National Honors Society. My biggest achievements were Girl Scouts, obtaining the Most Valuable Player award for three years in volleyball and being captain for two years.

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For my Gold Project, I combined my passion for Girl Scouts and volleyball by



Kayla Pritchett, when she graduated high school.

building an outdoor volleyball court at a local park. I also held a two-day volleyball clinic, teaching middle school girls how to play volleyball.

- Kayla Pritchett

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Girl Scouts award: My Girl Scout Gold Award was one of my biggest achievements and came with lots of hard work and effort. In order to earn the Girl Scout Gold award, a girl must plan a sustainable project in her community that benefits others. For my Gold Project, I combined my passion for Girl Scouts and volleyball by building an outdoor volleyball court at a local park. I also held a two-day volleyball clinic, teaching middle school girls how to play volleyball.

What will you do at Georgia College? I’m interested in playing intramural volleyball and being involved in the Baptist Collegiate Ministries and Outdoor Center.

Most looking forward to: While beginning my journey at Georgia College, the thing I’m most looking forward to is making new friends and new experiences.

Future: When I graduate, I plan to obtain a job as a media specialist in an elementary, middle or high school.



Meet the faculty: Dr. Jim Lidstone provides community leadership by example

[Health & Human Performance, School of](#): Monday June 29, 2020

Dr. Jim Lidstone, professor in the School of Health and Human Performance and director of the Center for Health and Social issues, has been instrumental in helping Georgia College make its mark on the community. He's always had the best interests of his students, community and university at heart.

Lidstone joined Georgia College's faculty in 1996 from South Dakota State University where through the years, he moved up from assistant to associate to full professor. He came to Georgia College to become chair of the Health and Physical Education Department, known today as the School of Health and Human Performance.

"After 12 years in that role, I was ready to move on to other challenges," Lidstone said. "So, in talking with former Dean Gangstead, the College of Health Sciences had an entity known as the Center for Health and Social Issues that lacked resources. I talked with her about the director role with the Center and said, 'Let's see what we can do with it.'"

Initially, he established a Faculty Advisory Committee for the Center for Health and Social Issues, and developed a mission statement and identified five focus areas: obesity, cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and healthcare access. Mental health was added several years later.

In 2009, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation issued a call for proposals to join its Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities program—a childhood obesity prevention initiative. Lidstone applied and was awarded funds for his Live Healthy Baldwin program—one of 50 selected for funding out of 540 community applications.

“The fact that obesity was one of the focus areas for the Center for Health and Social Issues made the call for proposals from the Robert Wood

Johnson Foundation particularly timely,” he said. “One of the prerequisites in applying was we had to have a coalition of community officials to battle childhood obesity and that is how Live Healthy Baldwin got started.”

He cultivated partnerships within Milledgeville and Baldwin County, including community organizations like the Milledgeville Community Garden Association, the Bicycling Club of Milledgeville, City Council, the Board of Commissioners, Baldwin County Schools, local businesses and faith-based organizations.

“Our first step was to get these people on board to help us address childhood obesity concerns,” he said. “We had to make cold calls to see if they would give us a letter of support to partner with us on childhood obesity. That enabled us to submit the grant proposal, which took about a year to complete the entire process.”

Lidstone told his students about the application process and used this as a teachable moment.

“I kept my Health Promotion Program Planning class informed along the way about our progress,” he said. “It was a good learning experience, because I told them



Dr. Lidstone's class who built and raised funds for the Harrisburg community greenhouse.



Dr. Jim Lidstone, professor of Public Health and director of the Center for Health and Social Issues

there are no guarantees in obtaining funding. But it was great one day to come in and say, 'Hey, we've been selected to receive funding.' We're going to start in January."

Live Healthy Baldwin rolled out in January, 2010. Since then, Lidstone incorporated it into his Program Planning classes. In this class, students break into teams and select a project related to chronic disease prevention and implement it in their communities. They do needs assessments, collaborate with community members to set goals and objectives, select and implement evidence-based intervention strategies and conduct program evaluation.

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"I hope they are successful and find a job they love doing. I especially hope they find a way of making a difference in the world and giving back to their communities. That's what public health and health promotion are all about."

- Dr. Jim Lidstone

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"I tried to make the learning experience as real as it could possibly be," said Lidstone. "If you ask most students how they learn best, they'll answer they like to learn in a hands-on way. They like to apply the knowledge they've learned in class, rather than just sitting in a classroom and hearing about it theoretically or doing hypothetical projects."

"I've had students write reflection papers on this class," said Lidstone, "and was really struck with the depth of learning that had taken place."

Live Healthy Baldwin launched successfully, but he was faced with challenges while forming it.

Alternate Text

Caption

"When the economy crashed in 2008, we had a significant period of time where city and county budgets were reduced as well," said Lidstone. "We were talking to city and county officials about building bike lanes and bike trails and costly projects like that, so we had to find other sources of funding to bring to the table."

Over the years, Lidstone was involved in numerous community organizations and attended lots of board meetings. Another challenge to the project was high turnover in local elected and appointed officials.

"We were constantly trying to develop those relationships and sell people on the

projects,” Lidstone said. “It made it challenging to keep things going.”

He is teaching his last class now, before retiring this summer. Lidstone hopes his example and teachings will encourage students to continue their involvement in their communities.

“I hope they are successful and find a job they love doing,” Lidstone said. “I especially hope they find a way of making a difference in the world and giving back to their communities. That’s what Public Health and Health Promotion are all about.”