Front Page News Story Archive

March 2021

Table of Contents

News Stories Posted Monday March 1, 2021

Women’s Leadership Conference aims to empower and engage

Women's Center : Monday March 1, 2021

In 2021, Kamala Harris took office as the first woman Vice President of the United States. Jane Frasier became CEO of Citibank and the first woman to lead a major bank in the United States. Sarah Thomas was the first woman to referee a Super Bowl game.

Women serve as CEOs of multi-million dollar companies including YouTube, Lockheed Martin and General Motors.

Although they continue to make an impact in the business world, women still hold less than a third of senior management roles worldwide, according to Catalyst, a global nonprofit working to help build workplaces that work for women. The organization notes that is the highest it’s ever been.

Georgia College recognized the need for more women leaders and developed a conference that focuses on giving women the opportunity to explore their passions for leadership.

Jennifer Graham speaks at last year's conference.

“We saw that many events and conferences highlight opportunities to be a leader and ideas geared towards leadership, but historically, those are from a pretty masculine perspective,” said Jennifer Graham, director of the Women’s Center. “Many resources and conferences don't really look at the unique ways that women face leadership challenges.”

From that idea, the Women’s Leadership Conference at Georgia College was born with the goal to highlight issues and empower young women leaders.

A panel discussion from the 2020 conference, which took place pre-COVID.

“We’ve covered a variety of topics. For instance, what does it mean to be a caretaker and a leader, or how do you lead when you're experiencing harassment?” said Graham. “We saw the need to have a day where we could focus on topics important to women and prepare students for some issues that we knew that they might experience.”

The Women’s Leadership Conference harkens back to Georgia College’s roots as a women’s college to educate and provide opportunities in the late 1800s. The conference started small in 2019 as a partnership between the Women’s Center and Leadership Programs and continues to grow each year.

“Last year, we brought on the College of Business and the Alumni Association,” said Ashley Copeland, assistant director of leadership programs. “This is truly a collaborative endeavor, and it really speaks to the beauty and nature of what the conference is about—helping others collaborate, build networks and show that we are stronger when we work together.”

Now in its third year, the conference has had to adapt, like most things, due to the ongoing pandemic. The conference will take place virtually with the same valuable information, but this time available to a larger audience.

“The virtual platform really allows us to reach a broader audience,” said Copeland. “We really try to keep an eye out for how to expand, and COVID really opened up this opportunity for us.”

Ashley Copeland introduces a speaker at the 2020 event.

“In the past presenters have been leaders in education, health care, nonprofit organizations, businesses, folks who are leading grassroots advocates—it’s really been all across the board,” said Copeland.

Each presenter brings their experience and expertise in a specific area, yet they’re all asked to follow the Social Change Model of Leadership.

> **“Many resources and conferences don't really look at the unique ways that women face leadership challenges.”**
>
> **- Jennifer Graham, director of the Women’s Center**

“The Social Change Model of Leadership focuses on three layers of leadership—leadership of self, leadership of groups and the leadership of your community or the world,” said Copeland. “We’ve asked presenters to focus their presentation on ways our attendees can develop in those areas.”

This year’s theme of “Leading Change: Passion for Action” speaks to the need for changemakers in our world. Presenters will discuss social justice, education, philanthropy, discovering and exploring your passion, citizenship and the impacts of the pandemic.

The keynote speaker is Atlanta area Attorney Helen Kim Ho, who specializes in civil rights, employment and business law.

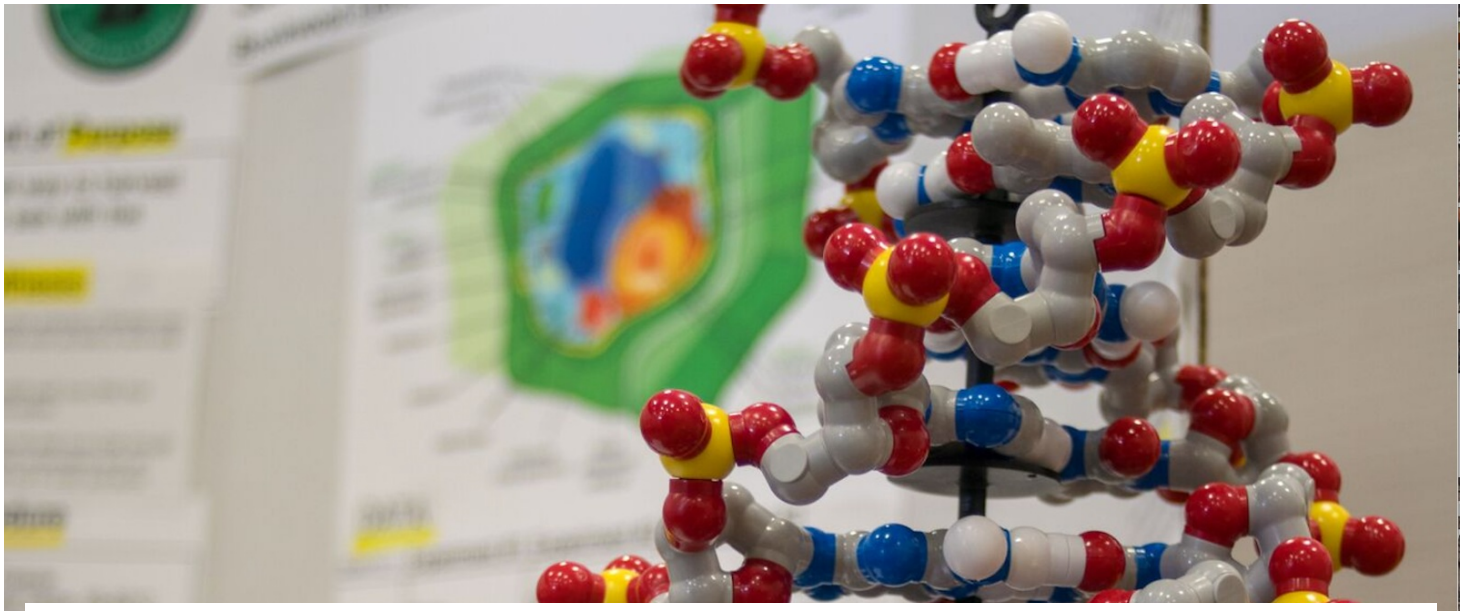
With the virtual format, the conference is open to anyone. Registration is $5 until March 5 and $10 from March 6- 10. Register for the conference here.

If you are a student that would like to attend but cannot pay the registration fee,

please reach out to Jennifer Graham at Jennifer.Graham@gcsu.edu. Limited need-based scholarships are available.

Conference 2020 photo

News Stories Posted Wednesday March 3, 2021



Georgia College awarded $650,000 national science grant for low income students

Chemistry, Physics, & Astronomy, Department of: Wednesday March 3, 2021

A highly competitive grant—the largest ever received by Georgia College from the National Science Foundation (NSF)—will help students who want to pursue chemistry or physics but lack the financial resources.

The NSF recently awarded Georgia College's Department of Chemistry, Physics and Astronomy a $650,000 S-STEM grant, covering a five-year period. It provides eligible incoming students up to $8,000 per year, a total of $32,000 over four years, as part of a multi-pronged approach designed to attract and retain chemistry and physics majors.

> **More than 65 percent of funds will directly benefit students by offsetting their education costs. That's what excites me.**
>
> **- Dr. Chavonda Mills**

“More than 65 percent of funds will directly benefit students by offsetting their education costs,” said Dr. Chavonda Mills, chair of chemistry, physics and astronomy.

“That’s what excites me,” she said. “We are able to make higher education accessible to academically talented and low-income students with demonstrated financial need, who want to pursue degrees in chemistry and physics.”

Remaining funds will provide enrichment activities to support the S-STEM Scholars and build on proven successful practices that increase retention and graduation rates.

The grant—titled “Increasing Graduation Rates of Undergraduate Chemistry and Physics Majors by Connecting College to Careers”—is a collaborative effort involving faculty in chemistry, physics and the department of education. To implement the grant, a cohort-based model will be used that includes activities like monthly “Lunch-N-Learn” events, early access to research, a mentorship program, internships and qualitative assessment.

Dr. Mills, right, in chemistry lab with a student.

Georgia College received the grant, in part, because of its proven successful model that offers a quality education experience for all students, especially those from historically marginalized groups. Underrepresented students perform at a high rate at Georgia College. They remain in college and graduate at higher rates. Undergraduate students at Georgia College have higher retention and graduation rates than their peers, as well—a success partly due to an elevated level of engagement the university offers all students.

Students engage in research early on, and GC Journeys prompts them to undergo five transformative experiences in college such as study abroad, service learning, community service or internships.

Not every institution does this or does it well. I think the difference is we do it very well. Having GC Journeys ingrained into who we are as a university, and not as an add on, distinguishes us from other universities. It's embedded into the definition of Georgia College."

- Dr. Mills

Mills finalized the NSF application during COVID lockdowns last spring, while also leading her department to online instruction. She was "elated" when the award was announced.

"A lot of time and effort went into submitting this grant," she said. "But, knowing it will be life changing for these students, that time and effort was more than worthwhile."

Mills will work closely with Admissions to advertise the S-STEM Scholarship and recruit students with financial need who have strong academic backgrounds. Scholarship recipients will be grouped into cohorts, like nursing and education majors. Using a cohort model is known to improve student retention and build comradery, removing feelings of isolation.

This fall, there'll be one cohort of about nine students for chemistry and physics. The cohort will take part in a half-day enrichment program with a concluding ceremony, where scholars will be given embroidered lab coats. They'll be encouraged to form study groups, volunteer for service learning activities and take part in monthly Lunch-N-Learn events. These activities will build a "sense of community" among scholars and "hopefully lead to increased retention," Mills said.

The program encourages early access to research.

S-STEM Scholars will also have opportunities to participate in undergraduate research early on and be assigned mentors.

Dr. Peter Rosado Flores

Dr. Peter Rosado Flores, assistant professor of chemistry, and Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge, assistant professor of physics, will design and teach research method courses that cover scientific communication skills. They'll find and assign mentors for S-STEM Scholars and encourage students to take advantage of other support services on campus.

"One reason I'm excited about receiving this grant is it validates the work we have already done in several aspects of this program, including recruitment, undergraduate research and career placement which built a trust with NSF that we are well-prepared to manage the program," Mahabaduge said.

"This sure will be a great opportunity, not only for our incoming students," he said, "but also for the university to attract and retain academically talented students."

Rosado Flores echoed those sentiments, saying "I'm excited about this endeavor from a recruitment and retention standpoint. We will be able to offer unique

experiences, as well as support, to students who show financial need and recruit them. This will enhance the diversity of our chemistry and physics programs and the university in general."

Summer internships are built into the program. S-STEM Scholars will have the opportunity to participate in internships together as a group after their sophomore or junior years. These will be with existing partnerships like the Center for Disease Control or Georgia Bureau of Investigation in Atlanta and others, as well as new opportunities that will be established through the Career Center to meet student interest. Part of the NSF grant can be used for internship housing allowance, which is a new feature for Georgia College students.

Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge, right, in the physics lab with students.

Throughout, the success of the S-STEM program will be evaluated by Dr. Rui Kang, associate professor of secondary education. Kang will use focus groups and pre- and post-surveys, as well as track student performance and meet with professors to access their perspective on the program's effectiveness.

> **We're not by any means reinventing the wheel. We relied on the Georgia College infrastructure, building upon effective practices known to help increase retention and degree completion."**
>
> **- Dr. Mills**

Every component is proven to work with students who have financial need, Mills said. NSF reviewers looked for proposals that were based on successful models.

"We're not by any means reinventing the wheel," Mills said. "We relied on the Georgia College infrastructure, building upon effective practices known to help increase retention and degree completion."

"Ultimately, we're looking to address the need for a high-quality STEM workforce by increasing the success of academically talented low-income students pursuing degrees in chemistry and physics," she said. "At the core of this goal is creating an

environment that is welcoming, supportive and inclusive of all students.”

News Stories Posted Friday March 5, 2021

Multimedia journalist creates awareness through works

Alumni : Friday March 5, 2021

As a young child, Jessie Parks, ’08, knew she wanted to be an artist. Since that time, she never looked back or questioned her decision to major in that field.

“I loved my time at Georgia College,” she said. “The work I did for my senior capstone was my favorite project, which was a blend of photography and drawing.”

At the time, Parks’ mother was sick with a brain tumor.

“The downward spiral that led to my mom’s permanent paralysis from the waist down began the same year I took my first photography class,” she said, admitting she had no interest in photography. “We were just required to take a class outside our discipline. But, I became immediately intrigued with how the camera could document my mother's life and the story of what my family was going through.”

