

# Front Page News Story Archive

May 2021



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# News Stories Posted Tuesday May 4, 2021



## **Class of 2021: On the Forefront of Thought, How GC's Philosophy Graduates are finding themselves Trendsetters in the Field**

[Philosophy Religion & Liberal Studies, Department of](#): Tuesday May 4, 2021

This year, two philosophy majors will start graduate programs with full-ride scholarships to Penn State and the University of Hawaii. This marks the second time in the last two years that Georgia College philosophy students are rising in the ranks of graduate studies during a time when it is increasingly difficult to gain admission with funding to the top philosophy Ph.D. programs. This year, Penn State had 160 applicants and accepted only six. In the last three years, four Georgia College philosophy students have been admitted to prestigious Ph.D. doctoral programs with funding. Dr. James Winchester, along with graduating student Kailah Jeffries and graduate Bobby McCullough, talk about what makes GC's Philosophy Department stand out.

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n 2005, Coordinator for the Program of Philosophy Dr. James Winchester, along



Kailah Jeffries

with other members of the department, made the conscious decision to lead the program onto a different path. It was a path that at the time, not a lot of other philosophy programs took. Since then, several GC philosophy majors have found themselves on the forefront of the field, receiving comprehensive scholarship packages in graduate level programs such as Penn State and the University of Hawaii. Two of those students, Kailah Jeffries and Bobby McCullough, will start their graduate programs in the fall.

“This didn’t happen by accident,” Winchester said, “we asked the administration, if we found an African-American philosopher, would they support us? And they did. There are so few African-American philosophers.” The Philosophy Department didn’t just seek to diversify its faculty, but to broaden its scope of disciplines as well, “We offer Chinese philosophy, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam. It’s a joint philosophy and religion program. We’re really offering diverse courses.”

By expanding course offerings, students also began expanding their interests. Jeffries, who came into GC on a soccer scholarship, and has been a star athlete for 15 years, found herself drawn to issues at the intersection of race, social and political, and feminist philosophy.

“I’m hoping that, when I get to Penn State, I’ll be under some really great professors who specialize in Latina feminism and Afro-Caribbean philosophy,” she said.

Jeffries originally began her studies as a psychology major, but after taking one of Winchester’s courses during her sophomore year, and discovering the range philosophies taught, she found that what had originally interested her about psychology were relational connections between thought and lived experiences explored in the humanities.

“What I enjoyed about his courses was that it included such a wide range of philosophers. There were some traditional, some continental, some analytical, and then there was also more modern stuff. We read the novel ‘Exit West’, which was rich with philosophical theories,” Jeffries said.

Another of Winchester’s students, who will enter into the doctorate philosophy program at the University of Hawaii in the fall, is Bobby McCullough. McCullough graduated the philosophy program in 2017 and has just received his Masters at Fudan University, where he’s been studying Chinese philosophy. Dr. Huaiyu Wang introduced McCullough to Asian thought and was instrumental in helping him get



to Fudan. McCullough can remember first talking with Winchester back in 2015, “on a whim, I emailed the head of the philosophy department, which ended up being Jim. We just sat down and talked in his office, and he was an incredibly charismatic and knowledgeable individual. He pretty much gave me the drive to get into college. And since that time, Jim has been, what I would consider, a mentor.”

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**- McCullough**

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**Bobby McCullough  
and Dr. James  
Winchester**

McCullough said that one of the things separating Georgia College’s Philosophy Department was its diversity of faculty and programming, “Almost every branch of philosophy you can think of is being covered at Georgia College, minus some really niche ones.” For McCullough and Jeffries, the broad scope of philosophical disciplines is reflective of how philosophy filters into everyday life. “If you go to school to study marine biology, you very likely want to be a marine biologist. That’s not really the case with

philosophy because it’s a foundational sort of thing, and it’s at the roots of almost every other field of study,” McCullough said, “I mean, there are hundreds of jobs in the market right now that people have never even heard of. I know of someone who graduated in philosophy who now essentially writes reports for a major company about what each department is doing and delivers that to management, and they make something around six digits per year.”

When talking about how the shift in GC’s Philosophy Department to a more diverse programming model has led to its recent success, Winchester points to the work of its incredible faculty, “We’re applying philosophy to the present day in ways that make it important and exciting,” Winchester said. Jeffries was surprised to discover both how much her studies in philosophy widened her appreciation of soccer as a sport, and also how it led to her pursuit of intersectionality, “there’s no one right way to frame the world,” she said but, like soccer, it’s a game that can be played where ever you are and whoever you are.



