

Front Page News Story Archive

September 2020



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News Stories Posted Friday September 4, 2020



International pageant title holder scores most points on stage and in her community

[Alumni](#) : Friday September 4, 2020

Allison Brown Wilkinson, '09, has applied what she learned from Georgia College to shine as Delta Zeta's "35 Under 35" honoree, as well as an international pageant winner.

In August, this wife and mother of two won the title of "International Beauty of the Nations." Wilkinson received the highest cumulative score for all categories and age groups at the Omaha, Nebraska

competition. She also was nationally recognized in July as one of Delta Zeta's "35 Under 35" program, which spotlights outstanding young professionals who've achieved success by making a significant impact in their profession before the age of 35.

The Delta Zeta Sorority honored Wilkinson for her leadership, initiative and dedication to her career. They applauded her motivation by challenges she overcame, her community volunteerism and force as a role model. Being a member of the Lambda Pi Chapter while attending Georgia College both as a first-year

student, a sophomore and graduate student garnered many benefits for Wilkinson. Her achievements have led to several long-lasting friendships.

“Lambda Pi gave me the drive to give back and do something more in life to help others,” she said. “I love being a part of groups that help make me a better person. Surrounding myself with positive friends and family gives me the drive to make an impact on society.”

Wilkinson created the non-profit “Queen of Bags Initiative, LLC” in 2016 after learning some children in the foster care system do not have a knapsack of their own and use trash bags for their belongings.

“It became my mission to stop this,” she said. “As an adoptive mother, I know my child could have been in the foster care system had his biological parents not made such a selfless decision for him. For those who are not as fortunate as him, I want to make sure they know they are special, loved and wanted by giving them a bookbag containing a teddy bear, blanket, hygiene kit, coloring book and crayons.”

Her involvement in pageantry encouraged her to be a voice for foster children who are often forgotten.



Allison Wilkinson, '09



Allison Wilkinson (second from right) and members of her sorority made Easter baskets for local children in need.

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“Lambda Pi gave me the drive to give back and do something more in life to help others. I love being a part of groups that help make me a better person. Surrounding myself with positive friends and family gives me the drive to make an impact on society.”

- Allison Wilkinson

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“After suffering from infertility, adopting my son, Judson, then giving birth to my

son, Tucker, I knew I had to inspire others by sharing my story,” Wilkinson said.

She started entering beauty pageants when she was 30 years old. As a lifetime dancer and cheerleader, being on stage was something that Wilkinson was used to. However, she credits Georgia College for contributing to her poise and determination.

Wilkinson was a ballet dancer with the Georgia College theater and dance department for six years, performing at spring concerts and in the Nutcracker.

“Having the opportunity to act in the Nutcracker’s party scene and solo gave me the experience to be on stage and not be afraid of the audience,” she said. “If you can dance a solo in pointe shoes, you can walk on stage in a swimsuit and heels.”

Georgia College Professor Emeritus of Government and Sociology Dr. Jerry Fly was a positive role model for Wilkinson, who majored in business management and minored in dance. He encouraged and motivated her as early as high school.



Allison Wilkinson wins the title of "International Beauty of the Nations" in August 2020.

“Although I never cheered at Georgia College, Dr. Fly was an instrumental part of my gymnastics and high school cheerleading,” she said. “He even let me come practice with the GC cheerleaders a few times when I was in high school. Having him as a professor was a warm welcome my freshman year, because I had an adult who I knew and trusted to go to if I needed help.”

Wilkinson also learned time management, prioritization and business professionalism through the Master of Business Administration program at Georgia College.

She currently works as director of Payroll Services at Georgia College. In that role, she makes sure Georgia College employees are paid accurately and in a timely fashion. Typically, behind the scenes, Wilkinson consults with employees about

taxes, timecards and accrual balances. This ensures all accounts are reconciled for auditing purposes, as well.

“My job is all about timing and deadlines,” Wilkinson said. “Through group projects in graduate school, I learned how to set deadlines and get things done, so I wouldn’t slip behind.”

Her business classes also helped build a foundation where she could speak confidently.

“Public speaking is a huge part of management and pageantry,” Wilkinson said. “By working in groups to build professionalism and speaking in front of my peers at pageants, I build skills that many people spend years trying to get comfortable doing.”

She hopes to quell the worries of foster children whom she helps through speaking at pageants and her nonprofit organization.

“I hope they know there are people out there who care about them and love them,” said Wilkinson. “Through the ‘Queen of Bags Initiative,’ it’s my goal they will see that there is hope and positivity in the future.”

Whether it’s through her workplace, sorority or pageantry, Wilkinson simply wants to help others.

“I love helping others and giving back,” she added. “I want my children to grow up knowing that helping those in need is a way of life. I do my best to include my husband and kids in as much community endeavors as possible in hopes of setting a positive example for them and those around me.”

[Read more about Allison Wilkinson.](#)



Allison and her two children Tucker (left) and Judson have knapsacks ready for local foster children.



Virtual Alumni Week has something for everyone

Alumni : Friday September 4, 2020

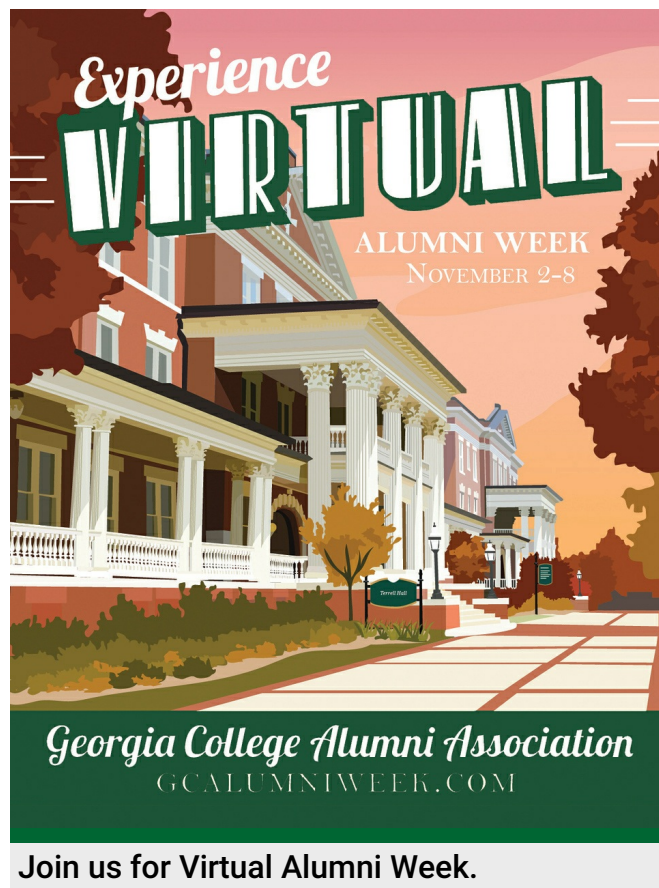
Georgia College's Virtual Alumni Week (VAW) slated for Nov. 2 through 8 will have back-to-back events, ensuring a fun, interactive and lively time for all.

