

Front Page News Story Archive

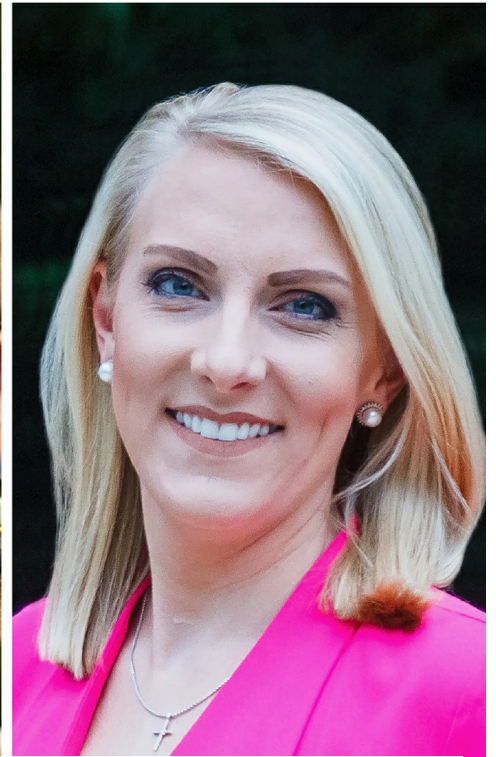
January 2021



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News Stories Posted Friday January 8, 2021



Newly established alumni affinity groups and chapter leaders are eager to expand their organizations

[Alumni](#) : Friday January 8, 2021

In September 2020, senior hotel operations and development Executive William "Will" Perry Jr., '10, was selected to serve as the first president of the inaugural LGBTQ+ Alumni Council for a two-year term. Perry resides in Dallas, Texas, and comes from a family with deep southern roots. His father—a sixth generation Georgian, raised Perry in East Tennessee. He has long experienced the misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding the LGBTQ+ community in the south.

Other Executive Committee leaders include, Abigail Downs, '16, who serves as vice president, and Charles Morgan, '17, event coordinator. The council is currently seeking someone to fill the secretary position. The Council members have outlined three core pillars of their initial strategy: growth, visibility and sustainability.

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"We're reaching out across social media and other platforms to enhance our

visibility and grow our LGBTQ+ alumni database."

- "Will



William "Will" Perry Jr.

"Since coming out in my early 20s, I have been committed both professionally and personally to breaking down labels and demonstrating the value of diversity in all aspects of my life," Perry said. "When the new affinity group was formed, I was among the first in line to volunteer for a leadership role, as the work of the council is an extension of my fundamental values."

The council was formed to highlight the goals of inclusion and diversity at Georgia College.

It's another way for alumni to connect and serve as a resource for the university, students and alumni.

"Historically, issues like LGBTQ+ status have not been tracked by the university, so we inherited a humble list of less than 50 names," said Perry. "We're reaching out across social media and other platforms to enhance our visibility and grow our LGBTQ+ alumni database."

The council is also planning several events throughout the year on and off campus subject to health restrictions.

["In January, we are launching our first scholarship campaign to raise funds for an LGBTQ+ Alumni dedicated scholarship," said Perry.](#) "Additionally, we are laying out a long-term plan to help ensure the Council's efforts are sustainable in the long run."

Realtor Rachel Ledford Weber, '10, '12, president of the newly formed Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia (DMV) Alumni Chapter, resides in Washington, D.C. Col. William Yarborough serves as vice president. Although he's not an alumnus, his grandson is enrolled at Georgia College.

"I serve as president, because I can't really get enough of Georgia College," she

said. "When I left Milledgeville, it was almost like I left home. I want to have a little piece of home here in D.C. and have an outlet for other Georgia College folks. We're very high-caliber alumni. I just want to give back."

"There's a growing number of alumni in the region who don't really have an outlet to get together and network and provide resources for other Georgia College alumni," she said.

Her goals for 2021 include holding three events in the Washington, D.C. area. Weber wants to establish a professional network for Georgia College alumni and supporters for advocacy purposes, provide mentorship opportunities for recent Georgia College alumni interested in relocating to the DMV area and serve as a means for Georgia College alumni to secure affordable and safe housing.

"To have that network of alumni when I moved to D.C. would've been helpful, especially my first year here to talk to the right people to help navigate the cost of things and get a job," she said. "There are Georgia College alumni who move here often."

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"I serve as president, because I can't really get enough of Georgia College. When I left Milledgeville, it was almost like I left home. I want to have a little piece of home here in D.C. and have an outlet for other Georgia College folks. We're very high-caliber alumni. I just want to give back."

- Rachel Ledford Weber



Rachel Ledford Weber

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"It's really important that we meet socially and establish some kind of group norm and vested interest in the organization," she said. "I'd also like to get some feedback from others in the group."

One of her main concerns for Georgia College alumni in the area is housing.

"As a realtor, this is a passion of mine," she said. As someone who interned in the area, and accepted my first job on the Hill, I know how shocking it can be to move from Milledgeville to DMV."

Weber and her husband had a Texas A&M student temporarily stay with them until he could make it on his own. Now he's employed in Washington, D.C., and has an apartment.

"It would've been great if that was a Georgia College student," she said. "I feel that loyalty to the university. We don't have an acceptable network of students. That's really my big thing is helping people get up here until they can get on their feet and blossom into the world."

Her first job working for congress and the congressional staff paid around \$35,000 a year.

"This is not a bad salary, but when you have to pay \$1,500 to \$2,000 in rent, and take public transportation for an hour, it's tough," she said. "I'd like to reduce that kind of angst for a college student, who's just getting out and trying to figure out what they want to do."

Ultimately, Weber wants to establish a roster of alumni in the D.C. area to engage with students and young alumni. She plans to implement her goals by embracing the imperfections and go into it with a liberal arts mind.

"GC has a vast network of resources in the area," Weber said. "If we leverage them, as other colleges have with theirs, then we can help our alumni make their mark in the national capital. Whether it's politics, technology, real estate or any other venture, GC has a vibrant, diverse and active community in the region available and ready to support you. I hope that GC alumni in the area will read this and reach out to me, offering their support for our fellow Bobcats."