She continued photographing through college and took all the digital photography classes offered. Her mother's story became her final project at Georgia College.

Parks' favorite teacher was the late Dr. Tina Yarborough, professor of art history. Yarborough informed Parks how powerful she felt her pictures were depicting the struggles she and her family endured as her mother's health deteriorated.

Yarborough was familiar with Parks' senior capstone project while she worked on it.

"After the gallery opening, I remember Dr. Yarborough telling me how much it meant to her," she said. "That affected me because I looked up to her."

Parks was living in Iraq in 2016 and 2017 when she received a text about Yarborough passing away.

"I was really sad to have not seen her before her passing," Parks said. "I think the biggest thing was that she always made me feel like my work and opinion made a valuable contribution to discussions in and out of class."

Parks loved going by Yarborough's office to talk, because she was always so lively and welcoming.

"Her affirmation played a role in my work, even after graduation," Parks said.

Parks with then President of Kurdistan Masoud Bargain (center) and Mayor Kak Krmanj of Soran at Soran University's soccer stadium eight days before Iraqi Kurdistan's vote to negotiate independence from Iraq.

“Dr. Yarborough always made me think deeply about things, even if we disagreed,” she said. “She asked a lot of questions. You take memories of people like her with you through the years.”

She recalled other professors from Georgia College she’ll likewise not forget, like photography Professor Emily Gomez and Patrick Holbrook.

Since Georgia College, Parks was worked as a freelance multimedia journalist, adding video and audio to her skillset.

“Having different tools to tell stories enables you to reach the widest audience and cross various platforms,” she said. “Some people are more willing to engage a story told in a quick photo caption while others prefer a long-form film.”

Parks is drawn to social issues. Much of her work in recent years has focused on immigration, migration and refugees in America and the Middle East.

“Decrying injustices will always play a role in my work,” she said. “Chronicling the forcibly displaced matters, because mass migrations unjustly impact the world’s poorest and the uprooted. The wealthiest nations, particularly America, are confronted with over 200 years of systemic racism and over-prosecution

compounded by politically motivated aggression against not only their safety but value as human beings."

Parks' "American Journey's" project took her and journalist Katy Long through 21 states, photographing and telling stories of more than 100 migrants, locals, academics and historians. Their work has been featured in The Guardian and the Overseas Development Institute in London.

Parks photographs men gathered inside a home at the Azadi Syrian Refugee Camp in the Rawanduz region of Northern Iraq. (June 28, 2017)

Parks' work captures her subjects' lives and provides a window into their situation in a way that makes them relatable. She sees them as fellow human beings.

> **"Decrying injustices will always play a role in my work. Chronicling the forcibly displaced matters, because mass migrations unjustly impact the world's poorest and the uprooted. The wealthiest nations, particularly America, are confronted with over 200 years of systemic racism and over-prosecution compounded by politically motivated aggression against not only their safety but value as human beings."**
>
> **- Jessie Parks**

"The power of the camera is it can usher viewers into the lives of people in a way that is not possible through text," she said. "In my early days at Georgia College, I learned the camera could give a voice to the suffering or unheard."

She's been doing that ever since.

"Which is why I moved to northern Iraq in the middle of the Syrian crisis," said Parks. "I went there to help the west understand what's going on there and help bring aid to those in need."

Currently, Parks lives in Washington, DC. Her time is spent on multimedia journalism, pursuing an MA in New Media Photojournalism from the Cochran School of the Arts & Design at George Washington University. Her projected

graduation is May 2022.

“I’m tapping the brakes on the freelance world to put my work under scrutiny and push myself with collaborative projects,” she said. “There's a creative buzz that happens in environments like these, especially in DC.”

Parks’ time at Georgia College and as a freelance multimedia journalist has shown her the power of storytelling with the camera.

“I’m not interested in frontline war stories alone, but the daily grind—the very human aspect of life that spans all cultures, even in a war zone,” she said. “Everyone wants their children to get a good education. Everyone in the world wakes up ready for a morning coffee or tea. We just aren’t all that different at the core.”

She feels that sometimes the stories needed out of difficult places answer questions of how people get on with life.

“Often, I am asked, ‘Do those people still have hope?’”

She feels it’s a joy to share how much they really do.

Offering hope amid trying circumstances has always intrigued Parks.

“I want the people in front of my camera to be heard,” she said. “I think that’s valuable, because even though I am the storyteller, none of it is actually about me at all.”

Visit Parks' website or Instagram account to learn more about her creative works.

Engineering manager applies leadership and innovative skills on the job

Alumni : Friday March 5, 2021

Brent Zucker, ’16, an engineering manager in the Innovation Lab at NCR Corporation recently earned the NCR Corporation 2020 Co-inventor of the Year Award for patents he created as innovative technology for use in banks, retailers, restaurants, small businesses and more. After working at NCR for nearly five years, Zucker has filed over 30 patents and has had at least 12 approved. He also supervises a dozen full-time engineers and five-to-10 interns.

Brent Zucker, '16, is pictured at the top of the NCR Corporation building in Atlanta.

Serving in a leadership role is nothing new for Zucker. At Georgia College, he represented the Computer Science Department on the College of Business Dean's Student Advisory Board in 2015 and 2016.

"I enjoyed getting to understand the university at a higher level," Zucker said. "As a student, you don't normally think about how the school can improve the academic, social and education quality. Instead, you're focused on individual goals, like finding an internship, a job or making friends. It was really neat to feel like my voice was heard at the administration level."

Some of the things he did on the board was offer suggestions for how to improve engagement with different organizations and how to improve the curriculum.

"Just being able to have that opportunity to discuss topics with your peers that normally didn't come up in conversation was awesome," said Zucker. "Georgia College has such an impressive student community to collaborate with."

"

“I'm very purpose and impact driven. For me, that’s really important. The things I'm contributing to will make a difference to someone. And creating things that other people care about is just really exciting to be a part of.”

- Brent Zucker

He felt honored to serve on the Dean’s Student Advisory Board and thought it was a great opportunity to provide feedback and gain leadership skills.

“As a student or a new person to the workforce, you might not have the confidence to provide suggestions or feedback to more experienced people who are decision makers,” Zucker said. “This experience provided an opportunity for me to have those candid conversations with the dean, and he listened to my suggestions.”

While at Georgia College, Zucker assumed additional leadership roles, serving as vice president for the Association of Information Services, vice president of Delta Sigma Phi and president of Hillel and a member of the programming team. Belonging to these organizations taught him time management, as well as additional leadership concepts.

“One of the big things for me in belonging to these organizations was the accountability of being a campus leader,” he said. “I learned how to make decisions that impacted my peers, and I also had to earn their respect by setting an example like doing my assignments on time and making good grades. The experience developed me into a leader who I would want to follow.

Dr. Jenq-Foung Yao, professor of computer science inspired Zucker in many ways including doing research and exceling in his studies.

“The biggest thing he did for me was gave me the opportunity to fail when I needed to,” Zucker said. “I had to retake some of his classes, because I deserved it. If I wouldn't have made good grades when I didn't deserve them, I wouldn’t have learned any lessons. So, I think he did a good job of making me learn the hard way.”

He especially enjoyed the more advanced computer science program coursework like software engineering, operating systems and networking, where he frequently worked in teams.

“Today at work, when I'm given a problem, I look back on these classes and connect the dots of what I've learned to a solution, so that I can turn an idea into reality,” Zucker said. “I can visualize myself learning about it back then. So, it helps me today. I also find the information I learned at Georgia College fascinating.”

In addition, he applies some software development applications he learned at Georgia College on the job.

“I look back on those software development practices that I learned when I was a student,” Zucker said. “And I'm teaching those applications to new members of my team.”

Outside the classroom, he learned additional leadership and organizational skills, where he would help coordinate projects.

Additionally, Georgia College provided him the opportunity to bridge his undergraduate studies to his profession. Zucker was involved in a dual-enrollment program at Georgia Tech, which opened the door for him to do research, while obtaining his master's degree in computer science and machine learning.

Brent Zucker, '16

Thinking independently to problem solve is something Zucker applies every day in his profession.

“I'm never told what to do,” he said. “I'm just given a goal we want to achieve. And often I don't even know what the expected outcome of that goal looks like. I not only have to think about how I’m going to reach that goal, but I need to communicate that plan to my team. And I need to trust that they are developing their professional skills so that they could solve some of the broken down problems that are a part of that larger journey.”

Zucker enjoys the intersection of technology and entrepreneurship and in surrounding himself with like-minded people who enjoy coming up with valuable ideas, so they can build them out quickly to get feedback in the marketplace. He also likes being an inclusive lead, as in the patents he’s co-developed that earned the award. They were built on technologies, like machine learning and artificial intelligence to provide solutions for businesses.

“I'm very purpose and impact driven. For me, that’s really important,” said Zucker. “The things I'm contributing to will make a difference to someone. And creating things that other people care about is just really exciting to be a part of.”

College of Business alumni encouraged to start affinity group

Alumni : Friday March 5, 2021

The J. Whitney Bunting College of Business (CoB) is interested in forming its own Alumni Affinity Group. With an overwhelming majority of alumni surveyed expressing interest in joining an affinity group, the new Bunting College of Business Alumni Affinity Group is now in the exploration phase.

Once Dr. Micheal Stratton became the new dean for the J. Whitney Bunting College of Business, he engaged the CoB Leadership Board members to think about areas that directly affect criteria on its upcoming AACSB reaccreditation. One of these areas is alumni engagement and support.

Amber Bennett Brannon, ’09, ’10, was appointed as the alumni engagement and outreach chair for the CoB’s Leadership Board’s Executive Committee. She’s

spearheading the effort to get the Bunting COB Alumni Affinity Group started.

Starting an alumni affinity group takes time. After receiving initial interest, we need approval from the Alumni Association Board of Directors.

Amber Bennett Brannon, '09, '10

> **"I think it's a more unique and smaller sense of community. And just like a lot of other university Alumni Associations, they sometimes can feel big or broad. But, the affinity groups are an opportunity to help people feel more connection with a smaller group of other Georgia College alumni."**
>
> **- Amber Bennett Brannon**

In the meantime, the CoB has also researched geographic areas with a high concentration of alumni, so they can plan to host virtual, and eventually in-person, networking events in these locations.

"An affinity group offers a unique opportunity for our CoB alumni to share stories, network and build community across generations," said Stratton. "The faculty and staff often tell me stories about the impactful work of our alumni and how they are making a difference and excelling in their respective professions locally and globally. Our CoB alumni are indeed role models for our students to see and learn how the liberal arts education can be brought to life during and after their time in Atkinson."

Brannon feels it's important to join Georgia College affinity groups.

"I think it's a more unique, smaller sense of community," she said. "And just like a lot of other university Alumni Associations, they sometimes can feel big or broad. But, the affinity groups are an opportunity to help people feel more connection with a smaller group of other alumni."

Brannon recalls when she was a student, she felt a sense of belonging in the CoB, because it felt like a smaller community within the overall college.

“I think it really speaks to the College of Business culture that students feel connected to it,” Brannon said. “So, the affinity group could be a great opportunity for us to connect with other alumni who felt the same way.”

“Academic affinity groups are always unique in that they demonstrate a perfect balance of alumni interest and support from the respective colleges or departments,” said Tre' Juan “Tre'” Johnson, assistant director of Alumni Awards, Collaborations and Reunions. “We currently have three such groups, and I highly encourage alumni to express their interest in organizing affinity groups based on their majors.”

Ultimately, it's the Alumni Association Board of Directors who decides which groups to establish based on alumni interest and the university's needs at the time.

"I look forward to seeing if the CoB Alumni Affinity Group surpasses its interest phase and adds to the Georgia College Alumni Affinity Groups, Chapters and Friends program,” said Johnson.

To express interest in a Bunting College of Business Alumni Affinity group, contact Tre' Johnson at trejuan.johnson@gcsu.edu.

Faculty sets alumna for success, who passes on same to others

Alumni : Friday March 5, 2021

It took someone who saw Sarah Kull's '19 skill and talent to help reach her potential.

In high school, Kull had difficulty managing her time and efforts between sports and successfully excelling in school academics. Her freshman year was the most difficult of them all and set the tone of struggle between good grades and strong sport's performance.

During a tour of Georgia College Kull met William "Bill" Fisher, professor and chair of the Department of Art. He saw Sarah's creative drive and potential, which sparked his initiative to support her admission into Georgia College.

“She almost didn’t make the cut with admissions at Georgia College,” said Fisher, “but her drive, commitment and optimism helped her thrive at the university level. She took charge of her own education and made the most of the support around her.”

Once at Georgia College, Kull poured all her effort into succeeding at Georgia College. And, her professors remained right alongside her throughout the journey.