"Alumni will get a unique experience during Alumni Week," said Tre' Juan "Tre" Johnson, assistant director of alumni awards, collaborations and reunions. "They will participate in virtual tours of our beautiful campus landmarks, engage in networking events with fellow alumni and get a glimpse of our student experience, as we walk them through their own personal GC Journey."

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"We will do some innovative things with the announcements, so alumni should make sure they stay tuned-in for each one."

- Tre' Juan Johnson



Throughout the weekend, Georgia College will host a virtual scavenger hunt, which will be team oriented. Alumni can have up to eight individuals on their team. There are some major prizes for lucky winners. The prizes include our grand prize—a private catered BBQ for a group of 15 on the front lawn of the Governor’s Mansion with GC President Dr. Dorman. Other activities include: A Golden Slipper Reunion, tour of Andalusia and more.

The Alumni Award Ceremony is typically held in person on Saturday evening. This year, the Alumni Award recipients will be announced throughout VAW, as opposed to one big ceremony.

“We will do some innovative things with the announcements, so alumni should make sure they stay tuned-in for each one,” said Johnson.

The VAW Committee includes members of the GC Alumni Board, Foundation Board and varied generations of alumni. The team developed a variety of events, catering to all ages, for the week. A 131st Birthday celebration for Georgia College will close VAW.

“We have received some positive feedback and have a few virtual events leading up to VAW,” he said. “Alumni who have participated in our previous reunions, most notably our Golden Slipper Classes, have even expressed interest in being a part of VAW.”

Visit: <https://www.gcsu.edu/alumni/alumni-week> to view the schedule, register for events and keep track of the happenings leading up to and during the event. We hope you can join us.



New, Promise Keepers Scholarship offered

[Alumni](#) : Friday September 4, 2020

The African-American Alumni Council's (AAAC) Promise Keepers scholarship was established for African-Americans enrolled at Georgia College. The opportunity is offered by an anonymous donor, who wanted a scholarship to mirror the AAAC Keepers of the Promise Award presented during Alumni Weekend.

This special award is given by the AAA Council, recognizing minority alumni or minority friends of Georgia College for their outstanding commitment to creating educational and social opportunities for others through personal sacrifice by overcoming challenging obstacles.

The selection of award nominees is determined by individuals who empower others by exhibiting peace, forgiveness, love and acceptance towards all; exemplify exceptional strength, courage and integrity during adversity, risking their lives to protect, serve and promote equality among social and educational injustices; and encourage and mentor others to serve as community "think tank" leaders, positioning the next



Georgia College President Dr. Steve Dorman and AAAC President Debra Minor with Dr. Lucretia Coleman (center) receiving the Keepers of the Promise Award.

generation of minorities for upward success.

“The scholarship creation process was rightfully rigorous to ensure the donor's desires align with the mission of AAAC and Keepers of the Promise Award,” said Demetrius Nelson, vice president of AAAC. “The name came from God being a keeper of his promise to all of us, as he is truly the promise keeper.”

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“We hope this scholarship will bless Black or African-American individuals who meet the established criteria in assisting to alleviate some financial weight of pursuing a higher education. We believe that such a gift can get them one step closer to their career dreams.”