Fox 5 Atlanta Reporter and former Georgia College lecturer Elizabeth Rawlins, '12, uses her mass communication experience every day on the job and as president for the newly formed Georgia College Communications Alumni Council.

A collaborative effort of the Mass Communication Department and University Advancement prompted Dr. Angela Criscoe, assistant professor of mass communication, to ask her if she would be willing to serve as president of the

chapter.

"Them seeking me out was a humbling opportunity," Rawlins said. "I love my alma mater, and I love what I do, so that's why I agreed to do it."

Rawlins was excited when she was asked to lead the council, because she feels it's something that the school and students need.

"I definitely think that we have so many opportunities to connect with our students," she said. "It's a connection I wish I had as a student."

"The hardest part is leaving college and starting your career," she said. "I think it's so important that we continue to bring Georgia College full circle."



Elizabeth Rawlins

Mass Communication majors Florrie McCord, vice president; Abigail Ralph, event coordinator and Benedict Esposito, secretary serve on the newly formed council. In addition, Rawlins' fellow alumni expressed their excitement to be involved in the Council.

The Council has met twice and formulated goals to build its alumni and student relations.

"My big goal is to bridge the gap between alumni and students," she said. "Every time we have an event, I think it should also be an opportunity for maybe some star students to come and talk to the alumni and tell them what they're doing and what they're achieving."

Rawlins and her executive committee are planning a small, Atlanta area alumni meet-and-greet event this spring, a career day this fall and a big event including a cocktail reception and silent auction in the newly renovated Terrell Hall in spring 2022.

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“A lot of times, especially in college, you’re narrow-minded about your career. Students need alumni who have experience in working with social media, graphic design or other areas. Everybody needs somebody to be that good communicator to students or alumni to make sure that the world knows who they are.”

- Elizabeth Rawlins

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“At Career Day, alumni could let students know what they're doing in the working world,” said Rawlins. “Not everybody may be hiring, but I think getting those alumni to come back to represent their organization and to connect with students is important.”

She wants to encourage students to talk to alumni at the council’s events.

“A lot of times, especially in college, you’re narrow-minded about your career,” Rawlins said. “Students need alumni who have experience in working with social media, graphic design or other areas. Everybody needs somebody to be that good communicator to students or alumni to make sure that the world knows who they are.”

[Learn how you can contribute to Georgia College Alumni Affinity group scholarships.](#)



Life-changing accident didn't stop alumna from obtaining successful careers

Alumni : Friday January 8, 2021

It's been three years since the accident that would test Kimiko Cheeley's, '14, resolve to get through life. Her will to live and sheer determination brought her out of a coma and, later, led her to mastering and managing three successful careers.

She doesn't have any recollection of her injury or the day it took place. From what she was told by her husband, the date was Dec. 26, 2017. Cheeley and her husband were asked to move a massive tractor tire at her mother's house.

"My mother also asked my little brothers who were seven and eight years old to help," she said. "But we didn't want anything to happen to them, so we proceeded without them. I lost my footing and the tire enveloped my entire body."



Kimiko Cheeley

The 500-plus-pound tire also fell on her husband's leg, but he was able to wiggle from under it. He said the last thing she told him before she lost consciousness

was, “I love you.”

“I assume I was thinking, ‘I’m not going to make it,’” Cheeley said. “All of the weight of the tire was on me, and I couldn’t breathe, so my heart stopped.”

She was rushed to The Medical Center, Navicent Health Level 1 Trauma Hospital in Macon. A medical director suggested they do target temperature management, known as hypothermia protocol to cool her body temperature to preserve her organs to give them time to heal. Then, they would rewarm her body back up—“a jump-start to my body essentially,” she said.

Cheeley was in a coma over a week. When she was stable enough to leave The Medical Center, Navicent Health, she was transported to the Shepherd Center. For three weeks, she endured intensive physical rehabilitation.

“I essentially had to learn how to do everything all over again,” she said. “My memory was horrible. I couldn’t recall the entire month. I also couldn’t walk and had to learn how to write and hold a spoon—little things you don’t think about.”

Her therapy sessions triggered memories of her time at Georgia College.

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“I thought I could provide care to a patient from a caregiver’s and survivor’s perspective. Plus, I got through my TBI, so I could help support patients and their families. They thought it would be the perfect position for me. And then with my background in psychology at Georgia College coupled with my experience as a marriage and family therapist, it was just a 360-degree experience altogether.”

- Kimiko Cheeley

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“Mostly, cognitive psychology was applied to my recovery, because it’s all about cognition and perception, attention, problem solving, creativity and thinking,” she said. “My short-term memory was horrible. They gave me a list of words to try and help remember, and I could only remember the first and last words, which, in psychology terms, are primacy and recency affects.”

She would try to remember numbers, as well. Cheeley had to chunk the numbers together to retain them and increase her digit span.

Unfortunately, the huge gap from Cheeley’s traumatic brain injury (TBI) made her unable to remember all her Georgia College professors. However, she recalls two

of them. Her psychology professor taught her how the mind works, and Cheeley applied these skills to her recovery. Her English 1101 professor encouraged her to continue writing, because she thought Cheeley was good at it.

“She told me how great my writing was,” said Cheeley.

“Being a writer never crossed my mind. And who would’ve thought early last year, I would publish an article in our Family Therapy magazine, where I wrote about the trauma I endured, my recovery and the approach a therapist should take with their patients who have experienced trauma.”



Kimiko Cheeley shares a laugh with others at the Georgia Trauma Foundation's 2020 Trauma Awareness Day at the state capital.

Prior to her injury, Cheeley was a palliative care coordinator at The Medical Center, Navicent Health. While she was recovering from TBI, Cheeley surprised her friends and family by going back to work early. However, she experienced palliative care from the family’s perspective before Cheeley was on the Health Care team. Her mother-in-law, who passed away from ovarian cancer was under its services prior to her death.

The Medical Center, Navicent Health wanted Cheeley to be the Trauma Survivors Network coordinator, because of her first-hand experience in dealing with trauma.

“I thought I could provide care to a patient from a caregiver’s and survivor’s perspective. Plus, I got through my TBI, so I could help support patients and their families,” she said. “They thought it would be the perfect position for me. And then with my background in psychology at Georgia College coupled with my experience as a marriage and family therapist, it was just a 360-degree experience altogether.”