# News Stories Posted Thursday May 6, 2021



## Class of 2021: Public Health major gains valuable experience in field

[Health & Human Performance, School of](#): Thursday May 6, 2021

**Emily Watson**

As a public health major, Emily Watson of Newnan, Georgia, has gained first-hand experience in the field. She recently interned with Delta Air Lines, doing research and evaluating pathogen risk in several areas.

"This career path really drew me in," she said. "It amazed me how many career opportunities are available such as biostatistics, epidemiology, environmental health, community health, disaster management and many more."





Emily Watson at Delta Air Lines.

During her internship, Watson's research project was to evaluate Delta Air Lines' pathogen risk in its travel ribbon—the essential stages of the overall travel experience including inspiration, planning, booking, purchase, pre-trip, departure, inflight and post trip—to provide the Global Clean Team with research and results that identifies threats of viruses, bacteria and other related illnesses that customers and employees are most vulnerable to. The team also evaluated the effectiveness of Delta's cleaning protocols against those threats.

Watson also worked with the battery disposal project, where 275 airports were sent a survey to indicate the number of new batteries they had in inventory, how many they have disposed of and how many they replaced. Her role was to tally the responses to determine if she needed to follow-up with the airport managers on her research. She also sent daily battery updates to the leaders and stakeholders of the project.

"This project was extremely important, because the batteries being used were recalled, which brought safety concerns," Watson said. "This project was a challenge, because many of the airport managers I communicated with were from international airports. The language barrier made it difficult to understand them. This taught me patience and how to work with others who have different cultural backgrounds."

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**“I’m particularly interested in how disasters affect health outcomes and the spread of infectious or chronic diseases. This is important to me, because it’s critical to predict the health impacts of future disasters and emergencies. By working to prevent illnesses, deaths and injuries, I’ll contribute to saving lives and future mitigation strategies.”**

**- Emily Watson**

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Her role with the on-board lavatory project, was to research innovative ways to improve customers’ first impressions of the lavatory units on aircrafts.

“This taught me how to think creatively when researching and to consider how people would react to it,” said Watson.

The project team evaluated everyone’s ideas to determine how realistic they for implementation and the impact it would have on customers’ first impressions.

“I’ve enjoyed establishing professional connections and relationships the most out of these experiences,” said Watson. “Having these connections will be extremely beneficial as I enter the career field.”

She also enjoyed learning something new every day, ranging from how to create process maps to how all areas in the airport are to be kept cleaned.

Dr. Ernie Kaninjing, professor for Global Health, Community Health and a Public Health Internship course, helped make her internships possible. In doing so, he made a significant impact on her academic and personal experience at Georgia College. His class opened up the window of career possibilities for Watson.

“Because of Dr. Kaninjing’s consistent support, I’ve found my own passion for public health,” she said. “He believes in his students and pushes them to be the best they can be.”

Watson was also a member of the Public Health Student Organization (PHSO), which helped develop her passion for public health. She enjoyed seeing students come together to organize awareness events, health panels and volunteer opportunities. Most of these events involved educating individuals on health topics, which allowed her to teach people about many public health issues she’s passionate about.

“Being a part of the PHSO has made me even more excited to enter the



epidemiology field, as I will be surrounded by professionals who are also passionate about public health,” Watson said. “This organization embodies hard work, dedication and enthusiasm—qualities I will bring into my future career.”

As a member of Kappa Delta Sorority, Watson grew to be more confident and has made lifelong friends.

“This group of women pushed me to be the best version of myself and taught me the true meaning of friendship,” Watson said. “I’ve grown into a better friend, sister and woman because of this sisterhood, and I am forever thankful for their support.”



Emily Watson

Belonging to these organizations made her career ready, as well.

“Kappa Delta provided me with numerous opportunities ranging from volunteer, leadership and community-involvement experiences,” Watson said. “Because of these experiences, I’ve learned the importance of teamwork and selflessness, which I will carry with me as I enter the career field.”