- Demetrius Nelson

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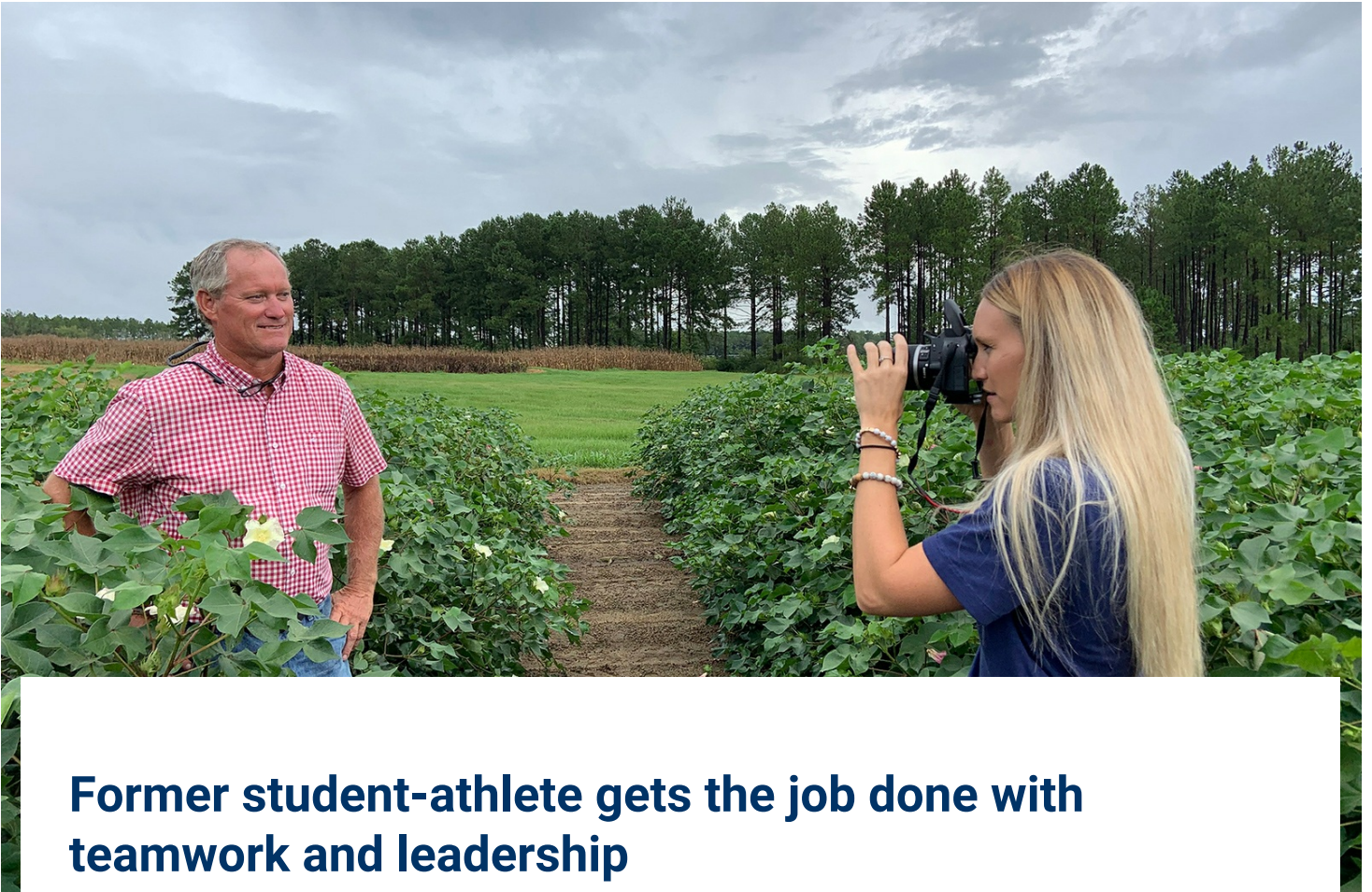
“We hope this scholarship will bless Black or African-American individuals who meet the established criteria in assisting to alleviate some financial weight of pursuing a higher education,” said Nelson. “We believe that such a gift can get them one step closer to their career dreams.”

The goal is to raise \$10,000 by Oct. 30, 2020. The AAAC will begin awarding scholarships to five students in Spring 2021.

“It is our hope for the recipients of this scholarship that they will proactively and progressively demonstrate these criteria as college students,” he said. “Anything that is bigger than us is never easy, but it is worth it.”

To donate to the Promise Keepers Scholarship, visit:

<https://crowdthunder.gcsu.edu/project/21789>. Or, you can mail a check to Georgia College, P.O. Box 96, Milledgeville GA 31061. To learn more about this scholarship, contact: Trejuan “Tre’ Johnson at: Trejuan.johnson@gcsu.edu or call 478-445-8665.



Former student-athlete gets the job done with teamwork and leadership

[Alumni](#) : Friday September 4, 2020

Caroline Snider, '19, is used to a hectic schedule. As a former student-athlete at Georgia College, it was crucial to have efficient time-management skills in her studies and on the ball field. Since mid-July, she has applied a similar skillset to her new role, as the education and outreach specialist at the Georgia Cotton Commission.

Her Georgia College experience began while she was enrolled in the Bridge Scholars program—a transitional support program for first-year students designed to maximize their achievements at the university.

“It helped me get ahead with classes and adjust to college while making awesome friends,” she said. “I made some of my best friends through Bridge and kept up with them throughout the rest of my time at Georgia College.”

The Bridge Scholars program helped her become comfortable talking to professors when she needed help.

“It also helped me learn time management and proper study habits and to find where I studied best on campus,” she said.

Snider learned how to manage her time wisely and stay organized at Georgia College. This was necessary, because she played outfield in softball and was active in other organizations.

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“I’ll use my skills I learned at Georgia College to educate others about the cotton story—the importance and benefits of cotton and supporting Georgia farmers. It’s been an awesome learning experience, and I’ve enjoyed every minute of it.”

- Caroline Snider



Caroline Snider at the Georgia Cotton Commission.

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A typical day for Snider consisted of waking up at 5:15 a.m. for workouts. Then, she attended classes in the mornings and studied throughout the day during breaks. She headed to the ball field for practice from 3:30 until 7 p.m. Snider would eat dinner after practice and do more homework, then sleep. In the midst of her busy schedule, she also served as treasurer of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), as well as a member of the Game-Changers leadership program, Kudzu Campus Ministry and the Colonnade staff.

“Serving on SAAC taught me the importance of having a voice and speaking up for our athletes,” she said. “I also had the opportunity to lead the organization and plan events for them.”

SAAC keeps Georgia College athletes informed on new or changing rules or policy put in place by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). It also serves as a voice in making changes or improvements in all sports at the NCAA level.

“Caroline was not only a great representative of the softball program, but for Georgia College, as well,” said Jamie Grodecki, assistant athletic director-SWA, head softball coach and deputy Title IX coordinator.

“SAAC is a crucial part of the NCAA governing body. With her help,” Grodecki said, “SAAC lead the department in the charge to grant a wish through the Make-A-Wish program.”

In addition, Snider helped lead the Game Changers leadership program for five years, where she learned life skills like etiquette, interview preparation, financial tips and more.

“Caroline used the Game Changers program as an opportunity to grow her personal leadership and communication skills. She learned that leading is serving,” said Grodecki. “She also learned that there was more to her than just being an athlete.”

Snider was also on the leadership team with Kudzu-college Ministry. It helped her step out of her comfort zone by talking to strangers, leading small groups and serving her community.

Playing softball in addition to her mass communication studies instilled a sense of teamwork in Snider. She plans to apply these leadership skills at the Georgia Cotton Commission.

“I worked on many group projects with many different people within my major, so teamwork and communication were vital,” she said. “Distributing an equal amount of work and bringing that back to the group to reach the end goal by working together, making changes and accepting feedback—these are the keys to successful leadership.”

On the job, Snider also plans to use the skills she learned in photography, editing and video production. She will use virtual ways of teaching through platforms like Padlet, Book Creator and FlipGrid. She learned these skills at Georgia College, along with how to be a leader.