Cheeley found solace in her position as care coordinator at The Medical Center, Navicent Health.

“Just being there to provide my perspective, experience and helping others and letting them know what to expect is rewarding to me. Because a lot of times, families are getting so much thrown at them, and no one is taking the time to go through the process step by step. This is where we’re going to go from here, this is what to expect, this is what you could do, or this would be better—I just enjoy giving back to patients and their families.”

In times of trauma, Cheeley hopes patients and their families will find peace,



Kimiko Cheeley speaks at the Georgia Trauma Foundation's 2020 Trauma Awareness Day at the state capital.

understanding and acceptance in what they're going through.

"As a volunteer, I enjoy seeing that glimpse of hope come from patients," she said. "They can see well if she can do it, then it motivates them to recover, as well."

Although much of Cheeley's memory is gone, she recalls some lessons from her psychology classes at Georgia

College.

"Psychology is the study of humans—their mind and behavior," she said. "It especially teaches about relationships. As I'm helping others, I draw from my classes and consider how each person's possibly thinking, and I question, 'How do I act in response?'

Today, she works in the virtual care outpatient clinic at The Medical Center, Navicent Health. She also teaches psychology at Middle Georgia State University and is a licensed marriage and family therapist.

"My biggest thing as a mom of a 12-year-old is that I cannot give up," she said. "I have to show my son that life can be tough. It throws things at you that you're not prepared for. But you can still make it if you have the right support. If you continue to think positive and don't dwell on the negative, then you can conquer those obstacles."

News Stories Posted Monday January 11, 2021



Grace Hopper empowers female students to land positions in technology

[Alumni](#) : Monday January 11, 2021

In a profession predominately held by men, more women are entering the technology field. The Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing Conference and Georgia College are doing their part to make this happen.

Since 1994, the conference is named in honor of Admiral Grace Murray Hopper, pioneer in the technology field. She helped create the first computers and also helped women across the globe gain the confidence to land successful careers with major corporations in an industry where they are the minority, while highlighting the contributions of women in the technology field.



Georgia College students and faculty attend the 2018 Grace Hopper Celebration Conference.

Georgia College has sent 79 students to this annual conference since 2014 and is now raising funds to allow 20 more to attend this event to be held Sept. 26 – 30 in Chicago. At this time, 10 students are funded.

The lodging cost has doubled this year due to COVID restrictions, which allows for only two students to a room versus four in past years.

“Costs are directly related to how many students we send and where the conference is located,” said Kari Brown, coordinator for business outreach in the College of Business. “If the conference is held in Orlando, for example, we are able to drive to the destination, creating lower travel costs. This year, however, the conference will be held in Chicago, requiring additional air travel costs in addition to increases in lodging, due to the COVID-19 restrictions.”



Dr. Tanya Goette (left) and Jordan Mixon attend a previous Grace Hopper Celebration.

The celebration—the largest gathering of women in technology in the world—brings students and company representatives together to network and champion others. The Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing Conference also supports students and young professionals through their various sponsorship programs.

The conference series builds on what students have learned about technology at Georgia College. Each participant is often the only female in their classes. The

conference, with approximately 30,000 female technologists in attendance, makes them feel empowered.

“It allows female students to understand that they are not alone and deserve to be in technology,” said Dr. Tanya Goette, chair, information systems and computer sciences department. “The celebration also allows them to network with individuals who work at Apple, Google, Microsoft and many other large companies, especially in technology, banking, insurance and consulting.”

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“This is more a soft skill, but I learned no matter how scary it may seem trying to network with a stranger in a more formal, professional environment, most people are going to respond with kindness if you approach them with sincerity. Attending the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing Conference really did change my life.”

- Jordan Mixon

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While attending Georgia College, the conference was the first time Jordan Mixon, '16, had been in a room where the overwhelming majority of people were women in technology.

“It was so inspiring to be around them and hear their stories,” she said. “I went back to school with renewed confidence and determination to finish my degree at Georgia College in computer science and find a career in technology.”

For Mixon, the best part of the conference was getting advice from young professionals, and the possibility of landing a mentorship, as well.

“It can be challenging in technology and academic settings, where sometimes, you could be one of the only girls in the classroom,” said Mixon. “Getting out of my routine bubble and attending the conference gave me a grasp on how much bigger the field is and how many amazing women are already working in it.”



Jordan Mixon

Attending the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing Conference

changed her life. Mixon now applies what she learned at the conference series to the work place. A cloud enablement analyst, she helps companies migrate to the cloud or improve their cloud infrastructure, security and monitoring processes. Some of her duties include writing automation templates for cloud infrastructure and migrating hundreds of on-premises servers to the cloud for large companies.

“This is more a soft skill, but I learned no matter how scary it may seem trying to network with a stranger in a more formal, professional environment, most people are going to respond with kindness if you approach them with sincerity,” Mixon said. “Attending the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing Conference really did change my life.”

The conference is unlike any other environment. It brings women in computing together to provide learning experiences from successful women in the same field and even job opportunities.

“At the conference’s career fair, I learned how to not devalue my skills and experience, but rather be proud of my past success and accomplishments and promote how those may apply in the position I am seeking or even just the daily task I’m completing,” said Shelby Upcraft, ’19.



Shelby Upcraft at her work station.

Now a transformation assurance experienced associate in an advisory practice, Upcraft expresses her gratitude.

“To the donors who supported me to attend the conference, I would like to say ‘thank you’ for this opportunity,” she said. “By supporting my attendance at this conference, you provided me with the opportunity to receive an amazing job at an amazing company I still love over a year and a half later.”

[Learn how you can help students](#) like Mixon and Upcraft, attend the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing.

News Stories Posted Wednesday January 20, 2021



Trendsetters: How Georgia College is leading the way in undergraduate research

[Transformative Learning Experiences](#) : Wednesday January 20, 2021

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inding connections between music used by American presidential campaigns to gain insights into candidate identities.

Conducting dramaturgical research on an early 20th century Russian ballet company.

Determining if solar panels could improve battery performance in golf carts.

These are a sampling of research done by undergraduates at Georgia College. Students are forging the path in undergraduate research. During 2019-2020, more than 2,300 Georgia College students participated in undergraduate research.