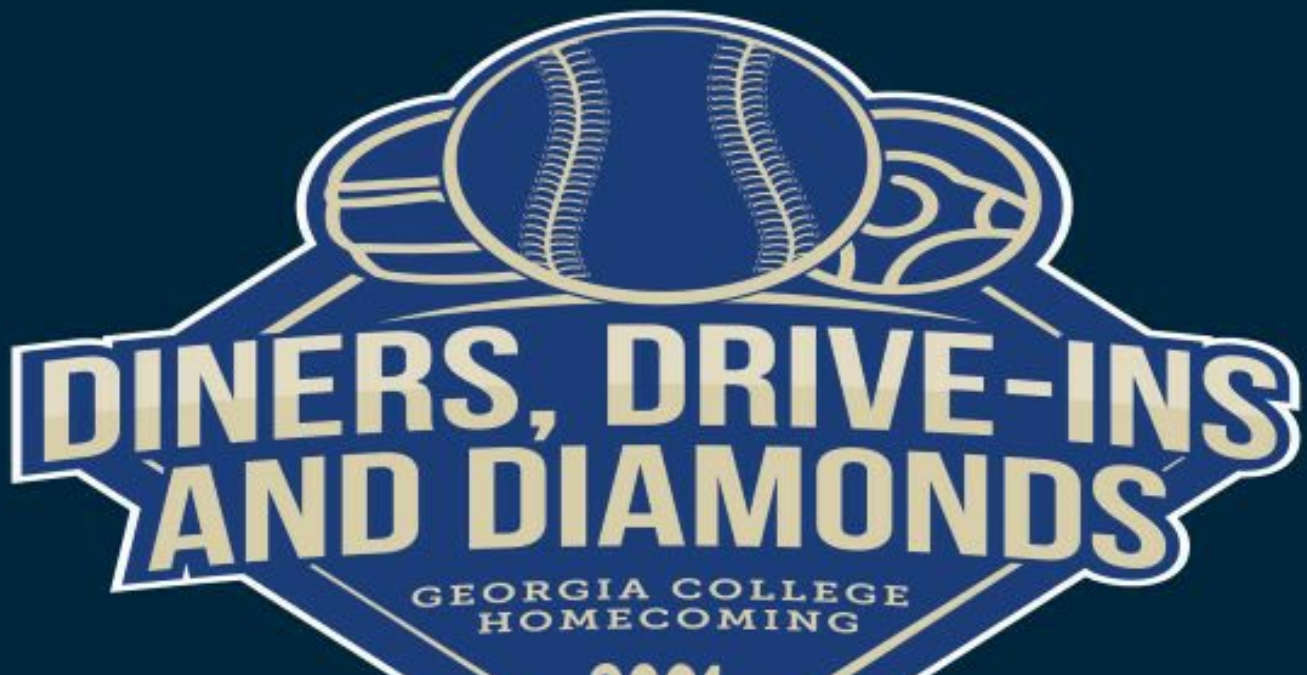
Watson will pursue her Masters of Public Health in epidemiology at the University of Georgia this fall. She plans to study infectious epidemiology, while gaining research experience in disaster epidemiology. And, she hopes to pursue a career in disaster epidemiology.

Watson plans to help improve the population’s overall quality of life by preparing for and researching the public health impacts of disasters.

“I’m particularly interested in how disasters affect health outcomes and the spread of infectious or chronic diseases,” she said. “This is important to me, because it’s critical to predict the health impacts of future disasters and emergencies. By working to prevent illnesses, deaths and injuries, I’ll contribute to saving lives and future mitigation strategies.”



# News Stories Posted Friday May 7, 2021



## Virtual Homecoming Week 2021 garners decent turnout

[Alumni](#) : Friday May 7, 2021

Georgia College's Virtual Homecoming Week was a hit with over 200 alumni participating across virtual events including: Thunder's Run to Homeplate, A Night Under the Stars and The Legends of Honors Series by Georgia College Professor Emeritus Dr. Kenneth Saladin.

Homecoming kicked off April 19 with the virtual 5-K and lasted until April 24. Participants were allowed to run or walk the 3.1 miles at their own pace and had to submit their times to Tre' Johnson, assistant director of Alumni Awards, Collaborations & Reunions once they were complete.

"I will say that our alumni are extremely athletic based on the times they were clocking in at," said Johnson.

A Night Under the Stars honored the trailblazers of diversity at Georgia College and highlighted current students and their amazing talents and achievements. The event showcased the many talents of Georgia College students. Voices of Joy, a

campus student gospel group, performed. Deon McBride, a Georgia College student and entrepreneur ran the entire program.