“I took advantage of those opportunities at Georgia College that could improve my leadership skills in the future,” she said. “Understanding yourself and your personality and figuring out how to work with other individuals, who have different ideas and personalities—just knowing how to encourage and work with others—is a major part in being a leader.”

A significant amount of Snider’s time at work has been spent getting the Georgia Cotton Commission website ready for launch soon. She also manages the organization’s social media platforms, does radio and social media ads, writes



Caroline Snider takes a picture of Dr. Phillip Roberts, professor and extension entomologist for the University of Georgia in a cotton field.

media releases and conducts virtual events.

Considering Snider does not have an agricultural background, she takes advantage of every opportunity to grow and learn more about cotton every day.

“I’m still learning more about the research being conducted with cotton,” she said. “I constantly learn more every day and use my communication skills by asking questions and doing a lot of research on my own.”

Soon, Snider will teach the basics of cotton to groups of all ages.

“I’ll use my skills I learned at Georgia College to educate others about the cotton story—the importance and benefits of cotton and supporting Georgia farmers,” she said. “It’s been an awesome learning experience, and I’ve enjoyed every minute of it.”

News Stories Posted Tuesday September 8, 2020



Georgia College provides extra CARE for students

[Student Life, Office of](#): Tuesday September 8, 2020

The COVID CARE Response Team—made up of 45 staff members from across campus—has been created to help students through the trying ordeal of testing positive for coronavirus or being exposed to someone who has.

Dr. Shawn Brooks, vice president for Student Life, was concerned about the challenges students may face, so he formed a team to support them through those challenges.

“Georgia College prides itself in the care we show to all members of our community. Student Life is at the forefront of providing care to students who find themselves in academic, emotional, or physical distress. This is the spirit behind the creation of our COVID CARE Response Team,” said Brooks.

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“It’s a privilege for me to be able to serve the students in this way. I am here for them as a one-stop-shop.”

- Kari Brown

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When the university learns of a student who has tested COVID-positive, is having COVID-related symptoms or who has been asked to isolate because of exposure to someone who is positive, they are being assigned to a member of the COVID CARE Response Team.

“These team members reach out by both text message and phone calls to check in with the student,” said Brooks. “The staff also provide their contact information to the student so that if the student encounters any problems related to their illness or isolation, the student has someone to turn to for assistance.”



Kari Brown calls to check on a student.

Staff from departments across the university have stepped in to rally around the students. They provide a listening ear while a student expresses anxiety over having to isolate or miss class. They also serve as a liaison for the student across campus. Each student has one person they can call to help regardless of their issue.

“It’s a privilege for me to be able to serve the students in this way,” said Kari Brown, a member of the COVID CARE Response Team. “I am here for them as a one-stop-shop.”

Staff can connect students to resources on campus—such as student health services, academic affairs or auxiliary services—taking the pressure off the student.

And Brown said the outreach goes “far beyond just phone calls and texts.”

“I had a student who was having to isolate, and she didn’t have anyone who could pick up meals for her at the MAX or the money for groceries. I made a few phone calls, and we were able to have groceries delivered. The staff in Auxiliary Services and the MAX also came together to get meals prepared for us to drop off at her apartment,” said Brown.

“Everyone was willing to and ready to jump in to help this young lady and take that worry off of her mind. As a mom to a college student myself, I would hope someone would make sure my child was ok, and I am more than happy to do what I can for these students – even if it’s just chatting on the phone.”

Brown's sentiments were echoed by Kendall Stiles, senior director for community engagement, who has volunteered to help deliver food to students.



Kendall Stiles picks up food from the MAX to deliver to a student.

"I am so glad that I was able to give support to students who are isolated or quarantined during this time. I was able to help meet one of their basic needs, which is assisting them with getting food," said Stiles. "Sodexo and Auxiliary Services were able to work out the logistics of getting the food from the MAX. Then I was able to pick it up and take it to the student's home. It made me feel like I was making an impact in that student's life."

Every day the COVID CARE Response Team receives updated lists of students who are returning to campus or are having to isolate, and each day they reach out to students on their rosters. They check in to see how the students are feeling, reassuring them if needed, and providing support and care for each student they encounter.

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“Student Life will continue to provide this service to students as long as it is needed.”

- Dr. Shawn Brooks

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News Stories Posted Monday September 14, 2020



Georgia College listed as Top Public Regional University by U.S. News & World Report

[General Institution](#) : Monday September 14, 2020

The 2021 [U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges](#) report lists [Georgia College](#) as a "Top Public School." Designated ninth in the South, Georgia College was the highest-ranked Georgia institution in this category for the second year in a row.

"I am proud Georgia College continues to be recognized as a top-tier public university in our region," said Dr. Steve Dorman, president. "This ranking exemplifies the success of our high-achieving students and also our dedicated faculty and staff who encourage our students to think independently and

lead creatively."

The 2021 Best Colleges guidebook shows Georgia College as 21st on the Best Regional Universities in the South list. "Best Regional Universities" are not ranked



Campus beauty shot

nationally, but rather against their peer group in one of four geographic regions — North, South, Midwest and West.

Georgia College was also named as a top undergraduate teaching institution. The university was also ranked the seventh most innovative school in the region—the highest-ranked public university in the state in both categories.

The “Best Colleges” guidebook is made up of a wide variety of data on assessments by peers and counselors, retention rates, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources, graduation rate performance and the alumni giving rate.



College of Business faculty use innovative techniques to engage with students

[Information Systems & Computer Science, Department of](#): Monday September 14, 2020

Georgia College faculty have risen to the challenges brought on by COVID-19. Although their classrooms may look a bit different, faculty continue to have their students' education as the top priority.

Over the last several months, many faculty in the College of Business reimagined their courses in new and innovative ways.

"When we went online in the spring, we had to make a major pivot, and that's really where all this started for me," said Brad Fowler, lecturer of management information systems.

At that point, he completely reworked his courses utilizing the flipped classroom concept—in which traditional ideas about classroom activities and homework are reversed or "flipped."

"Students interact with the content online first, and then I use the class time for reinforcement as opposed to instruction," said Fowler. "It's worked out really well so far because if students miss class, they're not missing instruction. They're missing reinforcement, but they're not missing actual instruction."