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At Georgia College, [undergraduate research] started out as a completely faculty-driven initiative, - Dr. Jordan Cofer

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“What’s really interesting about undergraduate research at Georgia College, maybe opposed to other schools, is that at Georgia College it started out as a completely faculty-driven initiative,” said Dr. Jordan Cofer, associate provost for Transformative Learning Experiences. “Basically, these faculty recognize that there was already a lot of undergraduate research happening and they wanted to figure out what was the best way to capitalize on that and organize it.”

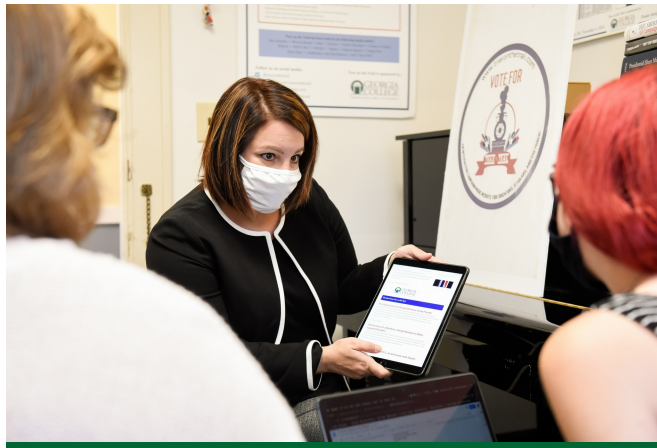
Dr. Doreen Sams, faculty coordinator for Mentored Undergraduate Research & Creative Endeavors (MURACE), was one faculty member that initiated undergraduate research at Georgia College. Sams was part of that faculty circle in 2011 that got together to research, plan and write a proposal to submit to the Provost’s Office that outlined the importance of undergraduate research. That group was granted \$100,000 to support student research and conference travel. That funding has continued. In the past eight years, MURACE has financially supported more than 2,500 students.

“I saw so much value in it for students, and, even back then, I had been doing research with undergraduates,” said Sams. “For me, it was kind of a no-brainer.”

Since then, undergraduate research has continued to expand and garner national recognition. The university was recently named a finalist for the Council on Undergraduate Research Campus-Wide Award for Undergraduate Research Accomplishments (AURA). According to the CUR website, this award recognizes higher education institutions that have successfully implemented the characteristics of excellence, have devised exemplary programs to provide high-quality research experiences to undergraduates and have evaluated the success of these programs.

“The Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) is well-known when it comes to undergraduate research. That’s the major organization everyone looks to, so this sort of national recognition is important,” Cofer said.

Along with being named a finalist by CUR, a recent study also showed how GC measures up to other universities when it comes to offering experiences for students to become problem solvers, leaders and put their ideas into action.



Trax on the Trail is a research project helmed by Dr. Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, associate professor of music.

“The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a national survey which is administered by almost every college and university in the United States,” said Cofer. “It’s designed to collect data from first-year and senior students to report the quality of the undergraduate experience to faculty, administrators, researchers and others.”

The survey compares students from across the country based on several pillars. Georgia College first-year students showed no significant difference when compared to other universities. However, Georgia College seniors exceeded national peers in a variety of categories including “Collaborative Learning,” “Student-Faculty Interaction,” “Supportive Environment,” “Reflective & Integrated Learning” and “Discussions with Diverse Others.”

One reason undergraduate research has become more important than ever, is because of its status as one of five transformative experiences that students can complete as part of the GC Journey Program. The GC Journeys Program encourages students to take advantage of five inside- and outside-the-classroom transformative experiences during their time at Georgia College. Cofer said the GC Journeys Program combined with the university’s liberal arts mission, sets the university up to offer a unique, interdisciplinary approach to undergraduate research.

One example of this is the research of Laura Swarner, who double majored in theatre and English, and was named a semi-finalist for the 2020 Fulbright Scholarship. Her dramaturgical research and set design on theatre’s fall 2019 production of “Ballet Russes” helped garner her the attention. She also took first place at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, a nine-region competition held in South Carolina.



Laura Swarner

"I feel very honored and excited and, honestly, just super grateful for the opportunity and support that I had throughout the process," Swarner said. "Georgia College prepared me by teaching me what I need to know in order to develop my ideas and present them professionally."

Georgia College also offers extensive opportunities for students to get involved. One of these is the student organization Undergraduate Research Circle. This semester, the group organized a Research Roundtable that allowed students to talk to faculty about their research and be exposed to many disciplines at once.

"The idea is that it would be connecting students who are interested in doing research with faculty who are doing projects. So the setup was kind of a speed dating model where they go from table to table and the faculty do a three-minute pitch about a research project," Cofer said.

Another opportunity the university provides is Posters at the Capitol, created in 2018, where students from across the state of Georgia share their research at the Georgia State Capitol. Cofer said last year, the university had six students accepted, which represented majors from chemistry, music therapy, physics and psychology. They were six of 54 students from 15 colleges and universities statewide. The annual event recently went virtual for their third year.

“Students get to present for state senators, state representatives, lobbyists and any of the public that might be there that day,” Cofer said. “When a student gets accepted, it has to be an outstanding project. It’s a student that is polished and done multiple presentations.”

The university also launched a national undergraduate research journal in spring 2020. The first volume of which is set to be published in winter 2021.

Sams has also helped write a handbook for mentoring undergraduate research students, which is used across the world.

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The amount of undergraduate research happening at Georgia College is unprecedented - Jordan Cofer

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“The amount of undergraduate research happening at Georgia College is unprecedented,” said Cofer. “Not a lot of colleges have had 23 years of an undergraduate research conference. We’re really ahead of the mark there. We are far above anything I’ve seen.”

Cofer said the benefits of research go far beyond that one project. Instead, it gives students a sense of resilience and grit, while also teaching them critical thinking skills.

“You have this tangible project at the end of the research that you can present to people. But you don’t just have that research knowledge, you now have the resilience of going through those steps,” said Cofer. “That’s what is going to set you apart. That’s what’s going to make our students stand out.”