“Many of the professors gave me the resources I needed to thrive, whether it was the Learning Center helping me with statistics or a professor helping me with French,” she said. “Aside from class, my professors always made themselves available for me.”

Fisher made a big impact on Kull throughout her time at Georgia College. She started as an art major, but with his support, switched to mass communications with a photography minor.

“When I didn't know what direction to go or needed advice, Bill Fisher was always there to guide me on the right track,” she said. “Mass comm turned out to be the perfect major for me and I was still able to remain in the art department through my photography minor.”

Declaring this major made for a smooth transition into her profession.

“Bill Fisher was a great mentor in leading me to the right places,” she said. “And, mass comm gave me a lot of great opportunities. Through my practicum with the Career Center, I was connected with the company I work for now.”

Sarah Kull in photography mode with her camera.

In some ways, Kull models herself after Fisher in her job as a field sales and marketing representative with Techtronic Industries (TTi).

“The way he mentored and guided me in the direction that benefited me, is now what I love to do for other people at TTi,” she said. “Whether it's training, lending a helping hand or encouraging one another—I just like to be a mentor and friend to my teammates, supporting them to excel in their strengths and aspirations.”

Amanda Respess, senior lecturer in the Department of Communication was also one of Kull's favorites. In one class, Respess made her students learn to think and respond to a task without preparing.

"That lesson impacted me, because it taught me how to problem solve, articulate and think on my feet in a moment's notice—which is something I utilize in my career, every day " said Kull. "She was phenomenal and had a big impact on my education, as well."

Sarah Kull fixes a display.

Georgia College provided Kull with the resources that she needed to succeed, including study guides, sessions and groups. Kull's hard work, combined with these resources and faculty support, helped her graduate with Cum Laude Honors.

"I can't express this enough—how much the professors truly invested in each of us and cared about our success," said Kull. "They often clarified new concepts for me and would always be right there to say, 'Let me help you. I want you to succeed, because I care about your overall success.' That was really encouraging to have throughout college."

There are many different facets to Kull's job. As a brand ambassador for TTi, she assures all products look pristine for customers. Throughout the day, Kull accomplishes objectives from her corporate team in stores to help sales initiatives and promotions. She plans small-and-large scale events to drive sales and also enjoys helping customers find the perfect solution for their projects.

> **"So many people at Georgia College, like Bill Fisher, have enriched me. It takes the support of many to succeed and do well in this world. If I can invest in someone like others invested in me, then I am more than willing to do so."**
>
> **- Sarah Kull**

“Whether it’s a customer or a teammate, I love that I get to help people every day,” she said.

At Georgia College, Kull also volunteered with the GIVE Center, Wesley Foundation and Young Life Ministry, where she tutored young students in the community. She showed up for their sporting events, recitals and mentored middle school students.

“I just loved investing in young students’ lives and giving them resources they needed to succeed and grow stronger,” Kull said. “They knew I was there for them. So, it has definitely been ingrained in me to give back to others.”

She balances her career and keeps her spark for photography alive by taking special event photos, such as business, engagement and wedding photos in her spare time.

“I enjoy celebrating people,” Kull said. “I had to keep my love for art and photography in my life, which also gives me a creative edge in my career.”

Kull is passionate about serving people for the greater good. She now draws on those times when her professors’ support and her personal drive pushed her to achieve a 3.62 GPA.

Kull tenaciously paved her path for success throughout school. This determination, along with her Georgia College mentors, inspire her to help others succeed every day.

“So many people at Georgia College, like Bill Fisher, have enriched me,” Kull said. “It takes the support of many to succeed and do well in this world. If I can invest in someone like others invested in me, then I am more than willing to do so.”

Preeminence follows alumna into the courtroom

Alumni : Friday March 5, 2021

Attorney Victoria Turner Dye, ’04, was put on a path to preeminence with her education from Georgia College. She holds the prestigious AV Preeminent Peer Review Rating from Martin-Hubbell for achieving the highest ratings for professional ethics and legal ability by her peers. This included defense lawyers, plaintiffs, lawyers and judges. She was also named in the National Trial Lawyers “Top 40 Under 40” list of Alabama attorneys for several years and the Mid-South Super Lawyers "Rising Starts" list since 2017.

Her time at Georgia College set her up for success with her law school career, where she achieved a scholar of merit award in several of her courses.

She learned good study habits at Georgia College that she applied at Cumberland School of Law. Dye also learned to foster a community of peers to use as a support system and a way to measure and ensure success of her academic efforts.

“Nobody can go it alone in anything they do,” she said. “It helps to have good people around you, who are like-minded, whether it’s in academics or community service. I learned that was important at Georgia College. I applied that concept to law school and did well.”

The biggest thing she learned at Georgia College that she applies in her role today is to treat everyone as a person.


Victoria Dye, '04

“I loved my Georgia College experience, because I felt seen,” Dye said. “When I met with professors, or interacted with faculty and staff, I felt like I was treated more as an individual than just a name or a number on a piece of paper.”

She takes the same approach when dealing with everyone—from clients to potential clients to expert witnesses to lawyers.

“I really try to make some connection with them,” she said. “I try to remember a name or a face so that the person understands that I recognize them and quickly engage them to try to make them feel comfortable.”

Dye practices this much like her professors did for her at Georgia College.

“Dr. Whipple was my sorority advisor,” she said. “I just loved her dearly. She is a one-of-a-kind, truly caring person.”

Dye also gravitated towards Professor Dr. Bob Wilson’s history lessons.

“Dr. Bob Wilson made learning so much fun,” she said. “I loved the way he took time to explain things in a way that has real-life application. It wasn't an abstract idea or theory that came from a book. He taught it in a way that made it easy to understand and relate to.”

Her 14-year law career resulted in her achieving appellate success in the Alabama Supreme Court on behalf of her clients. In her profession, Dye deals with clients of all socio-economic backgrounds who may not understand legal terms and processes, which can be foreign and scary to them.

“One of the things I try to emulate from Dr. Bob is to really talk to people, as if we're just having a conversation,” she said. “I want them to know that I’m on their side. And the best way to do that is to make them feel at ease with the process of helping them learn and understand what we're doing and do that together.”

Aside from her studies at Georgia College, Dye gained leadership skills serving on the executive board and as president of Alpha Delta Pi sorority.

“In my leadership role, I learned a lot about the organization and people and conflict management skills,” she said. “It also taught me responsibility. I had to

maintain a certain GPA in order to be an active member of the sorority."

Attorney Victoria Dye works with a client.

Dye was also a part of the Georgia Education Mentorship (GEM) program.

"It was fantastic. I loved it," she said. "The workshops taught me proper business etiquette. I was also paired with a very high-profile attorney in Atlanta and shadowed him for a day, which was a really cool experience, as well."

Dye also interned at the US Attorney's Office in Macon, Georgia, which was a program that was set up through her advisor at Georgia College.

Creative-minded Dye was drawn to the liberal arts aspect of Georgia College, which proved helpful in her career.

"I think the experience helped me to not just look at things the way I've been told to look at them across the spectrum, but also learning to evaluate things and make my own decisions and come to my own conclusions, no matter what," she said. "I think Georgia College fosters that spirit of independent thinking and being able to form your own opinions on things."

For Dye, no two days are the same, which works well with her, as she loves doing a variety of tasks and learning new things.

"I get to touch on many different types of cases and files," Dye said. "And I love that experience of getting into the research and figuring out what this means anywhere from medical record research to researching crash sequence data analysis, filing cases, arguing motions and hearings, writing letters, writing 20-page briefs, making phone calls and dealing with my staff. You name it—it's probably been done in a day."

"Success is being able to help people and lay my head down at night and know that I've done something good for at least one person today. It's extremely inspiring, even with all the chaos and stress in this profession. It's such a fulfilling and rewarding career."

- Victoria Dye

However, the one constant in her busy schedule includes maintaining open communication with her clients. Her clients run the gamut in terms of their background, education and socio-economic status. The common thread with most of Dye's clients is they did nothing to deserve the position that they're in now that required them to hire her. Much of her time is spent counseling individuals on topics which may not have anything to do with their lawsuit.

"That's a very scary thing for a lot of them," she said. "There can be a stigma around hiring a lawyer or being involved in a lawsuit. So, they often feel very lonely, because they don't want to talk about it around family or friends. And so often times, this is the reason why they call attorneys 'counselors at law.' Sometimes there are people who will just call me crying."

Dye genuinely enjoys helping her clients. That aspect is very important to her. And there are some cases that pull her heartstrings and drive her to do the best she can.

"Success is being able to help people and lay my head down at night and know that I've done something good for at least one person today," she said. "It's extremely inspiring, even with all the chaos and stress in this profession. It's such a fulfilling and rewarding career."

News Stories Posted Wednesday March 10, 2021

Class of 2021: Kendyl Lewis named GC's Academic Day representative

Honors College : Wednesday March 10, 2021

Representing the highest scholastic achievement as well as a devotion to service, senior Kendyl Lewis has been named Georgia College's Academic Day representative by the University System of Georgia (USG).

The psychology and economics major will graduate in May 2021 with a 4.0 GPA. She's a member of the Honors College and completed multiple Leadership Programs, including Leadership Certificate Program and the GEM Program. She has also created a student organization to help fellow students in need.

"The selection committee considers academic awards, evidence of scholarship or creativity, and diversity of academic pursuits in their process to determine the recipient of the award," said Dr. Brian Newsome, dean of the John E. Sallstrom Honors College and chair of the selection committee for the award.

“As a double major in economics and psychology, who has presented research in both fields and who has an extensive list of awards, Kendyl excelled in every category. She is also a model campus citizen, serving—for example—as the founder and president of Swipe Out Hunger,” he said.

USG honors one student from each institution as the Academic Day representative. The student must “reflect the system’s best qualities,” as well as have a stellar academic record.

“I was extremely excited and very thankful that the school recognized my academic accomplishments,” said Lewis. “It made me feel like all my hard work for the past four years had paid off.”

Kendyl Lewis

She worked hard in the classroom where she double-majored in psychology and economics, and she’s also been very involved on campus—serving in many capacities including as a student ambassador and a representative on the Student Government Association.

> **"I wouldn’t be the person I am today without the support of my professors and peers."**
>
> **- Kendyl Lewis**

“I wouldn’t be the person I am today without the support of my professors and peers,” she said. “They pushed me to be a better student and helped me to grow in my personal academic career.”

Lewis worked closely with faculty from the psychology department and the

economic department to complete research related to her food insecurity work. Also very active in Leadership Programs and the Honors College, Lewis credits many staff and faculty members with leaving a “big impression on me” over the last four years.

“Those include Dr. Harold Mock, Dr. Chris Clark, Dr. Kristina Dandy, Dr. Diana Young, Ashley Copeland and Anna Whiteside,” said Lewis. “They all poured into me and took a special interest in my goals and aspirations. I will forever remember the mentorship and support they provided for me in college.”

Lewis is president and founder of the university’s student organization Swipe Out Hunger, part of a national organization that works to end student hunger. The goal of the group is to raise awareness about food insecurity and aid students who struggle with hunger.

Lewis organized a student resource fair showcasing organizations that focus on students' basic needs.

“I was motivated to start Swipe Out Hunger because there were no readily available resources for students struggling with hunger at Georgia College, and I wanted to create a solution for students to receive meal assistance in a way that wasn’t stigmatizing or shameful,” said Lewis.

“It just seemed senseless to me that I had paid for this meal plan and wasn't fully utilizing it, but there might be another student in one of my classes who can't afford a meal plan, and they would value those swipes more than I do.”

The group has established ways for students to apply for meal assistance without having to have a consultation with financial aid or disclosing any of their financial records. She also worked with the GCSU Foundation for their “A Seat at the Table” scholarship.

“I hope that I have set an example for future students,” she said, “and that the accomplishments I made with Swipe Out Hunger are just the beginning and that future students will carry on the legacy I began by solving problems and creating initiatives to help their peers.”

After graduation, Lewis plans to continue to expand on her food insecurity research before applying to a Ph.D. program.

News Stories Posted Friday March 12, 2021

Class of 2021: Senior management major leads through ROTC

Management, Marketing, & Logistics, Department of: Friday March 12, 2021

A lot has changed for senior Tommy McHugh over the last four years. He went from being a high school student unsure of his plans for the future to leading an ROTC Battalion, graduating with his bachelor's degree and engaged to get married to his fiancé Mariah.

Tommy McHugh

"I decided I wanted to do ROTC my senior year of high school," said McHugh. "Just going to college, getting a degree and then a job didn't sound exciting to me. I had family who had been in the military, so I applied for the National ROTC scholarship."

Excited he now had a plan, it derailed when he found he didn't get the National ROTC Scholarship. Even with the

setback, he knew that was the path he wanted to pursue, and Georgia College's partnership with Georgia Military College (GMC) was a great fit for him.