Brad Fowler teaches his class.

In his principles of information systems, introduction to information technology and business publishing courses, he's also moved away from traditional textbooks, and instead primarily has students use resources found online. He engages students through discussions and activities all reinforcing the content they've been presented ahead of time. His model also allows for students to all have access to the content at any given time since it's posted online.



Students take notes in Fowler's class.

"My biggest concern was continuity. I feel like the students really appreciate continuity," said Fowler. "I think they also kind of appreciate the flexibility of it, especially in this time of uncertainty and weirdness."

Dr. Gita Phelps, associate professor of computer science, uses several tools in her courses to engage and interact with students. As a high-risk faculty member, her courses are taught

in an online format, so she spent the summer months researching the best techniques and finding the best tools to help students.

"During the summer I participated in several webinars sponsored by University System of Georgia that featured best practices in teaching online," said Phelps. "Staff from the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) also helped me practice different presentation techniques and figure out which platform I needed to use."

Her courses are typically taught in a computer lab where she can walk around and look at the students' screens. To fill that gap, she uses Google Slides. At any point in the class, she asks students to take a screenshot and paste it in the Google Slide

for Phelps to see. This helps “me make sure they’re following me,” said Phelps.

She starts each class with a couple of questions on the homework posted online before class. She also uses Pear Deck, an add-on to Google Slide that allows for polling questions where she can then discuss the student’s responses.

“My degree is in computer science, but my minor is instructional technology,” said Phelps. “I’m really always looking forward to different ways trying to find out how to reach my students better.”

A team of Georgia College staff members serve as a resource for Phelps and other faculty members as they work out how to continue providing the high-quality education Georgia College is known for.

“The Center for Teaching and Learning is fantastic. We had the weekly sessions in the summer where people came to share their concerns and present different tools,” said Phelps. “I presented Pear Deck comparing it to Nearpod. It was helpful seeing different tools and software others were using.”



Dr. Gita Phelps works with her students.

The CTL staff started pulling together programming early on as the pandemic hit. They knew faculty would need resources and training to pivot from traditional instruction to the online format that came in the spring as well as the transition back to campus in the fall for the modified face-to-face instruction.

“During the spring semester, we had a lot of faculty coming in, working on their courses, setting up courses in Georgia View,” said Dr. Jim Berger, director of CTL. “We also knew we needed to help some faculty understand how to work with their students in the new environment.”

They responded by increasing their programming through videos, tutorials, webinars and their D2L training courses. They also used demonstrations to show faculty the new technology available in some classrooms and walked them through how to teach in a hybrid format with the tools.

“That meant I would wear my mask, and I would teach behind the Plexiglas barrier,” said Berger. “I would use the camera that they had installed to show what it was like. I would give them an activity, and I’d demonstrate what it was like if they tried to have students follow along with the PowerPoint.”

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Everybody on my team chipped into work together to create the programming. I can't say enough about how great they are. They served the faculty quite well during this time.

- Dr. Jim Berger, director of CTL

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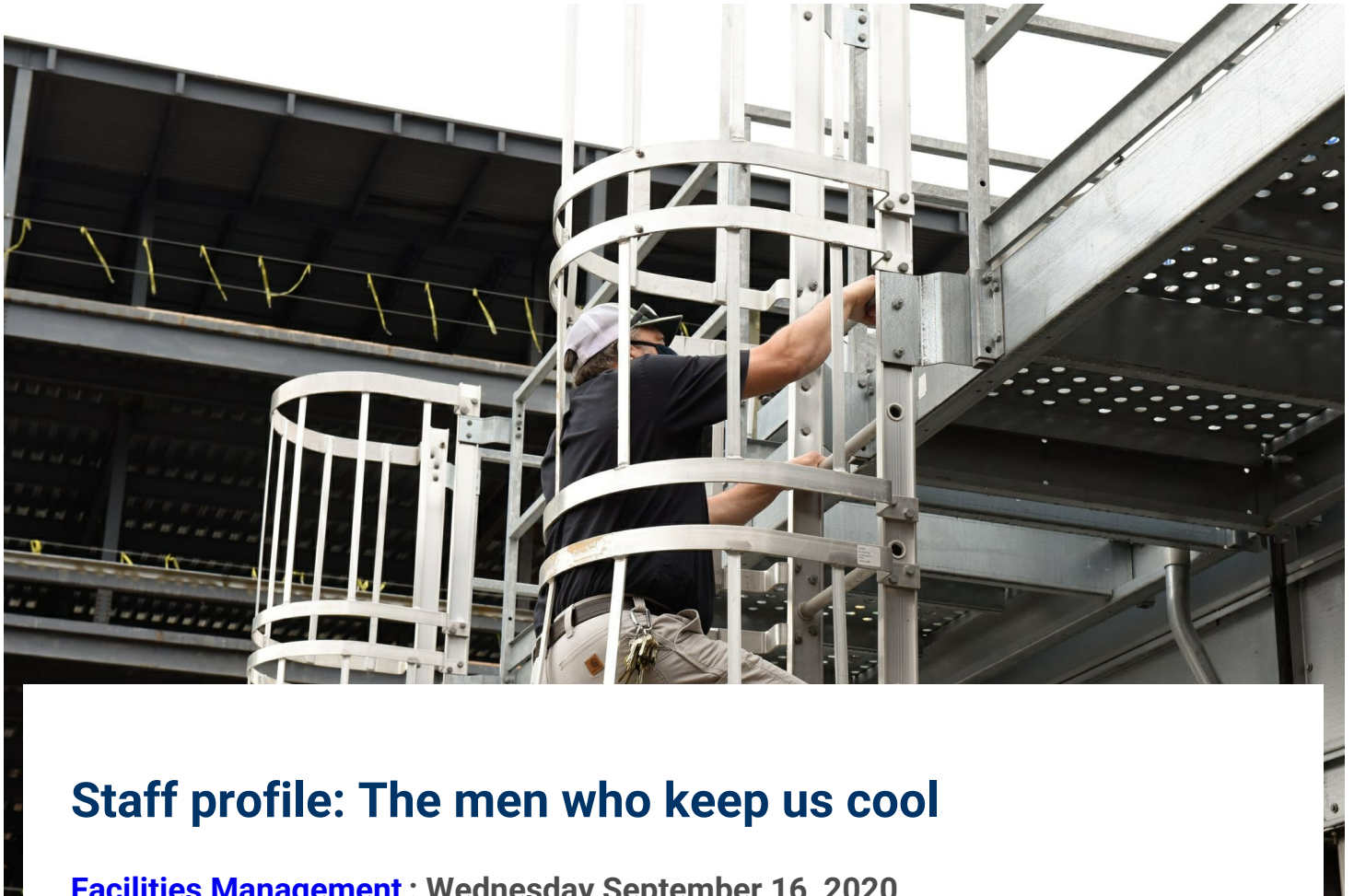
As the requests from faculty changed, CTL staff modified their programming and offerings to meet the needs.