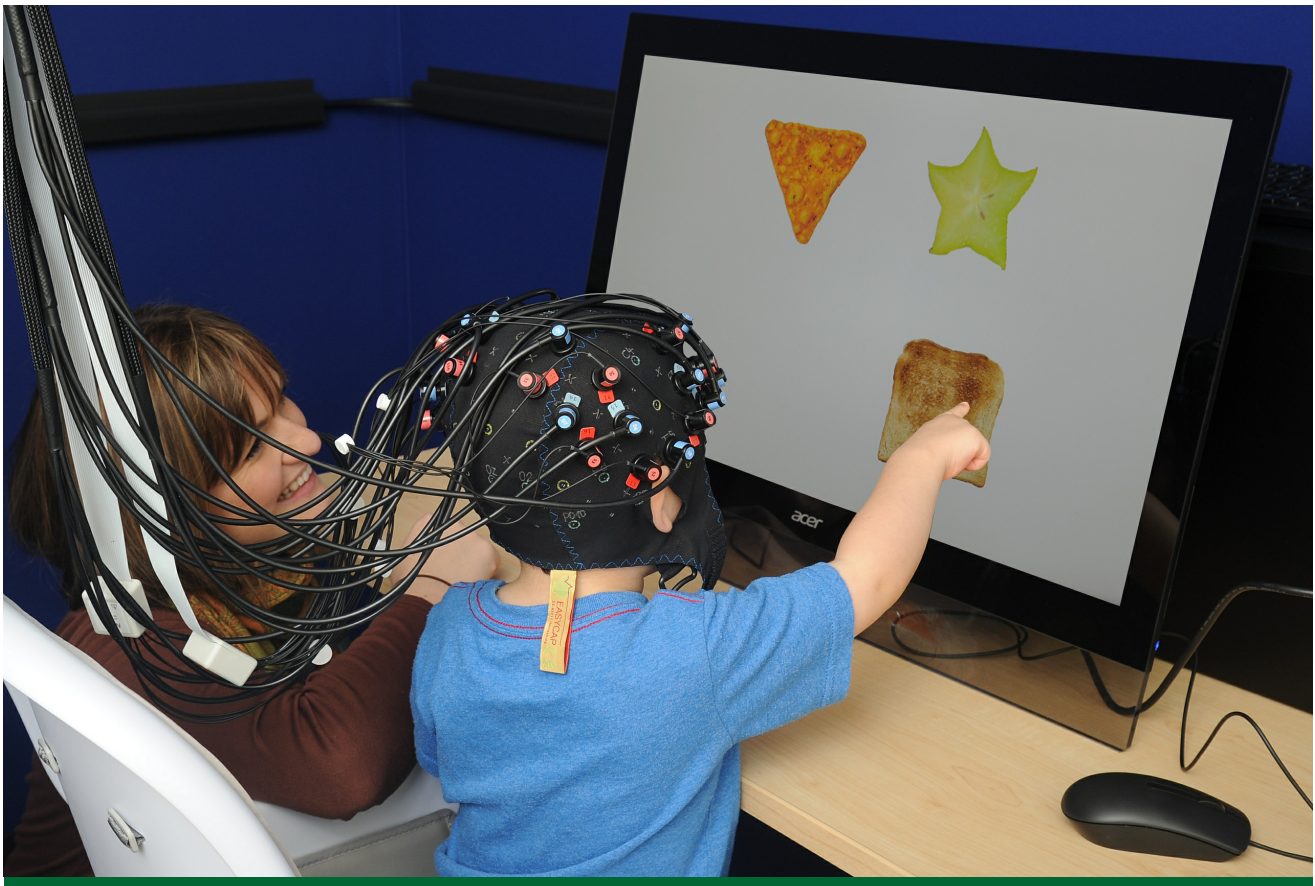
The Researchers: Alumni dive into industry through way of research

[Transformative Learning Experiences](#) : Wednesday January 20, 2021

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y the time Anastasia Kerr-German was a senior in 2014, she had already presented independent research at various conferences, delved into the rigor that goes into designing a research study and worked with three different Georgia College faculty in their research labs.

“All my professors that I worked with brought something different to the table,” she said. “That was the beauty of Georgia College for me because you get to work with multiple faculty and it's very collaborate. My ideas of what I wanted to do with my life sort of evolved based on conversations I had with them individually.”



Anastasia Kerr-German

Kerr-German worked with Drs. Whitney Heppner, J. Noland White and Tsu-Ming Chiang in the Department of Psychology while she was a student. It was those experiences in faculty research labs, that led her to pursue research in her own career—and she's not alone.

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Working with other students and faculty on research helped me figure out this was something that I loved doing.

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“Well, first I didn't even know that I'd have the opportunity here,” said Marissa Mayfield, '18, '20, who recently graduated in December with her masters in biology from Georgia College. When Mayfield was an undergraduate environmental science major, she too experienced taking the reins in a research lab, which invigorated her to explore research further.

“I didn't know what I wanted to research. At first, I just thought it was a cool path to test out,” she said. “Working with other students and faculty on research helped me

figure out this was something that I loved doing.”

Mayfield researched environmental remediation while an undergraduate. She looked at environments that have been polluted and through varying environmental analysis, she determined the most affordable and efficient way to fix that area. An interest in remediation and rehabilitation eventually landed her a National Science Foundation grant last year. The grant was to research the remedial properties of Moringa trees, whose roots and shoots absorb water and nutrients from the soil as well as heavy metals.



Marissa Mayfield



Audrey Waits

Like Mayfield, Audrey Waits, '17, was a graduate student studying biology at Georgia College. Her research at the university focused on the discovery of new bacteriophages, which are viruses that infect bacteria. Waits garnered a Fulbright Scholarship in 2017 to study in Finland. She conducted research with the Thule Institute at the University of Oulu. She studied Arctic health and studied how climatic factors (temp, precipitation, etc.) affects infectious diseases for both humans and animals in the Arctic.

As part of her Fulbright experience, Waits attended workshops, seminars and conducted a systematic literature review—it's the same experiences that now guide her as a faculty member in

biochemistry and molecular medicine at the University of Oulu. She's also a Ph.D. student at the university, where she's studying endometrial glands and their 3D structure in relation to hormones, genetic modifications, and early pregnancy (mainly in mice).

"This research will help in understanding how endometrial gland structure affects implantation and could aid in timing embryo transfers for in vitro fertilization (IVF)," Waits said.