"I started reaching out and talking to some of the cadre, which are the teachers in the ROTC program, and got involved my freshman year," he said.

After taking a military science course during his first year to see what the program was all about, he calls the summer after his freshman year "great season of his life." That's when he applied for and found out he got another ROTC scholarship, solidifying his future in the program.

"At the same time I was coming to faith in Jesus and was making the commitment to do ROTC," he said. "Everything in my life just lined up right that summer."

Now McHugh serves as the Cadet Battalion Commander for the Old Capital Guard ROTC, the highest position within the program and has also earned distinguished graduate honors— putting him in top 20 percent of ROTC graduates in the country.

Mchugh work with other cadets

Through the program with GMC, McHugh takes courses and participates in physical training most mornings at 6 a.m. Among his many other duties, he also serves as the captain of the Ranger Challenge team.

"Having PT most mornings, that's been a big thing for me. Just starting out my days that way helped develop discipline and character, as well as giving me opportunities to do things like attend airborne school two summers ago," he said.

Soon after his May 2021 graduation, McHugh will go "active duty" in the U.S. Army.

"I'll go to Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia, for the infantry basic officer leadership course, which is just about a six-month-long school where I basically learn how to do my job," said McHugh. "Then hopefully after that I can go on to Ranger School and any other schools they'll send me to."

> **I've grown a lot with the battalion commander position.**
>
> **- Tommy McHugh**

The management major has been able to put into practice through his ROTC leadership many of the principles he learned in his courses.

“I've grown a lot with the battalion commander position. Learning to delegate and empower others has been really important,” he said, “because I realized I'm not going to be able to do everything all the time and I don't want to do everything.”

McHugh’s also used his time in college to lead in other ways as part of the Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity for two years holding the position of chaplain. Led by his faith, he’s also started several Christian groups at Georgia College and GMC.

“At GMC, my friends and I started basically a church at GMC for the cadets, and that's been such an amazing thing to be a part of,” said McHugh. “Then this past semester, my fiancé and I started a weekly church service that we hold at our apartment.”

When he graduates in May, McHugh will be commissioned as a U.S. Army Second Lieutenant after successfully completing the three years of Advanced ROTC training. He credits the guidance through his faith in Christ, what he learned in his business classes and put into practice through his leadership experience with setting him up for the next step in his life.

News Stories Posted Monday March 15, 2021

Center for Health and Social Issues looks to improve quality of life in Oconee Heights neighborhood

Center for Health & Social Issues : Monday March 15, 2021

More than just an eye-sore, neighborhood blight brings with it a slew of social and economic issues.

Rundown and dilapidated homes and buildings lead to increased crime, lower property values and are an indicator of overall poverty levels in an area.

b

Georgia College's Center for Health and Social Issues (CHSI) is working to address blight in one Milledgeville neighborhood with the goal of increasing the well-being of the people living there.

Dr. Damian Francis, director of CHSI, and his team spent hours surveying residents of the Oconee Heights neighborhood to find out the most important challenges they see in their community.

“The idea came about that we should begin by assessing the community needs, and so it started out of a conversation between the CHSI and the county commissioners working to find out what needs communities have,” said Francis. “We used grant funding to meet and survey people living in the area.”

Community meeting in Oconee Heights.

The needs assessment identified blight as a top concern. Now Francis and his team of students and faculty members are working to conduct a blight assessment that will document the burden and severity of the problem.

“What we hope to achieve with the blight assessment is the necessary evidence to support blight remediation efforts such as a charter,” Francis said. “Providing an overall framework that the county could use to handle blighted properties.”

In most people’s minds, the only solution to blight is demolition, but a blight remediation charter aims to identify other options.

“Blight doesn't necessarily equal demolition. Sometimes blight means an opportunity for restoration or better enforcement of tax and property codes,” said Francis. “We're hoping to promote a charter that emphasizes enforcement of codes, tax sales of property that has been abandoned and restoration where that might be possible.”

> **Blight doesn't necessarily equal demolition. Sometimes blight means an opportunity for restoration or better enforcement of tax and property codes.**
>
> **- Dr. Damian Francis**

Through their work, they’ve also helped establish community collaboratives meant to foster community involvement and improve the quality of life in the residents. These collaboratives include residents, local government, non-profits and Georgia College.

“We have different stakeholders coming into meetings where we sit down and talk

about the issues, as well as potential solutions," said Francis. "The goal is to empower residents to jointly come up with the solutions for their own community. Then stakeholders along with the university pursue funding for these ideas through grants."

"Over time, it brings social cohesion within the community and the solutions come about," he said.

Senior public health major Kaitlyn Gauthier currently interns with CHSI. She's helping to conduct the blight assessment and assisting in writing a faculty grant proposal to help fund asset mapping in the area.

Kaitlyn Gauthier

The faculty research grant was just approved and is a partnership between CHSI and Dr. Doug Oetter, geography professor at Georgia College. Together they will map blight and the assets or agencies in the community that could serve as a resource.

"Once our work is finished, I hope to see these communities come together and recognize the serious health risks blight poses and work together to help eliminate the blight in their communities," said Gauthier.

This is just one of the many projects CHSI currently has in the works. They have on-going efforts in the Harrisburg neighborhood including a food bank and health screenings. They're also working in the Coopers community with county leaders to set up WIFI internet at the fire station for public access and renovating a walking trail. Francis and his graduate assistant Catherine Woodall have led those efforts.

Their work always harkens back to CHSI's mission— to improve the health of the residents of Central Georgia through collaborative campus/community partnerships and to provide research and education concerning contemporary health problems and social issues.

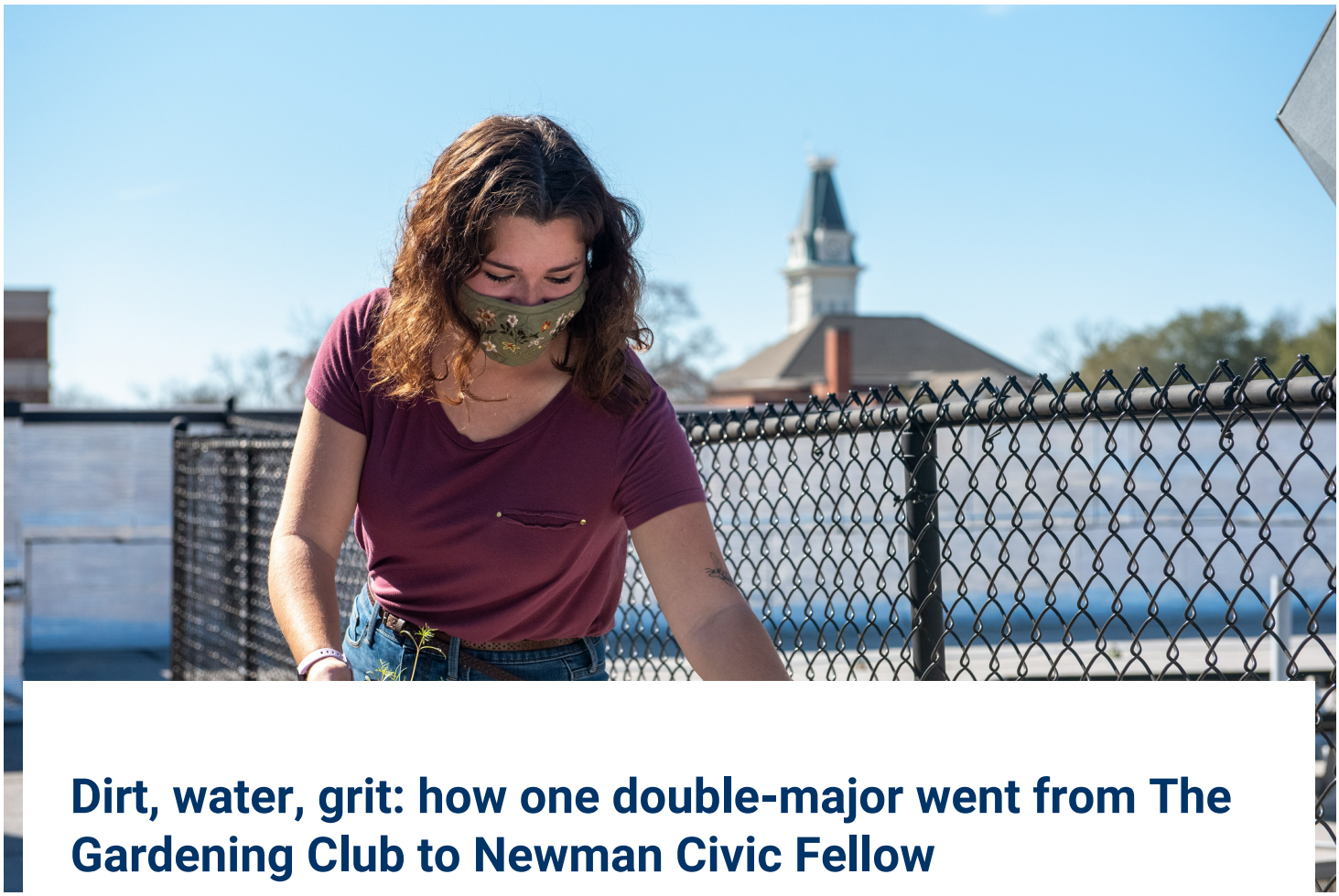
It all involves getting out in the community, listening to residents and getting creative with solutions. Whether it's educating on healthy living or addressing the problems associated with blight, those leading the effort hope their work leaves a lasting legacy on a community that needs it.

“I could list a million things that I have learned through the process so far, but something that stands out the most is how important community engagement and empowerment is,” said Gauthier. “The communities we seek to help are so thankful to have people who care to make changes in their community that they might not be able to accomplish on their own.”

“It has been so rewarding to have community members come up to me and thank me for the work that I contribute to help make their community a better place,” she said.

Damian Francis speaks with a community member.

News Stories Posted Tuesday March 16, 2021



Dirt, water, grit: how one double-major went from The Gardening Club to Newman Civic Fellow

College of Arts & Sciences : Tuesday March 16, 2021

For Savannah Taylor, a junior double-major in Economics and World Language and Culture, gardening was more about the mud than about sustainability. She grew up in the suburbs outside of Atlanta where she and her parents would spend afternoons cultivating vegetables and greens. It was this natural affinity she brought with her to Georgia College where she quickly joined the Gardening Club. She didn't expect that her personal hobby could lead to her to being named one of Campus Compact's 290 students making up the 2021-2022 cohort of Newman Civic Fellows.

"A lot of people are kind of surprised by that! I meet a lot of people who think, "Oh, she must be an environmental science major," but none of the career paths I'm looking at are, I would say, inherently environmentally related," Taylor says. For her, the Newman Civic Fellowship is about learning how sustainability filters throughout every facet of our lives. Gardening is just the fun part.

The Newman Civic Fellowship selects leaders from Campus Compact member institutions, like Georgia College, who demonstrate creative ways of solving challenges facing communities locally, nationally, and internationally. Taylor has been the president of the Gardening Club for a couple of years now, running an active group of around 20 people and a rotating interest group of about 40.

Savannah Taylor with the edible garden planters outside the Ina Dillard Russell Library

Since the pandemic, she's seen a rapid spike in interest from students in sustainability."COVID has shed some light on this, as you know; people come to college, especially their freshman year, and they're going through all these changes. I think so many people come out to my work days and discover how relaxing gardening can be."

In addition to the meditative effects of gardening, the pandemic has led to more students understanding the need for environmental accountability and awareness. "We're a very lucky organization for the pandemic because most of the work we do is outside," Taylor says, "so in terms of continuing our normal workdays, we've limited capacity and people wear masks, but other than that it hasn't been a huge roadblock."

Through gardening, Taylor was introduced to the Georgia College Office of Sustainability where she now works part-time while pursuing majors vastly divergent from that kind of work. "I think we all get in these bubble of like, '*this* is what I'm doing and *this* is my concentration'. We get focused on the work that we do, but it's really cool to step outside of that and say, 'oh, what I'm doing is really important, but what *they're* doing is also really cool and important!"

Through pursuing these creative connections between academic disciplines, Taylor reached out to professors Marianna Stoyanova and Aurora Castillo-Scott for guidance on a paper about the impact of drug operations on the Columbian lexicon, which she was later invited to present at the 24th annual Conference on the Americas and was awarded a certificate of recognition. This divergence of ideas is exactly what the Newman Civic Fellowship looks to promote.