“Everybody on my team chipped into work together to create the programming. I can't say enough about how great they are. They served the faculty quite well during this time,” said Berger. “Every time I asked them for suggestions for programming they jump forward and provide ideas.”

Both Fowler and Phelps took advantage of the training and courses provided by CTL and others on campus. As the challenges from the pandemic continue for everyone, faculty like Fowler and Phelps are committed to the success of their students and providing a dynamic learning environment.

“I'm really trying to focus on making sure what I'm doing is effective for students to learn,” said Fowler. “I think my new model is kind of a results-oriented process. It gets me away from lecturing, which is kind of naturally what you want to do, and it forces more engagement and interaction for me with the students and the students with each other.

News Stories Posted Wednesday September 16, 2020



Staff profile: The men who keep us cool

[Facilities Management](#) : Wednesday September 16, 2020

When the sweat starts to trickle and it's muggy, just remember—as you turn the AC down—someone's always watching, monitoring your comfort in every office and classroom across campus.

They are men of the chill.

Unseen and rarely thought about, they are unsung heroes who work quietly behind the scenes, braving rooftops with their toolbelts, crawling in hot spaces, answering the call and responding to complaints.

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We deal with professors and office people all the time. We might lose a pump or there's no air flow, but we try to keep everybody comfortable the best we can.

“We deal with professors and office people all the time. We might lose a pump or there’s no air flow, but we try to keep everybody comfortable the best we can,” said Tim Brooks, HVAC (Heat Ventilation and Air Conditioning) supervisor in facilities management.



Keith Sloan monitors air conditioning on campus.

Along with HVAC-III DDC (Direct Digital Control) Mechanic Keith Sloan and a crew of six, Brooks oversees Main and West Campuses. He and Sloan like to joke around. They call their work station “the war room” and “command central,” where air conditioning is controlled campuswide.

Computer diagrams of interconnecting pipes monitor the temperature in every building

and almost every office and classroom—showing them who’s hot and who’s not.

Graphs and charts identify what’s running or breaking down. Tubes and wires pour from enormous containers. Giant fans whirl. There’s steam and vents and levers and blinking lights. Retired supervisor George Mayor once said it looked like Starship Enterprise on the old TV series Star Trek.



Inside Georgia College's chiller plant.

It's an ear-deafening workspace with four 600-ton chiller tanks. The 9,000 sq. ft. warehouse near Miller Court chills water to 42 degrees and churns more than 55,600 gallons around campus. Water's piped underground to air handlers in every building, which absorb sticky humidity from the air. Warmed water comes gushing back to be recycled. Enormous cooling towers remove the heat. Then, water's pumped over Freon coils for recharging, and the process repeats over and over again.

Every classroom receives eight air changes per hour.

Throughout it all, Brooks and Sloan are constantly observing. The entire HVAC crew works weekend and night shifts in emergencies and during residence hall move-ins. Even when they're not at work, the duo can log into the computer program from home. Sloan does that "quite often," Brooks said, "always making sure campus is taken care of. We try our best to



Tim Brooks reads data on water output.

keep on top of it.”

It takes continuous training—seminars and webinars—to stay up-to-date. Soon, the plant will have a new computer system and additional chiller to deal with add-ons at Beeson, Terrell and the Integrated Science Complex. Every day is a new challenge.

Sloan’s been at Georgia College 18 years and Brooks 13. Both were electricians with kaolin mine backgrounds, and both of their wives are school teachers. The two men laugh and say they leave the physical fix-it jobs for younger “go-getters” on their crew.

With a team member retiring soon, their office will be reduced to seven. The job is hectic, so the group relies on one another. They kid around and, sometimes, someone brings in donuts or biscuits with gravy. They hunt and fish for relaxation.

It’s important to know how to decompress, Brooks said, because chill is a “big deal.”



Chilled water pump.

If Georgia’s Old Governor’s Mansion lost air conditioning its historic paintings, rugs and furnishings would be jeopardized. Temperature at Special Collections in Ina Dillard Russell Library is carefully regulated too, so humidity doesn’t damage precious papers and other items. The Natural History Museum at Herty Hall has taxidermy animals and fossils that need protecting, as well. Directors of these areas have Brooks on “speed dial” in case of emergencies.

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We’re always thinking about everybody on campus. We really are. There’s always something to be monitored. Always something to keep on top of.

- Brooks

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COVID-19 created new problems to solve. With changing class sizes, Brooks and Sloan are constantly reevaluating air flow and adjusting room temperatures. Areas with more people heat up quickly.

During the pandemic, HVAC mechanics used “foggers”—backpacks with biodegradable sprayers—to kill bacteria, mold, mildew and viruses. They ordered MERV 13 filters for academic buildings to catch microscopic particles from the air.

It seems every week brings a new regulation or recommendation.

"We're always thinking about everybody on campus. We really are," Brooks said. "There's always something to be monitored. Always something to keep on top of."

In addition, facilities is also concerned with reducing electricity costs. During critically hot months, Brooks and Sloan override temperature controls from their computer terminals with a click of a button. They do it in minimal increments, so it's hardly noticed. The savings, however, piles up. In 2019, the division saved 35 percent in energy costs.

In May 2019, Georgia Power Co. gave Georgia College a \$120,454 rebate check, because of the university's new demand-flow initiative. It produced a \$65,000 savings within six months of completing the chiller plant's optimization project.