"My Fulbright experience was truly a life-changing experience for me, in the best possible way," Waits said. "I met my husband during my Fulbright experience and now, we live in Oulu where I am a PhD student. My Fulbright experience definitely shaped my career and future in research."

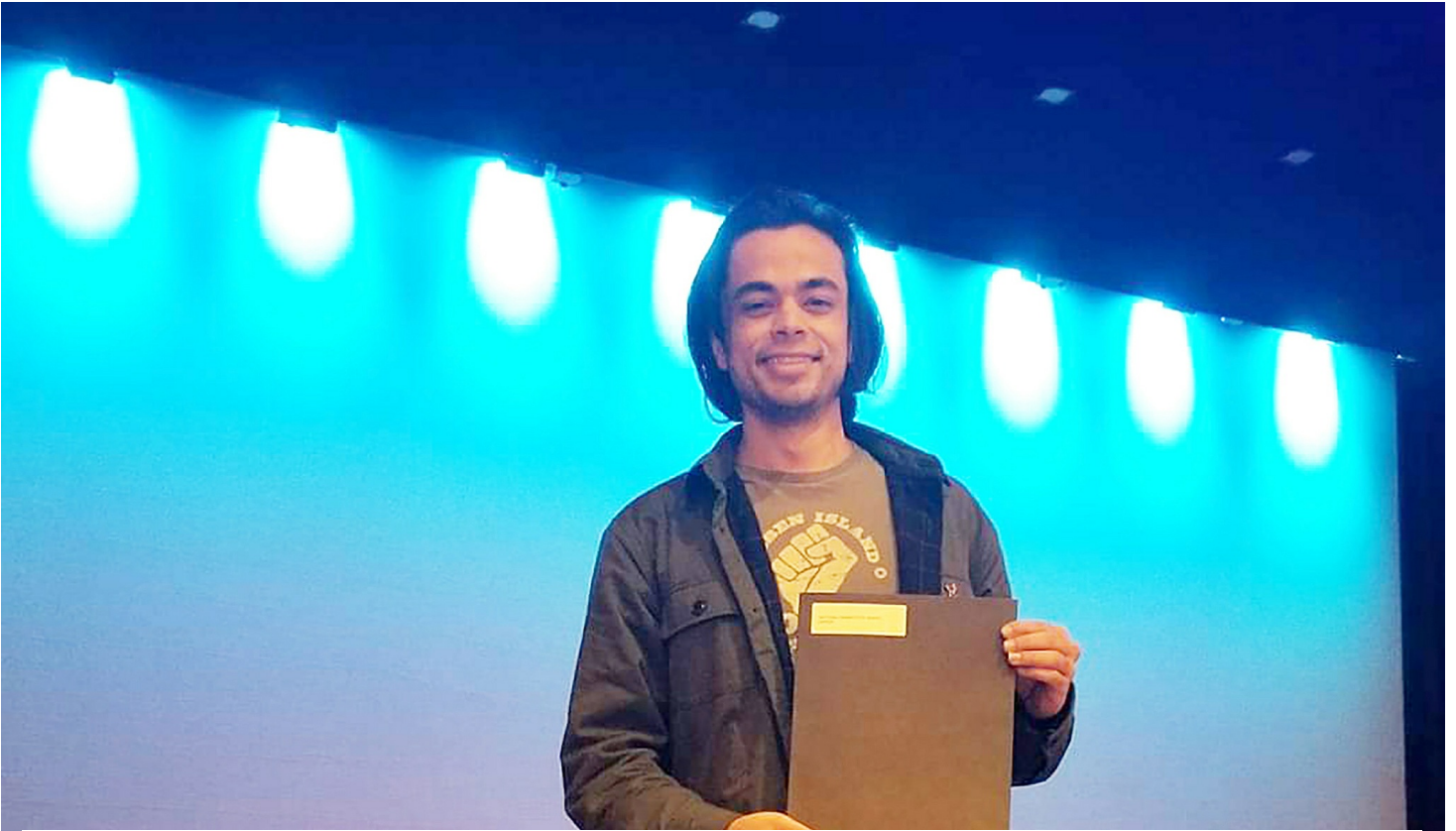
Kerr-German went on to study at the University of Tennessee where she got her masters in experimental psychology and graduated in 2019 with a doctorate in research and experimental psychology and neuroscience. She now leads the Brain, Executive Function and Attention Research (B.E.A.R) Lab at Boys Town National Research Hospital. One major goal of the lab is to understand how children's brains process the information in the world around them and what individual factors might lead to different developmental trajectories and long-term outcomes.

At the core of what these graduates do is a focus on community and translating this experience in research to serve others. For Mayfield, it's about helping communities and wildlife have a chance to thrive.

"Being a researcher is important because it's all about what you're able to contribute to science," said Mayfield. "I get to find ways to help people, to clean whole environments and give organisms back their habitats so they won't go extinct."

Kerr-German said it comes down to the lives she's able to impact—it's a lesson that's stayed with her since her time at Georgia College in Dr. Chiang's research lab, where she did examined factors contributing to development of young children's social and emotional competence.

"Because we were all paired with individual children, we were able to see that child grow over the course of a year or however long you're in the lab. You get to see how these interventions affected them, you got to look at the statistics and see if it actually worked," she said. "To me, that's the coolest part. It's that translational piece that I sought when I went on to get my graduate degree—and eventually what I sought when I was looking for a career in research."



Repeating history: Student's love of history ensures accuracy of theatre productions

[Theatre & Dance, Department of](#): Wednesday January 20, 2021

When watching a production, a vital source—the dramaturg—is often overlooked. It's the person who researches the history of the roles and setting, adapts the scripts and consults with everyone involved, so the production is on point. Senior Sachin Pillay is an integral member of Georgia College's production team.

The double history and liberal studies major and theatre minor did such a thorough job as a dramaturg for his research on his first production, "Ballet Russes," that he placed first in the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in South Carolina last February. Pillay also entered his research in Georgia College's Research Symposium last April, which got published.

"Ballet Russes" is about an enigmatic theatre ballet company that revolutionized the way theatre and ballet were done during the Russian Revolution.

As part of his independent study with Theatre Chair Dr. Karen Berman, Pillay studied the history of the characters and time period for the production. He formulated a 15-page thesis of "Ballet Russes" that argued the research to form its

foundation.