"

The experience of the last year has driven home to all of us that we need open-minded, innovative, public-spirited

> **thinkers and doers. That is what Campus Compact is about, and the stories of our Newman Civic Fellows demonstrate it's who they are.**
>
> **- Campus Compact President Andrew Seligsohn**

"The experience of the last year has driven home to all of us that we need open-minded, innovative, public-spirited thinkers and doers. That is what Campus Compact is about, and the stories of our Newman Civic Fellows demonstrate it's who they are," says Campus Compact President Andrew Seligsohn. Although much of the current fellowship is virtual, Taylor expects that there will be opportunities for in-person events later this year. For the time being, she's happy about the exchange of ideas she's been getting from other fellows within the cohort, "There was one woman on there who was saying that she used to be in the military and afterward went to college so she's now doing work that's a kind of bridge between the two. That was really interesting, just all kinds of branches of civic work and a lot of issues that you wouldn't normally see."

More than the accolades and accomplishments, Taylor enjoys filling her life with endeavors that leave her feeling complete at the end of the day. Beyond the Newman Civic Fellowship, she won't be surprised to find herself doing international or domestic work, nonprofit or concentrated organizations. Savannah Taylor proves that there really are no limits when you think outside of the gardening planter.

Savannah Taylor

News Stories Posted Wednesday March 17, 2021

Georgia College creates program to stem shortage of physics teachers

Chemistry, Physics, & Astronomy, Department of: Wednesday March 17, 2021

Competence in physics is consistently ranked as the highest need in U.S. school districts, according to the American Association for Employment in Education. Only 35 percent of new physics teachers in middle or high school, however, hold a degree in physics or physics education.

More alarming: Nearly one-third of secondary physics teachers take fewer than three college courses in physics. As result, most middle and high school students are taught physics and physical science by teachers who lack certification in the subject.

Georgia College is the first university in Central Georgia to tackle this problem.

Beginning this fall, a new concentration in physics is being offered for students who want to teach in that field. Students following this track for a Bachelor of

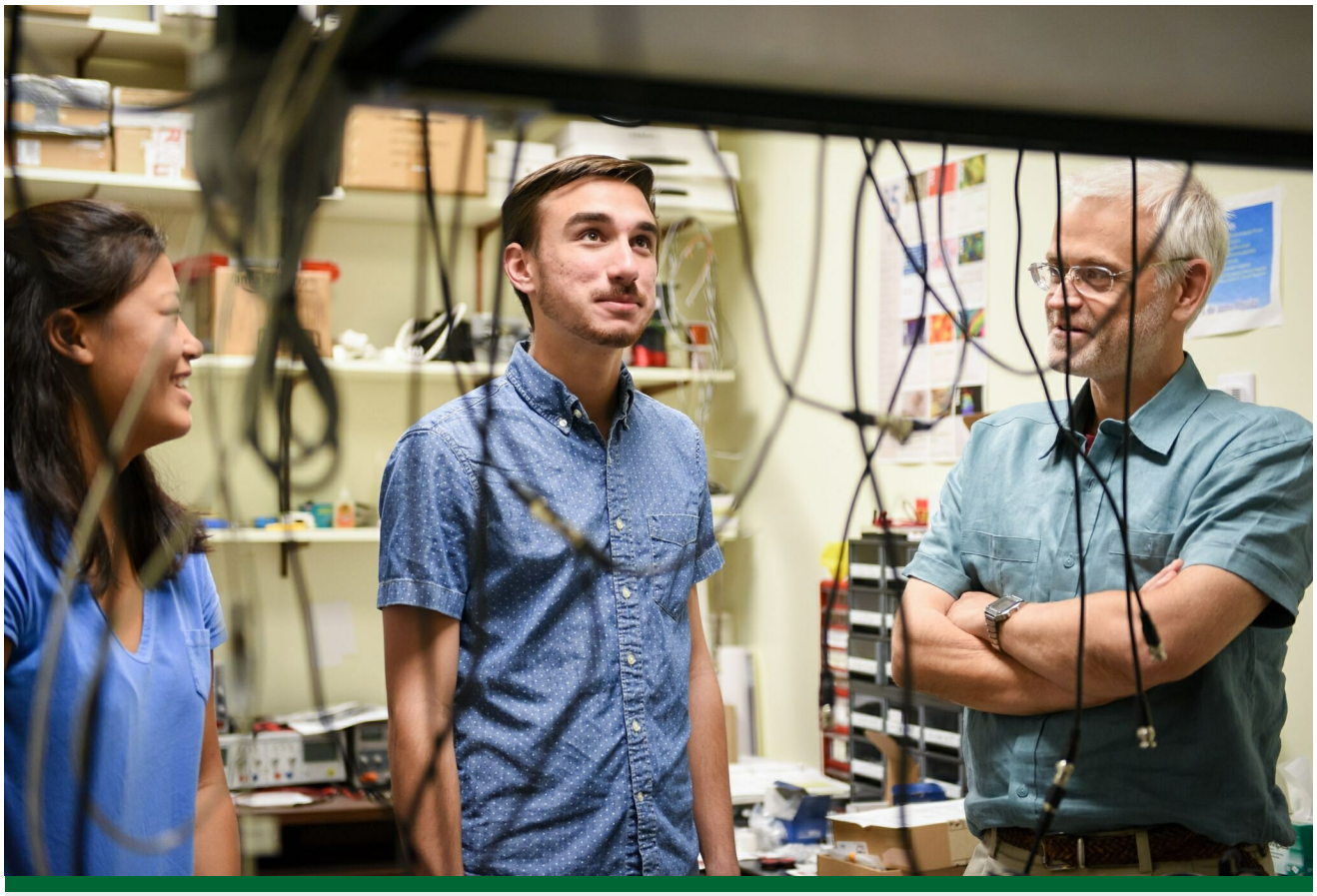
Science (B.S.) degree are expected to complete a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) after graduation.

“Physics is the gateway to many STEM disciplines, and students who take high school physics are better prepared for college,” said Dr. Chavonda Mills, chair of chemistry, physics and astronomy.

Physics students working on a solar panel.

> **Addressing the critical shortage of qualified high school physics teachers should not only lead to an increased number of college physics majors, but also to improved success and degree completion in all STEM majors. It’s a win-win situation.**
>
> **- Dr. Mills**

Physics is one of the oldest academic disciplines. Its exploration of matter and motion through space and time, along with force and energy, is critical for advancements in technology. Physics students learn important quantitative, analytical and reasoning skills. The subject is often a prerequisite for anyone looking for careers in engineering, chemistry, biology, environmental science and medical/veterinary fields.



Dr. Hauke Busch, right, in the optical physics lab with students.

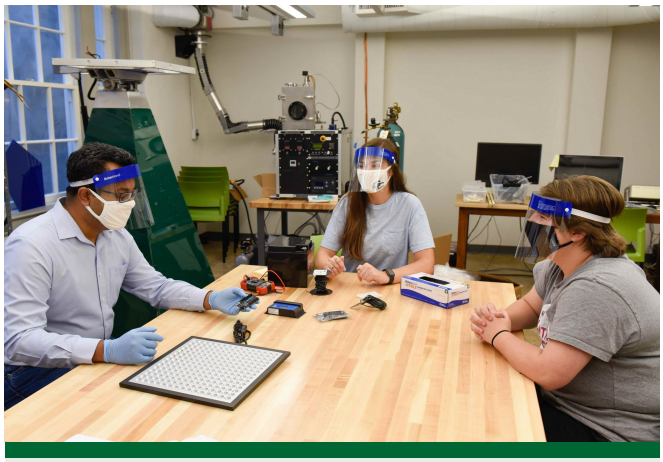
Without qualified physics teachers in middle and high school, however, few students emerge with the confidence and skill to pursue that science in college, according to Cornell University's Physics Teacher Education Coalition. To make the U.S. economically competitive with other countries, it reported, the number of qualified physics teachers needs to increase fivefold.

> **... there are just not enough graduates to go around.**
>
> **- Dr. Laura Whitlock**

Georgia College Physics Lecturer Dr. Laura Whitlock raised the idea for a physics education pathway in 2019. She previously taught high school physics and knows firsthand the "obvious need" for well-trained teachers in the field. When researching the problem, she noted a high number of jobs going unfilled because of a lack of qualified candidates.

"The standards just about everywhere these days require you to have a bachelor's degree or higher in physics to teach at the high school level. But there are just not enough graduates to go around," Whitlock said. "Our department felt like the need

is so big that we needed to give it a try. Even if we graduate only one or two per year, that's a significant increase for our state."



Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge works with physics students.

A few years ago, Georgia College's Department of Chemistry, Physics and Astronomy added a number of upper-level physics courses to the curriculum, designed to prepare students for graduate school. But these courses weren't geared towards the needs of students heading into secondary teaching and even prevented such students from succeeding or considering a degree in physics, said Dr. Ralph France, professor of physics.

The new program allows incoming students to choose a physics education pathway. They'll take more courses in the College of Education designed for the preparation of teaching. These include secondary teaching and math education, along with a broader set of introductory science classes outside of physics and fewer graduate school prep courses.

> **A physics teacher needs to understand physics and mathematics at a level significantly higher than that which they are teaching.**
>
> **- Dr. Ralph France**

"It's important to note that this is still a rigorous B.S. degree in physics," France said. "A physics teacher needs to understand physics and mathematics at a level significantly higher than that which they are teaching."

A new internship course for the concentration was also added to give students experience in Whitlock's astronomy lab or Dr. Sharon Careccia's physics lab. This provides teaching experience early on, while giving students valuable moments with mentors.

Groundwork for the program is being laid through recruitment. The department's working closely with Admissions to connect with school districts that require all high school students to complete physics. Students in these districts are often

inspired by their high school physics teacher and more likely to consider a career in physics education, Mills said.

The university's looking for students with this kind of passion. Along with a good dose of practice, these students can become great educators. Whitlock hopes to instill in in them "a sense of curiosity and wonder," creating teachers who can turn failed experiments or demonstrations into teaching moments.

She's certain Georgia College will soon develop a reputation for producing enthusiastic, qualified physics teachers and become a vital source for secondary school districts.

> **The future of our country could be at stake. Not having a good physics course in high school puts our citizens at a deficit in the global community. Physics is a love it or not field. Few who love it consider high school education as their goal. We need to change that.**
>
> **- Dr. Whitlock**

News Stories Posted Thursday March 18, 2021

New campus ‘glass cruncher’ expands Georgia College’s recycling program

Sustainability, Office of : Thursday March 18, 2021

GC's new glass collection bins.

Much like waves that crush rock and seashells into beach sand—a new rumbling machine at Georgia College breaks glass bottles and jars into tiny sand particles that can be reused in landscaping and other creative ways.

Operation of the machine recently began at West Campus. It saves the university in hauling, processing and disposal costs while ensuring a healthier

campus environment. Recently, blue 64-gallon glass-recycling containers have popped up all over campus giving faculty, students and staff the chance to join the effort.