It's a lot to oversee. Priceless artifacts. People's comfort and wellbeing. Saving money. But Brooks and Sloan do it well.

Unless you're feeling a little hot under the collar, however, you might never notice.

News Stories Posted Tuesday September 22, 2020



Psych professor wins national award for contributions to group therapy

[Psychological Science, Department of](#) : Tuesday September 22, 2020

Many people are tempted to Google their own names.

If H.L. Lee Gillis did that, he'd find more than 1.6 million hits directly connected to his work in psychology—a fitting legacy of his many years researching group psychotherapy and adventure therapy.



Dr. Lee Gillis, chair of psychology.

It's no wonder, then, Dr. Gillis was nationally recognized by the Society of Group Psychology and Group Psychotherapy, Division 49 of the American Psychological Association (APA). He was recently presented with APA's "2020 Arthur Teicher Group Psychologist of the Year Award" which honors important contributions to knowledge of group behavior.

"For me personally, it's a matter of having adventure therapy recognized by a national organization. This is a big deal. I was honored just to be nominated," Gillis

said.

“There’s an acknowledgment there that’s been really powerful,” he added. “On the Division 49 board, I’ve gotten to meet and work alongside people I respect. I had read their publications. Great scholars. Great academics. Making those connections through the years was an avenue to getting our work published in higher-tiered journals.”

Gillis has been a professor of psychology at Georgia College since 1986 and department chair for the past 15 years. His journey to “mindful group adventure therapy” began at age 10, when he started attending summer camp. Gillis worked as a camp counselor through the 1970s, guiding youth in small-group activities.

He got his first taste of psychology at Davidson College in North Carolina and became involved with a Wilderness Instructors course in Blairsville, Georgia. It introduced Gillis to enterprises like “trust falls” and 12-foot rappelling walls. During a summer course on abnormal psychology, he helped a psychiatrist conduct rock climbing with male adolescents. It was there, Gillis noticed a peculiar change. Patients, who wouldn’t ordinarily talk and answer questions, were suddenly opening up.

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Something happened when they started climbing. The conversations were different. I’ve essentially been chasing that my whole career.

- Dr. Lee Gillis

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“Something happened when they started climbing. The conversations were different,” Gillis said. “I’ve essentially been chasing that my whole career. What was it? What made the difference? Was it the risk, the excitement, the fear? Being able to accomplish something they thought they couldn’t do?”

The rest, as they say, is history.

A research term paper led to interning at an environmental education center, which led to graduate school at Middle Tennessee State University and a PhD. in counseling psychology from the University of Georgia. Gillis has worked with Project Adventure in Covington, Georgia, and as a licensed psychologist at Coliseum Center for Families in Milledgeville.

Over the years, he’s won numerous honors, including Georgia College’s “Distinguished Professor Award” in 1993. Gillis co-authored three books, multiple textbook chapters and a copious number of publications. He’s given over a dozen

keynote addresses and nearly 145 professional presentations. He helped make training videos, as well. All revolved around wilderness groups and adventure therapy. In fact, Gillis was among the first to write on this subject and co-authored “Adventure Therapy: Theory, Research and Practice.” He’s also been a board member, fellow and past president of APA’s Division 49.

Gillis has taught Georgia College courses on group dynamics, interpersonal relationships and personality theory, as well as senior seminars in adventure therapy and teamwork.

A couple dozen students have worked in Gillis’ adventure therapy lab—about seven per semester. They analyze data from the Canadian organization, Enviros, and its “Shunda Creek” program in Alberta, Canada. The 12-week program treats young men with substance abuse disorder. Students use data from biweekly questionnaires to determine how wilderness-based activities lead to improved self-worth and recovery. Treatment groups go camping, canoeing, hiking, biking and rock climbing—



Youth at Shunda Creek. (Courtesy of Will Black)

but Gillis said what makes the therapy powerful is “intentionally connecting” each activity directly to issues young adults are experiencing.

At Georgia College, his students are treated to similar small-group techniques and learn by experience. Instead of lectures, they read and discuss psychology articles, problem solve and give presentations. Sometimes, visitors see Gillis’ students walking around the Arts and Science building. Each group member pulls the ends of a bandana so tautly, a cup of water on top doesn’t spill. These types of activities connect people and show the importance of working together.

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That’s what I’m working toward with my students too. They’re problem-solving. It’s learning, instead of lecturing. This develops trust and makes it psychologically safe for students to be themselves and share with each other.

- Gillis

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Google's done a study that identified psychological safety as the most important factor in group productivity. Reflecting on what happened during activity completes the lesson, because issues "literally play out" during movement. Whether it's a problem with depression, communication, cooperation or personal relations—outdoor and group adventures help identify pathways for resolution.

"That's what I'm working toward with my students too. They're problem-solving," Gillis said. "It's learning, instead of lecturing. This develops trust and makes it psychologically safe for students to be themselves and share with each other."

When students work in the lab, Gillis said their schoolwork "becomes real." They examine data and apply what they've learned in statistics and psychology classes. Many go on to be therapists, social workers, counselors and psychologists.



Dr. Gillis (left) and recent graduate Garrett Cook (right) at the Southeastern Psychological Association conference in 2019.

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I felt like the adventure therapy lab would be a good fit, and I can say now that I was right.

- Garrett Cook

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Garrett Cook was one of Gillis' lab assistants. He graduated in May with a degree in

psychology and now works as a research analyst for Georgia College's Early Language and Literacy program. He starts graduate school next fall.

"Initially, I was trying to get my foot in the door with research and get more involved with my studies," Cook said. "I grew up backpacking, hiking and camping with my dad. The idea of using those types of activities to help young adults work through their drug addiction was extremely interesting to me. I felt like the adventure therapy lab would be a good fit, and I can say now that I was right."

Lab students deal mostly with secondary data on Excel spreadsheets. This helps them acquire important skills employers seek in the workplace. They learn how to analyze numbers, review literature, manage large sets of data and report findings in an understandable way.

It was enjoyable work for Cook and a refreshing change from regular schoolwork. His time at Georgia College and in the adventure therapy lab helped him develop critical-thinking skills and "a healthy level of skepticism," which he uses every day at work to make decisions.