Dramaturgs, like Pillay, are used in new play development, when the writers are trying to determine what they're going to say, the evolution of characters and how they'll be characterized. They also interpret what the text is trying to relay on an academic or literary level and convey this to the production team.

"We contextualize the history of the play for the artists involved in the project," Pillay said.

"Dramaturgs are there to essentially ask the right questions and get people to think."

Dramaturgs can also be a confidante for the artists, because often times working in theatre is an emotional process. At times, from the producers to the cast; they become emotionally vested in the production and get lost in their sentiments. So, they need guidance from the dramaturg to regain their focus on the reality of the production.

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"I feel that my time at a liberal arts institution really prepared me for something like this. You're bringing in so many different skills—academically and emotionally—into one process. It's been very interesting."

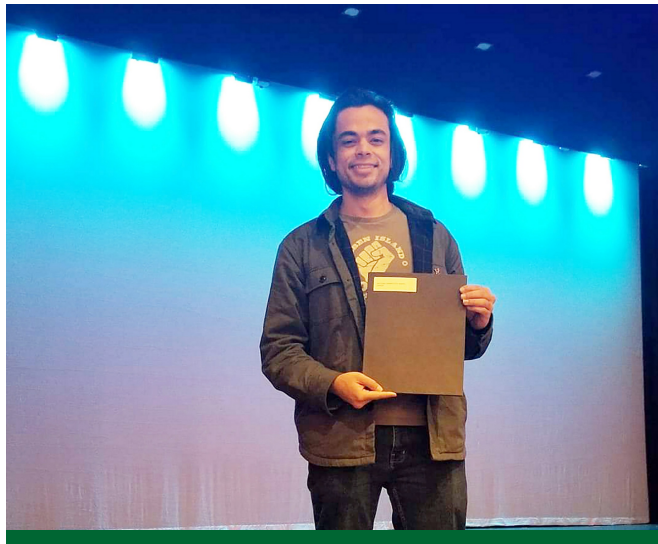
- Sachen Pillay

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"So, we're the literary manager, historian and therapist. We can be a lot of things at once," Pillay said. "It just depends on what the situation calls for."

But it all starts with research. One moment he's delving into the history and writing, and the other half of his time is spent in the rehearsal space.

"I can actually roll up my sleeves and get to work in the Black Box Theatre," Pillay said. "I'm watching the actors do their work and conversing with the director about different possibilities. I get to see the art being made."



Sachen Pillay with his research portfolio on Ballet Russes.

After Pillay wrote the thesis for “Ballet Russes,” he made actors’ packets, which entailed researching the biographies of all the actors in the play who are based off of real people. He also located and used archival film from the Russian Revolution period to create a realistic backdrop for the audience.

“Productions like this one open a dialogue,” he said. “Everyone has a role to play. I think artists especially do, because they express the feelings, wills and emotions of the community in which they live in. And to do my small part in supporting the program that supports those artists is important to me.”

Pillay also shared his love of history in working with Dr. Bob Wilson, professor of history and university historian, in Special Collections transcribing primary sources and placing them into an archivable format for him to use in future chapters of his book on the history of Georgia College. Pillay scanned documents, detailing historical periods and events at the university.



Sachen Pillay

“I learned interesting facts about Georgia College, like the evolution from an all-women’s school to a liberal arts university,” he said. “I made that interesting, historical connection as to how the university was affected by the shift in social demographics that were happening throughout the U.S. at that time. To see this in the college I attend is pretty fascinating.”

Between his time as a dramaturg and transcribing for Wilson, Pillay refined his interdisciplinary skills while at Georgia College.

“I feel that my time at a liberal arts institution really prepared me for something like this,” he said. “You’re bringing in so many different skills—academically and emotionally—into one process. It’s been very interesting.”

News Stories Posted Monday January 25, 2021



Against the odds: Communication major wins national radio news award

[Communication, Department of](#) : Monday January 25, 2021

When he was little, Jonathan O'Brien wasn't afraid of a monster under the bed.

From early on, he loved watching the nightly news and knew how bad real people and circumstances could be. By Kindergarten, he was scaring all the other kids with tales of Hurricane Katrina, and his teachers had to tell him to stop.

Now, he wins awards for telling the news.

O'Brien took 2nd place for [Best Audio Newscast](#) at CBI (College Broadcasters, Inc.), a huge feat as many of his national competitors were from larger schools with bigger budgets, better equipment and far-reaching audiences—stations with 1.3 million listeners compared to Georgia College's humble gathering of a couple hundred. O'Brien likes to joke "you might get the WGUR signal up at the Kroger."

But that hasn't stopped him.

“

This award, it's a wonderful thing that we've won. It's an achievement. I don't know if radio is taken quite as seriously as the rest of media, so it's an affirmation of something I've worked to build.

- Jonathan O'Brien

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Jonathan O'Brien outside the WGUR radio station at Terrell Hall.

A junior communication major from Atlanta, O'Brien quickly rose from a “homesick freshman”—who knew little about all the buttons, lights and levers on a radio control panel—to becoming news director of the student-run station, [95.3 WGUR](#), by his second semester. In reality, this means he's editor, anchor and chief reporter all rolled into one. Since freshman year, he's also been given practicum students to manage, all mostly older than

him.

O'Brien gets paid \$300 a semester to do this job.

But he says he'd do it for free.

“There's always been an underlying desire to report the news,” O'Brien said. “I was always fascinated with current events—anything the adults were talking about. Real-world things always interested me.”

“Why? I guess I'll have to consult a therapist about that,” he said, laughing. “I guess because it was so normal. Everybody always said I was the kid who was mature for his age.”

To understand his rise to the top of radio news at Georgia College, one must not only ponder O'Brien's upbringing but also the underdog syndrome that's been his life's story.

He grew up like most any other child—maybe a tad more serious—wanting to be a

lawyer and then governor of Georgia. He was raised by his two grandmothers, both extraordinary women who built successful careers. They taught him to mind his manners, look people in the eye when speaking and value experience “more than any textbook.” Their influence largely made O’Brien who he is today.

“That determination, that grit of theirs, is what I focus on,” he said. “It makes me want to make something of myself and do something in life that’s worthwhile. My grandmothers always made me feel like I can do most whatever I want if I put my mind to it. They probably don’t know I get a lot of that from them.”