“I feel this event is a night of healing,” said Johnson. “Some of our African-American alumni did not have the best experience as students, but the hope is this event among other acts of engagement, begins to repair and strengthen the relationship between them and Georgia College.”



Tre' Johnson,  
assistant director of  
Alumni Awards,  
Collaborations and  
Reunions

Saladin's presentation was titled “The Rise of American Fundamentalism and the Scopes Evolution Trial.” He discussed the political action that was taken by religious groups to fight the teaching of evolution in schools.

Johnson received several positive comments from participants about this year's events.



GC Homecoming logo 2021

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**“I envision us finally being able to gather in person. I’ve noticed how much our alumni really miss campus. Quite frankly, I miss having them here too. I envision several alumni events next year, but I hope to have more student-alumni interactions compared to previous Homecoming Weekends.”**

**- Tre' Johnson**

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“Alumni expressed how fluid the virtual aspects of our events were,” he said. “By providing a little extra made the 60-plus minute Zoom events worthwhile.”

After holding two Homecoming Weekends virtually, Johnson has high hopes and a fresh idea for Homecoming 2022.

“I envision us finally being able to gather in person,” he said. “I’ve noticed how

much our alumni really miss campus. Quite frankly, I miss having them here too. I envision several alumni events next year, but I hope to have more student-alumni interactions compared to previous Homecoming Weekends.”





## VIDEO: Celebrating the Class of 2021

[General Institution](#) : Friday May 7, 2021

### [Celebrating the Class of 2021](#)

Meet some of our fantastic seniors as they get set for graduation. They recap their time at Georgia College, why they chose their major and how impacted them during their undergraduate experience.

You can view the video also [here](#).



## Alumnus' legacy teaches others to be fearless leaders

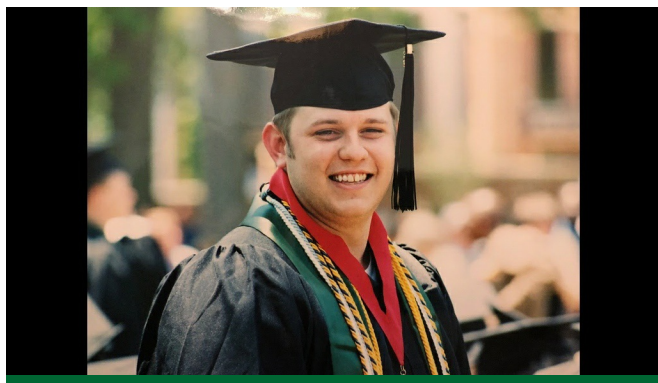
[Alumni](#) : Friday May 7, 2021

First-generation college student Adam Michael Edge, '05, '07, always put others first. He had a way of making individuals feel comfortable and appreciated—whether it was his loud laugh or his willingness to take the initiative to help someone. People knew they could count on him.

Unfortunately, Edge passed away at the age of 38.

Today, two of his close friends offer a scholarship to pay tribute to his unwavering commitment to his community and his love of life.

Robert Buckley, '07, director of financial management and program oversight at the Federal Transit Administration, and his wife Sarah Treleven Buckley, '07, a nonprofit



Adam Edge at graduation.



fundraising and development professional, knew Edge for over 15 years.

“We have so many fond memories of Adam while we were at Georgia College,” said Robert. “I lived with all of my best friends, including Adam, in a tiny, three-bedroom townhouse right off campus that we lovingly referred to as ‘the mansion.’”

Senior year solidified a lot of the friendships the couple made—people who are still involved in their lives, as adoptive aunts and uncles to Robert and Sarah’s children or as participants in their wedding. Fellow alumni still play active roles in their lives.

But they miss Edge. He demonstrated an eagerness to put what matters most in life in the forefront.

“I’m going to try to keep the waterworks to a minimum,” said Robert. “Adam would bring that passion every day to work, life, family and friends. I try to do the same.”

Both Edge and Georgia College showed the couple the importance of being involved in the community—something they still do today as long-time members of the College of Arts and Sciences Board.

“Georgia College, gave me the room to get involved,” said Robert. “Sarah and I were both involved in things besides academics. I was in student government, and we were on the Campus Activities Board. And I’ve applied myself in my professional life by volunteering in different areas.”