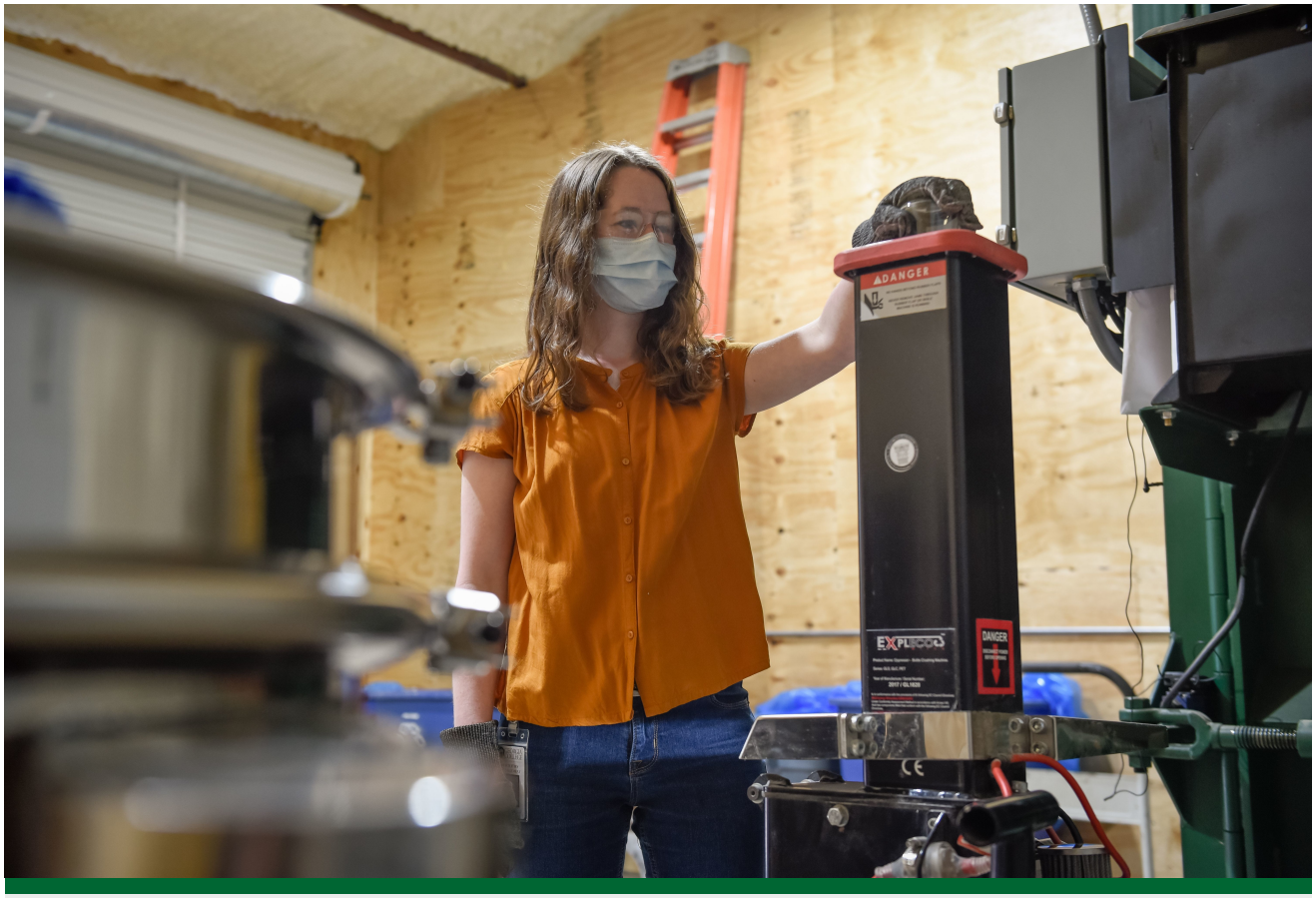
> **Glass is a heavy, nonbiodegradable material that can stay in landfills for hundreds of years, so we needed a way to remove glass from our waste stream.**
> **- Cameron Skinner**

“Glass is a heavy, nonbiodegradable material that can stay in landfills for hundreds of years, so we needed a way to remove glass from our waste stream,” said Cameron Skinner, who graduated in 2018 with a degree in environmental science and is now an assistant in the Office of Sustainability.

“With the environmental crisis we’re currently facing,” he said, “it’s extremely important to keep as much glass material out of landfills as possible.”

Obtaining the machine has been a three-year project. The glass crusher was the idea of a past SGA president, Amelia Lord. She reached out to Skinner and together they wrote a grant proposal to acquire the machine, which cost $14,000. The Sustainability Council and Sustainability Fee Program funded the project last spring.

Before this, Georgia College could only collect and recycle paper, cardboard, certain plastics, aluminum cans and tin or steel containers, according to Lori Hamilton, chief sustainability officer. Now, glass from recycling bins will be transported by trained students and staff to West Campus to be fed into the machine, ground and sifted into five grades of miniscule shards.



Senior Ally Esmond feeds a bottle into the machine on West Campus.

Junior environmental science major Ally Esmond of St. John's, Florida, is a "materials recovery" intern for the Office of Sustainability. She plans to get a master's in environmental engineering and work building water systems and refining water purification methods.

Esmond jumped at the chance to operate the GLSand Machine, which uses "vibration screening technology" to break hard glass into granules. Using earplugs and protective gloves, Esmond pushes glass products into the machine. Within 3 to 5 seconds, each piece transforms into sand. Some grades have bigger particles; others are powdery soft.

> **I like learning about all aspects of sustainability. At a bigger school, I don't think I would get the same experience.**
>
> **- Senior Ally Esmond**

Screen technology is capable of crushing 1,000 pounds of glass per hour. Skinner estimates Esmond will process 100 bottles a day or about 500 per week. She'll help with data collection and reporting too.

“I love my unique small-school experience and getting one-on-one instructions with professors in the research lab, as well as instruction from faculty and staff on things like glass crushing,” Esmond said.

“It’s fun and it’s good experience. I like learning about all aspects of sustainability,” she said. “At a bigger school, I don’t think I would get the same experience.”

Sand byproduct is used in gardens and other ways.

Byproduct is stored in huge plastic bins until needed. Currently, students from the campus Garden Club are using the sand in West Campus Garden. Sand amends clay soil, making it permeable for better water drainage and healthier plants.

Many applications for the sand may be tried in the future, such as ground cover for volleyball courts, pool filtration and in exterior beds or to mix cement for sidewalks at the university’s new Integrated Science Complex on Montgomery Street.

Georgia College is also working with the City of Milledgeville to see where the sand byproduct can be used for municipal and community uses.

> **From what I know about most university recycling programs, it’s uncommon for both the collection and processing of recyclable materials to occur on campus itself. The university benefits from this model, because we’re avoiding hauling and processing fees. But it also serves as a great educational opportunity for the campus and community.**
>
> **- Cameron Skinner**

News Stories Posted Monday March 22, 2021

Two Georgia College students selected for Fulbright Canada and MITACS Globalink internships

College of Arts & Sciences : Monday March 22, 2021

Two Georgia College students have been selected to participate in summer research internships funded through a partnership by Fulbright Canada and MITACS Globalink.

Junior physics major Catherine Boyd and junior biology major Molly Bullington will undertake advanced research projects for 10 to 12 weeks under the supervision of faculty at Canadian institutions.

Boyd will perform research on nanostructured thin film devices with faculty from the University of Victoria. Nanotechnology, a relatively new field of study, centers around engineering materials and their properties at very small-length scales. It is widely used in technology, including in electronics and automobiles.

Bullington will study the neural circuit for courtship behavior in drosophila, known more commonly as fruit flies, with faculty from the University of Saskatchewan – Saskatoon.

Students would typically travel to Canada for the internships. This year, though, the internships will be conducted virtually.

While different from a Fulbright Scholarship, the internships are administered by Fulbright Canada. The program is relatively new, and this is the first time Georgia College students have been awarded this internship.

The program does not publish its statistics on how many internships are awarded annually. However, the internship is nationally competitive, said Anna Whiteside, assistant director of the Honors College and coordinator of the National Scholarships office.

“The program has great benefits, so it's competitive. Our particular students were heavily involved in undergraduate research,” she said. “Both were referred to me by MURACE for their undergraduate research experiences.”

Boyd developed an interest in physics early on through her family’s iron foundry business and is looking forward to researching a new topic.

“This research is similar to research that I am doing now, but it will still give me a new opportunity that I cannot wait to explore,” said Boyd. “This internship will also let me practice working with new people and new mentors. I am excited to strengthen my research skills and learn more research techniques.”

Catherine Boyd

Before attending Georgia College, Boyd worked at the foundry as an engineer intern. After initially enrolling at Georgia College as pre-engineering, she discovered a passion for physics and changed her major.

“After I graduate, I will be attending another undergraduate school to earn a mechanical engineering bachelor's,” she said. “After my second bachelors, I will be applying to graduate programs to get a master's in engineering. My dream is to work for NASA, so hopefully this will put me on the right path.”

Just like Boyd’s passion for physics, Bullington has had a longstanding passion for biology. She’s always been interested in the details of things and understanding how and why they work.

Data analysis will comprise the majority of her research with the University of Saskatchewan. Since the internship is virtual, she will not carry out physical experiments. Instead, she will analyze data produced by colleagues who are present in the lab.

“For the specific project I will be working on, I will be analyzing behavioral assays of a model organism, the fruit fly,” she explained. “The physical experiments will include genetic manipulation of very specific genes known to be responsible for the male fruit fly courtship behavior. Genetic crosses and behavioral studies will be set up in the lab, whose outcomes I will then analyze to ultimately better understand the development of the neural circuit responsible for courtship behavior.”

“This internship will push me to be a better student, one that is confident in myself and my abilities as they have gotten me this far in obtaining the internship,” she said.


Molly Bullington

Upon graduation, Bullington plans to attend school for veterinary medicine. Another possible academic path she may take, once accepted into vet school, is to apply to a dual-degree program for a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine (DVM) and a PhD.

Both students expressed excitement and enthusiasm over the opportunity to work alongside a faculty member in Canada, gaining personalized mentoring.

“This is an opportunity to do research projects that we might not have at Georgia College,” said Whiteside. “This is also a great first step towards learning how international research collaborations work, and also learning about research culture in other countries."

News Stories Posted Tuesday March 23, 2021

Class of 2021: Mass communication major raises social justice awareness through passion for journalism

Communication, Department of : Tuesday March 23, 2021

Ava Leone

Where are you from?
I was born and raised in Augusta, GA where I attended Davidson Fine Arts Magnet school. Growing up here shaped my love for culture and the arts. Dr. Brian Newsome, head of the Honors College, also attended DFA, and Dr. Harold Mock, head of Leadership Programs, is from Augusta. They are wonderful people and worth getting to know.

Do you have a minor?
I have an English minor and apply many of the storytelling techniques I have learned in my English classes to my journalistic style.

What have you enjoyed most about being a mass communication major?
I absolutely love meeting new people. There is something magical about meeting a person for the first time and creating lasting connections!


Ava Leone

Favorite course and professor/mentor at GC?
My favorite professor at GC is Dr. James Schiffman. I took two courses with him, Comparative International Media Systems and GC360, both of which changed the trajectory of my life.

In CIMS, I was assigned to follow the news in India over the course of the semester and learned so much about the issues in the country, like air pollution and poverty, which is one reason why I am so passionate about media now; I want to spread awareness. I was able to apply that passion locally when working with GC360, the television news station. The classes were intense but so worth the work. Dr. Schiffman is one of the most genuine, charismatic professors I have ever met. I am so grateful for his dedication to students, and I will carry his leadership and editing philosophies with me for the rest of my life.


Leone (right) and Emma Parry tabling for Swipe Out Hunger

How have you grown as a student and person during your time at GC?
I came to GC undeclared and didn't really have a plan. I surrounded myself with passionate, driven people, which inspired me to get involved on campus, and from there, I was able to lean into my passion for communication. I can honestly say at the beginning of college, I didn't think I would be doing any

of the things I do now, but I am happy I took chances to jump at opportunities as they presented themselves.

Any advice for incoming freshman?
It's okay to take care of yourself! In all honesty, I lost a lot of family members throughout my time at GC and it was tough, but I definitely did not take the time to care for myself like I should have, and that not only impacted me but also those around me. Self-care is not just face masks and mimosas, it’s doing things you don't want to do, like laundry and tidying up, because they are good for you.

Favorite spot on campus?
I absolutely love setting out a blanket under the big oak tree on front campus! So beautiful!

What are your plans once you graduate?
I currently don't have any solid plans, but I have a strong desire to work with nonprofits, especially in Atlanta or Philadelphia. I just want my career to be fulfilling! Right now, I am choosing between working with AmeriCorps or as a reporter!

News Stories Posted Thursday March 25, 2021

Class of 2021: Future teacher completes bachelor's degree in two years

Teacher Education, Department of : Thursday March 25, 2021

Libbie Rawdin

Where are you from?
Griffin, Georgia.

What activities have you been involved with during college?
At Georgia College, I have enjoyed completing the Emerging Leaders Program my first year, and I have loved being involved with BCM. BCM has given me the amazing opportunity to have a community and grow as a person.

What was your favorite class/professor and why?
My favorite professor has been Dr. Olha Osobov. She has been my cohort leader

for the past two years, and I cannot even begin to explain how much I have learned from her. She has taught me what it means to be a good teacher, and all that entails. I would certainly be much less prepared for my career without her guidance.

Libbie Rawdin

What does it mean for you to be named a valedictorian?
Being named valedictorian has a special meaning for me. College, especially the cohort, has not always been easy. Being valedictorian means celebrating hard work and remembering all it has taken to where I am today.

Can you talk about how you came straight from high school to the education cohort?
During high school, I had the amazing opportunity to be involved in dual-enrollment at a local college. I enjoyed the extra freedom that came with this experience and was happy to work towards my goals. I graduated with my associate's degree a few weeks before my high school graduation. I am glad that Georgia College allowed me to enter the cohort straight out of high school. The first semester was challenging for me to transition to the demands of the cohort and college life, but I have loved it. Even though it is a little unusual, I feel that I have been ready for each new challenge and blessed to have the opportunity.

What are your plans after graduation?
After graduation this May, I have two days to celebrate before I begin my master's degree in Early Childhood Education. I am excited to learn more about effective teaching and learning and being involved in more research connected to the field of early childhood education. After completing my master's degree, I look forward to teaching and having my own classroom.

Anything else you'd like to mention?
I am beyond thankful for Georgia College and cannot say enough about the quality of the education program. I am excited to enter the master's program this summer, and I have marveled every semester at the amount of information I have learned

and how much more ready I feel to be in charge of my own classroom.