Recently, Cook was the lead author on a peer-reviewed article about adventure therapy, published in the "Journal for Therapeutic Schools and Programs." Its major conclusion showed age had no bearing in the effectiveness of adventure therapy. However, post-treatment findings identified the need for additional support following discharge, because clients who tried alcohol at younger ages experienced more-severe relapses six months later.

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It's nice to be in a setting where the work you're doing feels purposeful and your ideas are taken seriously. Sure, the work we do in lab is academic, but it has real-world implications. You know you're working for something more than just a grade.

- Cook

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"You know you're doing something that could potentially advance the field's knowledge in that area," Cook added. "When everyone in lab feeds off each other's ideas, there's an energy and a pace that's uncommon in normal classroom settings. It's exciting stuff."

Cook is just one of hundreds of students Gillis has worked with at Georgia College. He helps them find their passion through his.

You could say it's been an adventure.

News Stories Posted Wednesday September 23, 2020



Preserving the memory of Flannery O'Connor is at the core of giving

[Andalusia](#) : Wednesday September 23, 2020

Mike and Wendy Laidlaw, of Portland, Maine, had always loved 20th century author, essay and short-story writer Flannery O'Connor and her creative works. When they bought their second home in Savannah—O'Connor's birthplace—the couple knew they would eventually travel to Milledgeville to see Andalusia—O'Connor's home.

"The interest in Andalusia came from my interest in Flannery," said Mike. "I'd been reading her stories for a long time and knew she was from Savannah. We also knew we would visit Milledgeville sooner rather than later."

Shortly after visiting Andalusia in 2017, Mike and Wendy knew they wanted to make a financial commitment to O'Connor's home.

"It was clear to me that Andalusia was a good place to represent who Flannery was," said Mike. "It was worth investing in. So, everything just fell into place."

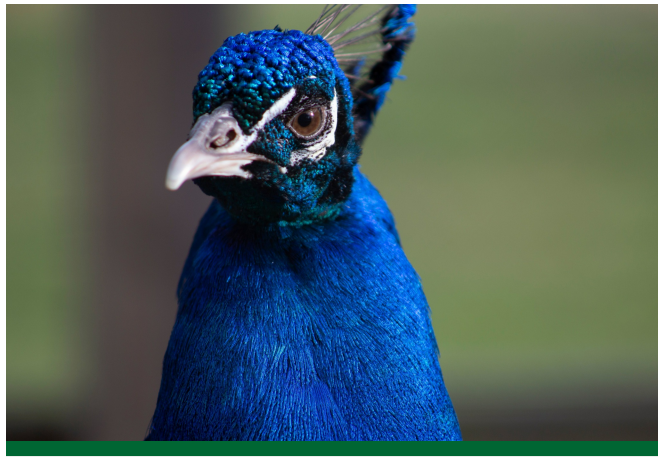
The couple knew Flannery had gone to school at Georgia College. Both the information they received from the university and the campus tour gave them a sense of the school and town.

"There's a nice, southern vibe to it," said Mike.

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"It was clear to me that Andalusia was a good place to represent who Flannery was," said Mike. "It was worth investing in. So, everything just fell into place."

- Mike Laidlaw



Currently, two peacocks roam Andalusia. However, at her peak, Flannery O'Connor had 40 peacocks on her farm.

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"Not only am I interested in Flannery's work, but I'm equally interested in her as a person," said Wendy. "Flannery was unaware of the social issues that she struggled with at times."

Wendy feels O'Connor's writing applies to the 21st century, as well.

I'm really amazed at all the social issues that are arising independent of one another in our nation," Wendy said. "The whole issue of race and bigotry that produces racism—it seems there's a natural move to better understand and deal with this. I think Flannery's creative works figure into this in no small way."

Wendy feels it's important to view O'Connor as a human being in an evolutionary process of growth and existence.

"I think she's a great example of all of us trying to work through issues," she said. "Of course, Flannery was living and writing from a different place and time, as she was evolving and working through issues. This is a good lesson to take away."

The couple encourages others to learn more about O'Connor by reading some of her stories and visiting Andalusia and Georgia College.

"Visiting Andalusia and the college was more meaningful than I expected it to be," said Wendy. "It's become very personal for us. Having these electronic communications and meeting the college president have been great. It's not only

the intellectual connection with Mike's love of literature, but now this passion has become broader to include me and more people with an experiential connection in both places. For us, Andalusia has become a high priority in our life that extends to our giving."

And their giving has had a tangible effect on the landscape of Andalusia. Recently, they donated funds to help expand the footprint of the peafowl enclosure and bring that part of the grounds closer to how it was when O'Connor lived there. At her peak, she owned an upwards of 40 peacocks; currently, Georgia College has two.

O'Connor has been an inspiration to the couple's new snowbird life, as they come to Georgia four to six months each year. It's also been a way for them to meet individuals associated with O'Connor. Supporting Andalusia fits with their mission to give.

"We have multiple goals for our giving. We talk about it regularly. Not only for estate planning purposes, but just for annual giving as well," said Wendy. "We're pretty well aligned in our thinking about those areas that are near and dear to our heart."

"I think our giving to Andalusia will continue well into the future, and probably increase over time," said Mike. "My primary focus will be on the Andalusia Institute."



Flannery O'Connor's desk, where she wrote her famous creative works is on display at Andalusia.



Wendy and Mike Laidlaw



Andalusia was home to World-famed Author Flannery O'Connor from 1951 to 1964.

Although Mike and Wendy are in different professions, they share the same giving interests. They feel it's easy to give to Andalusia.

"We found that giving yearly through the donor-advised fund has been very simple," said Wendy. "You don't need a lot of money to do this. You choose to donate what you'd like when it's convenient for you. And you can donate cash or lower, cost-basis securities, which is what we've done."

"It's been a very easy way for us to contribute more than we ever gave before and to give on a schedule that's convenient for us," said Mike.

The Laidlaw's intend to help Andalusia thrive through the coming years.

"After much discussion, we give to organizations, causes and undertakings that we feel close to due to the personal nature of each one," said Mike. "Here, we're all on the same mission to protect Andalusia."