“Building on what Robert said about allowing yourself to get involved in different things—this relates to Adam,” said Sarah. He was the type of person who never shied away from doing something, because it was out of his comfort zone. This is just something that we carry with us every day.”

“Fearless” is how Sarah describes Edge.



Adam Edge and Sarah and Robert Buckley at the Capitol.

"We're talking about a guy who enjoyed listening to OutKast, but also volunteered as a docent at The High Museum of Art," said Sarah. "He never met a stranger, and he never thought of something that he didn't feel like he could do."

Edge also loved to dance.

"He was an excellent dancer and the life of the party at any group function or wedding," said Robert. "Adam was the person who was on the dance floor the whole time, and he didn't care who he was dancing with."

"That was always something to me that was so amazing about Adam," said Sarah. "He was fearless and didn't care if a situation was out of his zone. He was going to try it anyway. And he always killed it, because that's what Adam did."

Edge's joy was infectious.

"He had this huge, booming laugh," said Sarah. "So, some of my favorite things to look back on are when our group of friends are texting videos that pop up as their memories on Facebook or Google. And there are videos of Adam laughing or having a dance battle with a kid at a wedding, and that laugh just echoing through the room—it just makes your heart happy."



Adam dancing at a wedding.

After graduation, Edge enjoyed building community relations and wanted to make a difference in the lives of younger generations—much like opportunities he was provided where he grew up in Atlanta. He felt compelled to mentor younger generations of students living in Suwanee. He started a program there to help transform over 300 graduating high school students into leaders.

"Adam wanted to help the next generation, so they could be civic leaders at any age," Sarah said. "That was important for him, because he learned some of that on his own. So, I think he wanted people to know that it doesn't matter where you

come from, it doesn't matter your age. You can do big things and impact people's lives."

Edge taught Robert and Sarah to be passionate and engaged in their lives, and the lives of others.

"If he was going to do something, he did it big," said Sarah. "He did everything whole-heartedly and was kind. He also taught us to get out there and give back."

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**"Since Adam was the first person in his family to go to college, it was a big deal to him. And just the way that we talked about Georgia College, Adam had those feelings about it too. It was a place that was really special to him. And we think we're doing what he would have wanted us to do."**

**- Sarah Buckley**

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When the group, including Edge, met for homecoming a year or two after graduating from Georgia College, they thought about someday creating a scholarship.

"Somehow it came up in conversation," said Sarah. "'How cool would it be, if one day, we could all go in together and start a scholarship?' We thought we could really make an impact on the school and provide something that would have meaning for years into the future."

This was something the group didn't think about again until after Adam passed. Robert and his Sarah brought the idea up with Edge's wife, Rebecca, and shared what they wanted to do this in his honor to preserve his memory and legacy.

"Since Adam was the first person in his family to go to college, it was a big deal to him," said Sarah. "And just the way that we talked about Georgia College, Adam had those feelings about it, too. It was a place that was really special to him. And we think we're doing what he would have wanted us to do."

The goal of the scholarship is to help first-generation students who are similarly engaged with their community, and who need that extra financial support to get through college.

"I think it's nice to help take away one daunting barrier to achieving a degree," said Sarah. "So, we hope the scholarship can help take a little bit of those nerves and barriers away for students."



“We're trying to live up to this mountain of a man,” said Sarah. “And a scholarship is just one little way we can do that. I think like instilling a little bit of Adam in others, and maybe we can discover someone who has a little bit of Adam in them already.”

[Learn how you can provide a life-changing opportunity to students](#) or contact Bob Preston at [bob.preston@gcsu.edu](mailto:bob.preston@gcsu.edu).



Sarah and Robert Buckley



## Middle Georgia Alumni Chapter forms network to support community

[Alumni](#) : Friday May 7, 2021

The Georgia College Middle Georgia Alumni Chapter will hold its [first event of the year May 22, 2021, at 1 p.m. at Fall Line Brewing Company in Macon](#). Some of the proceeds will go towards the creation of a scholarship for Georgia College students living in the middle Georgia region.

“Our goal for the event is for alumni in the area to come together, network and support small businesses in Macon,” said Middle Georgia Alumni Chapter President Joseph “Tyler” Kemp, ’13. “We hope to raise about \$10 per ticket purchase to go towards a scholarship.”