News Stories Posted Friday March 26, 2021

Class of 2021: Approaching diversity education through poetry

College of Education : Friday March 26, 2021

Diondra Franklin

What first sparked your interest in Poetry? In seventh grade, my teacher at the time taught the poem, "Song of Myself: 52" by Walt Whitman, and I fell in love with it. I asked her for more poetry by him and ever since then I've had a love for reading and writing it.

Have you taken part in any other groups on campus during your college tenure?If so, which ones and why? I was a part of the Latino Student Association (LSA) and

sat on the board as the Community Service Representative for my sophomore and junior years. I joined the group because I wanted to find something that had a community and outreach and they welcomed me with open arms.

Diondra Franklin

What is your proudest moment at Georgia College, and can you describe the events that led to that moment? I think my proudest moment at GC was when I completed my Spanish minor last Spring. It wasn't a super big deal but I felt like I had accomplished something great, made it to a milestone you know? I finished it and all I could do was breathe a sigh of relief; one minor down, one minor to go, and then I'll have my Bachelors. It kind of gave me encouragement to keep going.

What are your plans after college? After I graduate in May I'm hoping to continue in Georgia College's MAT program to receive my masters in teaching high school level English.

What is the single, most important event that led to your interest in Diversity Education? As a kid my family moved around a lot before settling in a city called Bowdon, Georgia. It's a really small place and predominantly white and right winged - while those two things are separate they made a big impact on me as far as feeling othered. I wanted to do something to help others learn to not be ostracizing just because of how someone else identifies.

What is the importance of a Diversity Education in today's world? Diversity Education serves to remind us that we are all still human, and we're the only creatures in the world that think and act as we do. With everything that's happened in the past year, it's important to remember that no matter how or why you disagree with someone they're still a person and no one deserves to be hated or discriminated against for something that's out of their control.

Where do you hope to go next? As far as location, after I leave Milledgeville - which probably won't be for another few years - I hope to buy some land maybe in West Virginia or Maine and start building a home and a farm for myself, not too far from civilization so I can still teach.

What did you find most surprising about Georgia College? I found the openness of the college community most surprising. People are more willing to adapt and understand than we give them credit for. It's something I wasn't expecting to find at GC but I'm glad I did.

What was your favorite part of attending Georgia College and how do you think that might influence your future? My favorite part of Georgia College was how it opened it's borders - so to speak - to the greater Milledgeville community. Georgia College is very immersed in Milledgeville, and I love that fact.

What advice would you give to incoming students at Georgia College? If I could say anything to incoming students it would be to have courage and try what might scare you. Georgia College isn't perfect. No place is. But if you give it and all of its opportunities a chance you'll learn more than you thought you would at any other university. Also to go abroad if you can, trust me, it's life changing.

News Stories Posted Monday March 29, 2021

Georgia College art students create watercolor prints for kids in Cameroon

Art, Department of : Monday March 29, 2021

Junior Maya Whipple applies ink for a print.

You can learn a lot from a simple sketch. And, sometimes a small effort can make a big difference.

Georgia College art students are making that kind of impact on a classroom in Cameroon, where students share one box of crayons.

Georgia College was one of 30 schools and universities nationwide to participate in the Cameroon effort through the international nonprofit, “The Memory Project.” Fourteen students in Matt Forrest’s advanced printmaking class received photos of artwork from 9th graders in the Central African country. Through interpretation and research, they reimagined the art into something new. Water-colored ink prints will soon be shipped back to Cameroon for

students there to keep.

Once the package arrives, young artists in Cameroon will send their original work for Georgia College students to keep. Junior studio art major Maya Whipple of Gordon already knows where she's going to keep hers on a wall in her bedroom.

"Things you create have a longer-lasting impact than you think," Whipple said, "It's been a very rewarding experience to have an impact on these children, who we've never even seen before. It's just amazing to think about bringing somebody else joy and happiness through a simple picture."

The project was a little like detective work—trying to find clues in a drawing to discover the artist's intention. All Whipple received was a drawing of a man, woman and two children standing near what looked like a shield. She also got a photo of the boy who drew the picture. He wasn't smiling.

The drawing Whipple received from a student in Cameroon.

To understand why, Whipple researched and discovered Cameroon was recently involved in war. She thought the boy might've experienced hardships. His shield may have been his way of showing strength. Aside from yellow boots people were wearing, Whipple said the boy's drawing wasn't colorful.

To show him she'd noticed his workmanship, Whipple incorporated the yellow boots into her watercolor print. To help him find hope and peace, she drew four adorable children holding up the world against the flag colors of his country.

Whipple's interpretive watercolor prints.

> **It’s just amazing to think about bringing somebody else joy and happiness through a simple picture.**
>
> **- Maya Whipple**

Through this, Whipple learned art has meaning—not only for the artist but also their viewers. From now on, she intends to put more thought into what’s happening in her life and how that’s conveyed in her work. She also plans to apply for a Fulbright scholarship and someday teach English in Cameroon.

Her classmate, Laurie Gentry of Trion, Georgia, was profoundly moved by this project. As a studio art major with a minor in psychology, Gentry wants to help others through art therapy. She believes art is a powerful tool for community service.

She was struck by the photo of her Cameroon student, an unsmiling girl. She thought about the one box of crayons the girl shared and how few colors were used in the flower drawing. Gentry wanted to make the girl smile. She decided to use

Senior Laurie Gentry paints her print.

more colors and flowers in her variation of the picture.

“People say you can never get back the creativity and optimism you once had as a child,” Gentry said. “Doing this allowed me to capture that back for myself and make something whimsical enough for a child to enjoy.”

“This was an opportunity to reach out to someone I’d never be able to connect with by myself,” she said. “It’s really great to help people in any way you can, especially children. They deserve the most, and they need to be encouraged. It’s great we were put in touch with an obscure place and got the chance to help be a part of that community.”

> **It’s a huge project that requires a very small effort. It doesn’t take a lot—but it’s something that will last forever.**
>
> **- Matt Forrest**

Forrest said he’s proud of his students’ work. They had only three class sessions to work on their pieces for the art exchange. He chose prints and watercolors, because The Memory Project only ships lightweight paper—no canvas, wood or clay. Due to time constraints, printmaking is relatively quick and nontoxic too.

No contact information was given for students in Cameroon. To make the project more personal, Forrest had his students trace their hand on the back and sign their names. The children will feel respected and valued, he said, knowing people in the United States saw their art and were inspired to produce their own.

“The idea that art can impact an international community through something they’ve done here in Milledgeville is incredibly vital,” he said. “What my students in the advanced screen-printing class did will basically impact the lives of others for the rest of their lives. It’s a huge project that requires a very small effort. It doesn’t take a lot—but it’s something that will last forever.”

Senior art studio major Emily Sabonis-Chafee of Rowell said the project made her realize how art can be used to improve lives. She noticed her Cameroon student loved colors. She incorporated his use of a scroll and flowers into her print, turning

Senior Emily Sabonis-Chafee examines her print.

his hearts into heart-shaped leaves.

“I love just being able to interpret this my own way and imagine his reaction,” Sabonis-Chafee said. “I think he’ll really enjoy that an artist is replicating his drawing. I like to think he’ll be excited to have that piece, because it’s from something he drew.”

I'm so glad we got this opportunity. The thought that this is going to make someone’s day and make them happy is really cool and inspiring.

- Emily Sabonis-Chafee

Whipple making her print.

News Stories Posted Tuesday March 30, 2021

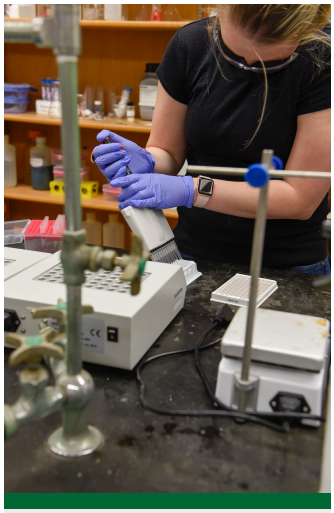
Georgia College's new forensics program a first in Middle GA

Chemistry, Physics, & Astronomy, Department of: Tuesday March 30, 2021

Like their heroes on TV crime shows, Georgia College students will soon be able to do a little scientific sleuthing of their own.

They'll be able to detect explosive TNT residue, analyze DNA fingerprints, determine drug usage from a strand of hair and identify signatures by the type of ink or pen used.

Demand for these kinds of skills is rising, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which projects a 14 percent growth in entry-level forensic science jobs through 2028.



The forensics lab.

In recent years, chemistry professors at Georgia College also noted increased student curiosity about criminal analysis. This prompted a new concentration in forensic chemistry, the first of its kind in Middle Georgia.

“Drawing on the strengths of Georgia College’s liberal arts mission, our forensic chemistry concentration is designed as an interdisciplinary program bringing together chemistry, biology and criminal justice to prepare students for the field of study,” said Dr. Chavonda Mills, chair of chemistry, physics and astronomy.

“Beyond the classroom, students will have the opportunity to engage in innovative forensic research in our new state-of-the-art Integrated Science Complex, as well as explore internship opportunities to apply what they’ve learned. This holistic approach will fully prepare students to enter a professional career immediately following graduation.”

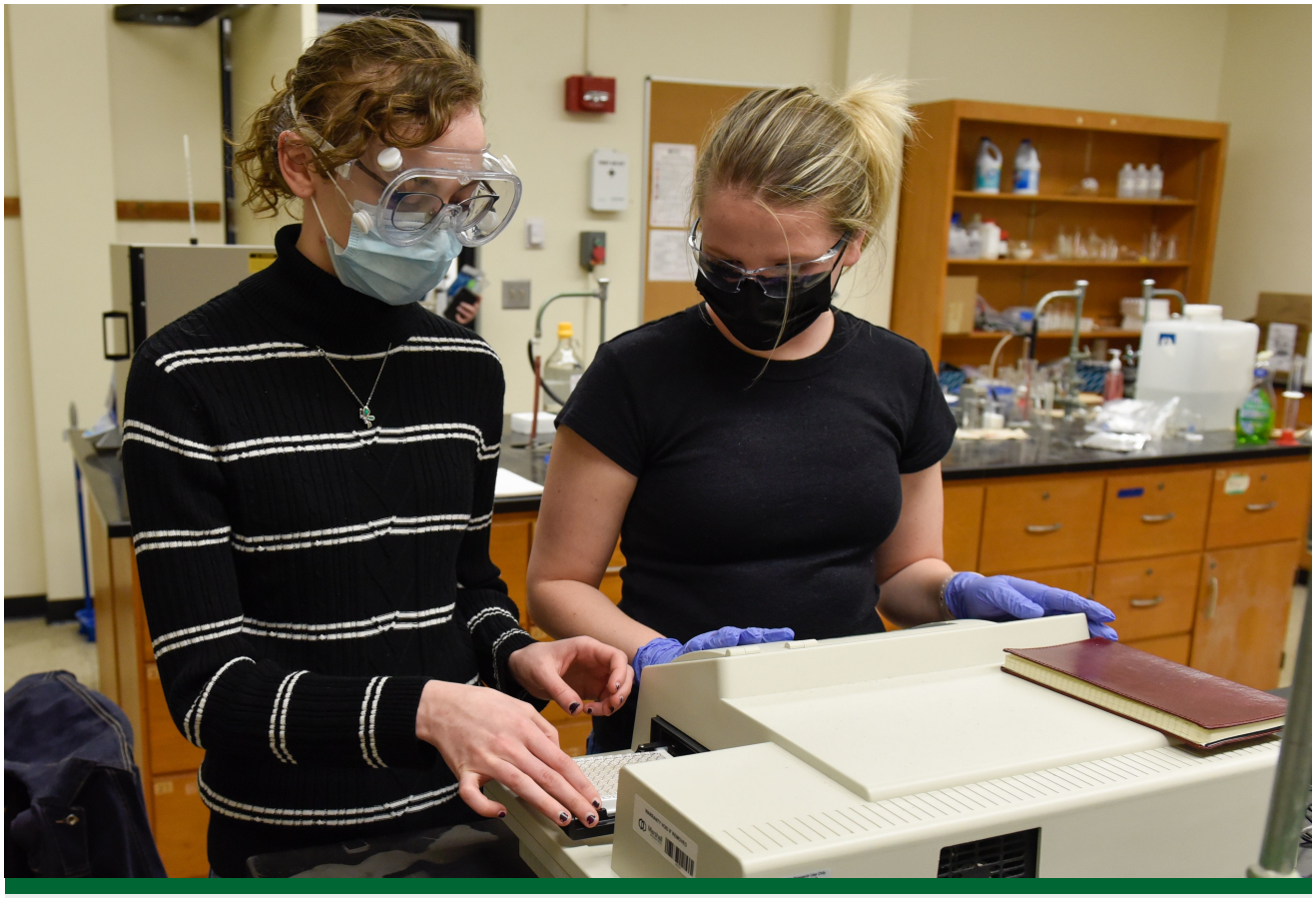
> **I think we all have that built-in detective in us. We want to know why and how. Forensic chemistry explains this at the molecular level.**
>
> **- Dr. Wathsala Medawala**

For the concentration, students will be required to take introduction to criminal justice and introduction to law, as well as biology courses. Two main forensic science courses may be offered next spring—trace evidence and material analysis; and drug and biomaterial analysis—where students will learn about DNA analysis, serology, arson, explosives and other important chemical investigation in forensic chemistry.