Junior communication major Jonathan O'Brien

Growing up, his heroes were TV reporters and anchors. His grandma likes to tell the story of how O'Brien, at age 3, asked for the time. When she answered 8 a.m., he said, “Oh my goodness! We’re going to miss Channel 2 Action News!”

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There’s always been an underlying desire to report the news. I was always fascinated with current events—anything the adults were talking about. Real-world things always interested me ... Everybody always said I was the kid who was mature for his age.

- O'Brien

Now, O’Brien delivers the news in his own spunky, creative way—lending a distinctive Southern-accented enthused voice to news from campus, the local community, nation and world. With a million-dollar TV studio above his head in Terrell Hall and the newspaper staff next door—O’Brien can be seen daily plugging away in the university’s radio room.

All technology at WGUR came hard-earned through ad sales and grants. It’s a small but impressive space, where O’Brien keeps the news short, factual and clear—churning it out every hour on-the-hour. Each show is 3 minutes and 30 seconds long. An additional program, “Georgia College’s Evening News,” was produced last semester three days a week live at 4:30 and 5:30 p.m.

During important occasions, like the 2020 Presidential Election and U.S. President Joe Biden’s recent inauguration, O’Brien spearheads unscripted, live coverage that’d make most TV news editors envious. He was featured in a [13WMAZ newscast](#) for the inauguration. He’s caught the attention of many faculty and staff on campus, as well, along with members of Georgia Public Broadcasting and the National Radio Talent System in San Francisco, which offered him a [Benztown Mentorship](#) last spring that got derailed due to COVID-19.

O’Brien practically gave himself “an ulcer” prior to the 2020 Elections. He’d essentially been planning coverage since getting off the air after midterm elections in 2018. At that time, he flew solo as a freshman doing live reports. This time, he had help.

From 7 p.m. to 2 a.m., O’Brien juggled the schedules of a dozen other students. He assigned some to the courthouse and polling places to get voter reaction. Others roamed campus for faculty and student reaction. O’Brien interviewed leaders from the Young Democrats and College Republicans live on air and used audio from the Associated Press (AP) to fill in time gaps. He created table charts and spreadsheets, showing 35 open senatorial seats with details about each. He compared 2020 to elections in 2008, 2012 and 2016. All night, his students scoured the Internet for



O’Brien in the WGUR news station.

interesting tidbits, the latest news from the New York Times or what CBS was predicting. They fed this information to O'Brien via text as he continued talking on air.

O'Brien is quick to say he didn't do any of this or achieve award-winning status alone. He names off a list of mentors who helped him, including Media Lab Coordinator Evelina Galova-lossifov, Operations Manager Daniel McDonald at 88.3 WRGC, reporter Sandra Parrish at 95.5 WSB, news anchor Rahul Bali at Oconee Radio Group, Jennifer Seelig at KCBS News in San Francisco and longtime friend Lynn Harasin, a former reporter for Channel 2 Action News.

But his advisor gives much of the credit to O'Brien, saying he doesn't require micro-management.

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He's on top of it and, if that's not enough, he produced and hosted live election coverage in 2018 and 2020. That's something done by veterans and here he was—a newbie with only talent, work ethic and an incredible drive—delivering six-plus hours of non-stop live results and analysis on air. In short, Jonathan comes as close to being the perfect student and radio journalist as possible. I look forward to following his career in radio journalism. He'll achieve a grand slam in the business.

- Evelina Galova-lossifov

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“In short,” she said, “Jonathan comes as close to being the perfect student and radio journalist as possible. I look forward to following his career in radio journalism. He'll achieve a grand slam in the business.”

The 2nd-place CBI award for Best Audio Newscast came as a complete surprise to both O'Brien and Galova-lossifov.

The prize was for a lengthier newscast, a 9-minute [“Evening Brief”](#) O'Brien did when bored and stuck in his apartment at the beginning of COVID-19 last March. The newscast was a splicing of several stories—the most notable about Baldwin County's first death from coronavirus. The report included facts, quotes from local health officials, audio from several AP stories, another news story from a Georgia

College practicum student and sing-song advice from Sesame Street's Elmo on the importance of handwashing.

"I looked online and saw we came in second. I couldn't believe it. I about fell out of my chair," O'Brien said. "It was such a fun moment, because it was just so unexpected."

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Growing up, I never won many awards. I was never good at sports, was never good at any of that stuff. The awards I did win were for debate team in middle school. And I thought, 'How funny, after all these years, the only awards I win are for talking.'

- O'Brien

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News Stories Posted Tuesday January 26, 2021



Georgia College online graduate programs recognized by U.S. News & World Report

[General Institution](#) : Tuesday January 26, 2021

U.S. News & World Report has released its [‘Best Online Programs Rankings’](#) for 2021—nationally recognizing four programs from Georgia College.

The university’s online graduate [nursing](#) programs ranked 27th in the nation—up one place from last year. Georgia College’s programs were the highest-ranked in the state of Georgia. These programs include the Master of Science in Nursing with track options of Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP), FNP Post Master, Nurse Educator and Professional Enrichment, Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse practitioner programs (MSN and Postgraduate), the Women’s Health Nurse Practitioner Programs (MSN and Post Graduate) and the Nurse-Midwifery programs (MSN and post-graduate).

The online master’s degrees in [business](#) (non-MBA) were listed 38th nationally.



Graduate nursing students in training

That includes Georgia College's Master of Logistics and Supply Chain Management and Master of Management Information Systems.

The Master of Business Administration ([Georgia WebMBA®](#)) at Georgia College was also recognized among the best in the country ranked at 62nd. The program allows professionals to earn an MBA completely online without interrupting their work and personal lives.

Also recognized were the online graduate [education](#) programs including Educational Leadership, Teacher Leadership and Master of Arts in Teaching, among

others.

"I am proud our online graduate programs continue to be recognized in the top tier of the state and the nation," said Dr. Costas Spirou, provost and vice president for academic affairs. "This speaks to the dedication of the faculty and staff who work within each program. They ensure each student receives the high-quality education that Georgia College is known for both at the undergraduate and graduate level."



photo of mba sign

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For more information on Georgia College's online graduate programs, visit gcsu.edu/graduate.



Education students teaches a class