The chapter will also hold a get-together for the Macon Bacon game July 15. Refer to a future issue of eConnection for event details.

The chapter formed in summer 2019. Its kick-off event was held at Just Tap’d, also in Macon, which boasted an ample attendance.

The chapter planned events in 2020, but due to the COVID Pandemic, they were canceled. It hosted a virtual networking event last year which yielded a low turnout. However, the chapter is excited about its May 22 event and to have the opportunity to gather with its community in a safe, outdoor area.

This year, the chapter is also planning for a [Macon Bacon Baseball game July 15](#), Macon Mayhem Hockey game, Halloween events and some philanthropic events. These events and more will take place over the summer and during Alumni and Homecoming Weekends.

Chapter leaders are also open to ideas of how to bring in more middle Georgia alumni.

Kemp formed the organization for Georgia College graduates to network with fellow alumni. The counties covered include: Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Jones, Laurens, Houston, Monroe, Peach, Pulaski, Putnam, Twiggs, Washington and Wilkinson Counties.

"There are a lot of alumni in Middle Georgia who don't realize there are fellow Georgia College alumni around them," he said. "It's really formed to help establish the transitioning students in the area. So, students who've moved from Macon or Warner Robins may not really know anyone. Here, they can meet fellow Bobcats to gain friendships."

The chapter started by using Facebook to gain interest of other alumni.

"Once we met and created this interest page, we had over 100 alumni within 72 hours join this group," he said. "Today, we have 205 members on our page."

The goal for the May event is to reintroduce the chapter's leadership and let everyone know what the plans are for the year including the creation of the Middle



Tyler Kemp, president of the Middle Georgia Alumni Chapter

Georgia Chapter Scholarship Fund for local students. Kemp encouraged input from alumni to gauge interest in participating on its subcommittees to help with community needs or alumni events, such as the golf tournament to be held during Alumni Weekend to raise funds for the scholarship.

The chapter's goal is to raise \$10,000 as soon as possible to establish an endowed scholarship.



The founding members of the Middle Georgia Alumni Chapter pictured from left to right are: Jeff Wells, '07, treasurer; Brad Berg, '12, vice president; Tyler Kemp, '13, president and Mary Cason Sherwood, '19, events coordinator.

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**“I think a lot of people in Middle Georgia don’t go to college. We want this scholarship to create an awareness about Georgia College and hope to be able to give back to the people who really need it.”**

**- Tyler Kemp**

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“All four of us on the leadership team donated up to \$500 to create this scholarship fund,” Kemp said. “There’s a need for student scholarships, especially, now with the COVID pandemic. We’re all working in this area too, so we all understand there’s a need.”

Kemp received the Pell Grant to have the opportunity to go to Georgia College during the recession, as his parents were unemployed during that time. In addition, he was involved in a work-study program working as a monitor at the Centennial Center.

“Without that grant and the work-study program, I would’ve never had the opportunity to attend college, because my parents didn’t have any money to give me,” he said. “I received that scholarship to get to Georgia College and become established to where I could get a job and make extra money. If I never had those extra funds up front, then I wouldn’t have had those roots and be able to say, ‘I’m established here.’”

Chapter leaders look forward to raising funds for the scholarship.

“I think a lot of people in Middle Georgia don’t go to college,” Kemp said. “We want this scholarship to create an awareness about Georgia College and hope to be able to give back to the people who really need it.”

[See how you can support the Middle Georgia Alumni Chapter Scholarship](#) To learn more about the Middle Georgia Alumni Chapter, contact Tre' Johnson at [trejuan.johnson@gcsu.edu](mailto:trejuan.johnson@gcsu.edu).



# News Stories Posted Monday May 10, 2021



## Class of 2021: Valedictorians honored

**General Institution** : Monday May 10, 2021

Fifteen students have been named valedictorians for the May/August graduating class of 2021- a feat that can only be accomplished through hard work, dedication and perseverance. Valedictorians have a perfect 4.0 GPA throughout their undergraduate careers.

Join us in celebrating: Jacklyn Crawford, Natalie Miller, Sachen Pillay, Juniper Guthrie, Catherine Barr, Amy Staton, Haley Strassburger, Elizabeth Bochniak, Savannah Rawdin, Abigail Tong, Emily Howe, Haley Gibbs, Sidney Roule, Emily Deason and Anna Houghton.