Additional teaching labs will cover hands-on training for topics covered in class, such as DNA fingerprinting; analysis of body fluids for drugs; hair analysis for metal poisoning and drug abuse; and detection of explosives. All lab work requires an understanding of sample collection, data analysis and proper usage of science instruments and equipment.

“I think we all have that built-in detective in us. We want to know why and how. Forensic chemistry explains this at the molecular level,” said Dr. Wathsala Medawala, assistant professor of chemistry.

“When forensic-themed courses are offered, students are very excited to take them. It gives them pleasure knowing they can understand the science and even catch mistakes in crime investigation dramas on TV,” she said.



Freshman Madeline Teigen and senior Mia Popkin work to detect amphetamines.

Six Georgia College students are busy producing lab experiments to go along with lessons. They develop available resources and procedures to be appropriate for a college-level lab.

Senior chemistry major Mia Popkin of Jesup, Georgia, and first-year chemistry major Madeline Teigen of Evans, Georgia, are working with Medawala to create step-by-step instructions for lab experiments that analyze and measure levels of amphetamine in urine. Popkin wants to work in a medical lab before going to graduate school, and Teigen is still deciding what area of forensics she might work in, such as ballistics, fingerprinting or blood analysis.

“It’s challenging,” Popkin said, “but it’s good to be challenged in this atmosphere where you have a professor or another student helping you and learning together.”

Another student working with Medawala is senior chemistry major Lauren Lautzenhiser of Bonaire, Georgia. She’s helping to create a lab protocol for DNA fingerprinting. First-year chemistry major Carson Kleider of Dacula, Georgia, works with Dr. Ronald Fietkau to develop experiments in ink analysis and type of pen used in signatures.

Junior chemistry major Emily Pitts of Griffin works with Fietkau too, combining blood and drug samples into one experiment that’ll test blood-splatter patterns and

drug or iron levels in the body. Someday, Pitts would like to work for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) or Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Junior Emily Pitts works in the lab."

"I've been thinking forensics since about 12. I was obsessed with (the TV show) NCIS as a child. I still am," she said. "Then, I did a forensics summer camp one year, and I absolutely fell in love with it even more. I was like, 'Yup, this is what I'm doing with my life.'"

> **It's a good feeling knowing I'm helping to build coursework that's going to be here even after I graduate, and I had a piece in that.**
>
> **- Junior Emily Pitts**

Junior chemistry major Aubrey Reynolds of Augusta wants to go to graduate school before seeking a career with the FBI. She was offered an internship at the FBI in Atlanta last summer, but it got derailed due to COVID-19.

Under the supervision of Dr. Catrena Lisse, Reynolds did some of the original research leading to development of the concentration. First, she tallied how many university chemistry programs nationwide offer forensics. She found a limited number. Then, with Lisse as her mentor, Reynolds helped develop a method for detecting explosive TNT residue, using sol-gel chemistry. Currently, they're developing a hair analysis experiment to check for abuse and mis-use of pharmaceuticals.

All lab work requires an understanding of sample collection, data analysis and proper usage of science instruments and equipment.

“It’s great experience for me,” Reynolds said, “because these are exactly the kinds of things I’m going to be doing if I get a forensics science job.”

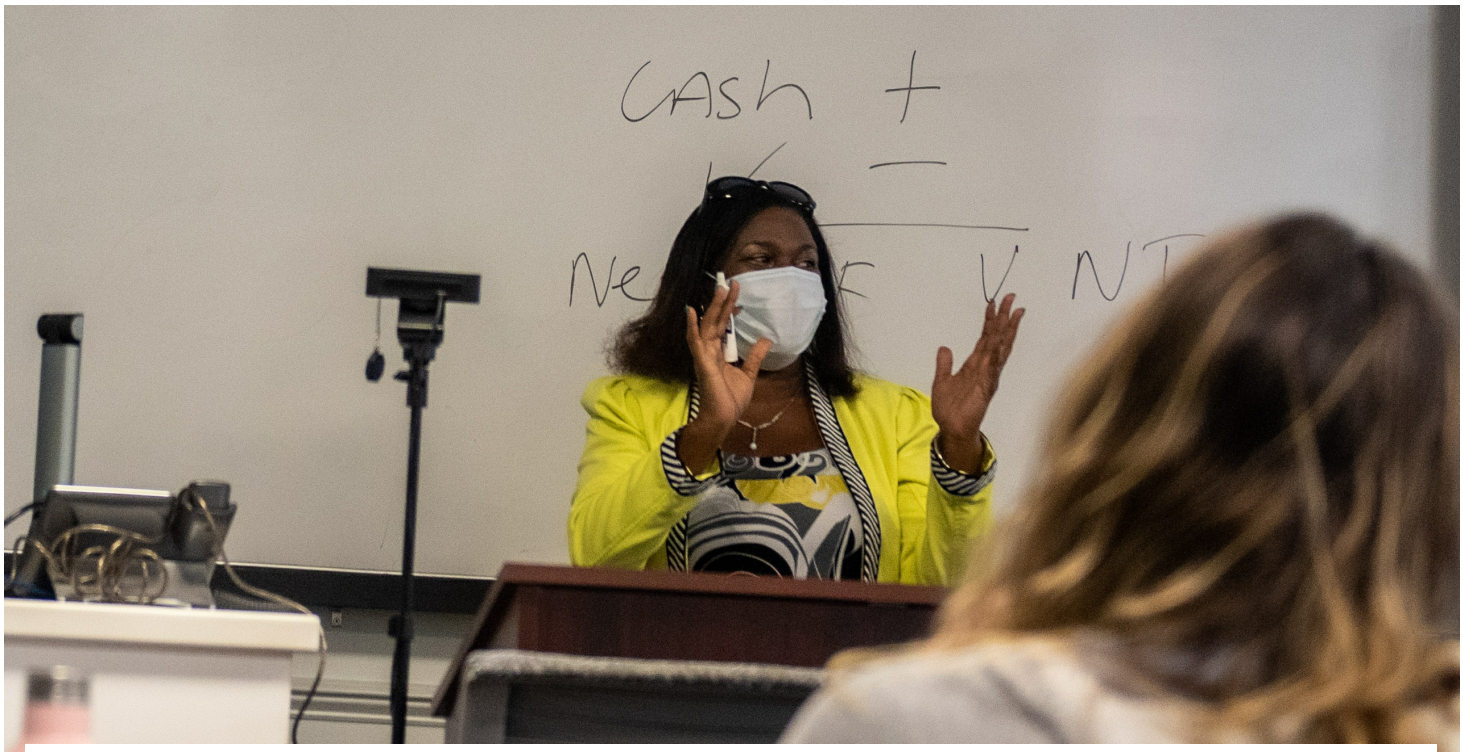
> **... these are exactly the kinds of things I’m going to be doing if I get a forensics science job.**
>
> **- Junior Aubrey Reynolds**

Reynolds is glad she learned these concepts at a small university, where she says it’s hard to “get lost.” By the end of her first semester, she knew all her professors, and they knew her by name. She feels lucky professors responded to her needs by starting a new concentration in forensics.

Now, she’s being exposed to things she didn’t expect at the undergraduate level.

“Research can really give you a step up in grad school,” Reynolds said, “especially when you have a professor who knows you on a personal level and can testify to what you’ve done.”

News Stories Posted Wednesday March 31, 2021



How a new College of Business professor is bringing accounting to life

College of Business : Wednesday March 31, 2021

In January of 2020, before Dr. Sandria Stephenson began teaching at Georgia College and before the pandemic changed everything, she was in the North Georgia mountains, engaging in a Holistic Educational Learning Partnerships (HELP) retreat amid the fog-covered peaks with a cohort of prospective doctorate students. Stephenson designed this HELP initiative to retreat with prospective students whom she felt were prepared to take the ultimate leap in higher education, pursuing a doctoral degree. She'd been doing this informally since 2008, after discovering that she was one of only 5 percent of minorities who have earned a doctoral degree. The number of Black women with doctorates is even more staggering.

"Once I completed my doctorate, it was always my mantra to help somebody else along their journey," Stephenson says. This is the kind of example she uses to translate realistic numeric data into real-world action in her teaching.

Stephenson wanted to be a meteorologist before an internship in high school introduced her to a love of accounting. She views life as narratives, where every story can be translated into numbers. For example, she was recently on faculty at an emerging research institution, where she was one of 34 faculty members in the School of Accountancy. She is now at GC, a public liberal arts institution, where she is one of eight in her Department. She did the calculations and determined that not only would she be more valued at Georgia College, but she could bring more value to Georgia College.

“I wanted to be able to teach and talk about accounting in the essence of the liberal arts because accounting is about the socio-economic aspects of life. It is not just debiting and crediting economic activities. It’s about the living experience and the lived experience,” Stephenson said.

Dr. Sandria Stephenson

It was fortuitous that Stephenson began teaching accounting during the fall semester of 2020, as students and faculty were returning with some trepidation after the national shutdown in March. It was a time where the nation, and the world, were receiving a hard lesson in how numbers affect everyday life.

“So yesterday, the federal government passed the American Rescue Act, a big COVID relief bill,” she said, “Georgia College will get some of that money, as are all colleges around the country. We desperately need those funds to do a lot more for

sanitizing, cleaning, and all the different things we're doing now that we have COVID to deal with. But GC must budget and subsequently account for all those funds and must report on how they were spent."

In this regard Stephenson uses aspects of the pandemic to bring accounting to everyday life.

To drive home the idea that accounting makes up every facet of our lives, Stephenson has given every one of her students their own company to run; albeit an imaginary one.

"So as we talk about different concepts, we go to that company's financial statements, and we extract the information!" She told her students a narrative about the way Whole Foods predicted that a "pandemic" might greatly affect their customers and or services. She showed them in class how the company noted this in their risk analysis and outlined it in their 2017 financial statements, so was able to prepare for and mitigate the risks of the pandemic to some degree.

> **Once I completed my doctorate, it was always my mantra to help somebody else along their journey.**
>
> **- Dr. Sandria Stephenson**

These techniques are what Stephenson calls, "S.M.A.R.T. Learning" which stands for "Simulate, Maintain, Apply, Reflect, and Teach," a technique she created for helping students navigate the learning process. The technique has already become popular in and outside of her classes. A resident assistant in Wells Hall developed the context of this concept into a poster and put it around the dorm.

Stephenson's philosophy is also making an impact outside of GC. She was recently contacted and met virtually with doctoral students from Vanderbilt University for help with developing a program evaluation model for their doctoral program. They contacted Stephenson after reading another of her teaching techniques, the "Accounting Communities of Practice (ACOP)" in an article she published in the international A-ranked journal, Accounting Education. They asked her permission to use this ACOP model in developing their evaluation proposal. As reflected in her mantra and evidenced in her HELP initiative, Stephenson was happy to help.

Since she began helping students refine their professional aspirations into PhDs, she has been able to formalize her retreats with the help of "The PhD Project" an

initiative sponsored by KPMG.

“During our retreats, we have our own chef, we do holistic activities such as Yoga, dance, counseling, etc., but the core focus is on academics. During the retreats we have various workshops where we discuss the doctoral application process, advancing through the coursework, selecting your committee, and how to navigate the doctoral and dissertation journey. My objective is to get as many underrepresented students as possible to be able to matriculate and succeed at their graduate and or doctoral endeavors, but any educational endeavor as a matter of fact.” she said.

As her HELP website testimonials outline, the numbers don’t lie. Stephenson has been instrumental in helping many students navigate and or pursue their masters and doctoral degrees. She has worked with honors students in the past and has discussed her vision of working with GC honors students with the Deans for the College of Business and Honors College.

“To be able to take those students and bring them into the world of creativity and research in accounting and help them become creative thinkers; to move forward to become CPAs, but to use that platform to become well-adjusted professionals with a view social justice in every aspect of their professional life,” Stephenson said, “Just like the weather, numbers account for everything around us.”