Valedictorians





## **‘Thunder Learns to Read:’ Education students use new tools to teach reading**

[Teacher Education, Department of](#) : Monday May 10, 2021

Reading is a skill known as a building block of life and fundamental to society.

Teachers work hard to help children read early in their education, but many students face obstacles in their learning. It helps when they receive extra guidance and understand that anyone can face similar challenges with reading—even a famous furry friend.

Georgia College junior education majors spent several sessions during their spring semester working on-site at Lakeview Academy in Baldwin County giving students additional guidance and encouragement as they honed their reading skills.

“We are actually putting it into practice the different tips and skills that we've learned through our classes,” said early childhood education major Erin Malone. “I think it helped that we were with the students only in the spring because we had a toolbox of all the things that we needed to know be a lot more impactful.”

As part of their college course Literacy Assessment and Instruction: Dyslexia and Diverse Reading Profiles, teaching candidates tutored Kindergarten through second-grade students (K-2).

"This is the first time we've been one-on-one or in pairs with students to see where they are with their reading and use the assessments that we've been learning in class," said early childhood education major Katherine Funke.

The course is part of pilot program in the John H. Lounsbury College of Education, which aims to better prepare teacher candidates for reading education.



Katherine Funke works with a student.



Dr. Linda Bradley prepares her students for tutoring sessions.

"In the state in general, there was a bit of a concern that new teachers were coming out not really ready to teach all of the fundamental components of reading," said Dr. Linda Bradley, professor of literacy education. "There's been a state push to pay attention to those fundamentals."

Historically known as a leader in teacher education in Georgia, the

College of Education joined an effort to assess and rework their literacy courses. The university is one of 14 University System of Georgia (USG) Educator Preparation Programs participating in a pilot project to plan and implement projects to improve teacher candidate impact upon K-12 student learning in literacy and mathematics.

"We revised our literacy coursework for early childhood and for special education as a part of a pilot in the state," said Bradley. "We developed a three-course restructured plan that emphasizes hands-on implementation with students in schools. Spring 2021 is the first offering of this course linking assessment and interventions on-site with groups of K-2 students."

That course brought college students this semester to Lakeview for eight sessions of hands-on tutoring. Overcoming the challenges of the pandemic and working with school and county leadership, Bradley connected her students with 106 younger children to work on the fundamentals of reading.



In honor of their hard work and the end of the school year, the children received a special celebration during their last scheduled tutoring session. A book of their very own to take home written by Bradley and featuring Georgia College's mascot Thunder the Bobcat.

"It's a treat for every child who's come to tutoring this spring," said Bradley. "On their last day of tutoring, we celebrated each K-2 student, gave them a copy of the book and then read it together as a group."

The idea for the children's book "Thunder Learns to Read" came to Bradley several years ago. She teamed up with a professional illustrator Min McGlaughn for the project. In the book, the bobcat decides he wants to learn to read but faces a few challenges along the way.

McGlaughn jumped at the opportunity to work on the project because she believed in its goal. Diagnosed with dyslexia at a young age, McGlaughn knew firsthand the struggles and frustrations many kids face. She hopes the book will encourage children that they too can tackle reading like Thunder.



photo of the book

In writing the book, Bradley tied in key concepts and tools she teaches her college students to help young children gain confidence in their reading abilities.

"We are thrilled to give copies of 'Thunder Learns to Read' to children and teacher candidates," said Bradley. "This book recognizes the complexity and significant challenge that learning to read can be. We want students who find reading tough to know how intelligent they are, and to know that teachers have tools that can help them grow stronger in their reading."

Capping off the end of the school year, the special reading and the gift of a book to take home helped celebrate a job well done by both tutors and students alike.

"It gave the young students the validation they need," said Malone. "They also got to celebrate, so it just showed them we are really proud of them and that they did a really good job this year."



Erin Malone reads with the student she tutored.

# News Stories Posted Thursday May 27, 2021



## Summer REUs: Six science students get research internships

[Biology & Environmental Sciences, Department of](#): Thursday May 27, 2021

For years, Georgia College students have been selected for valuable REUs (Research Experiences for Undergraduates) that help broaden their skills and enhance future opportunities. They're chosen for their knowledge, lab experience, ability to work in teams and experience with undergraduate research.

This summer is no different.

Six students—four biology majors, a physics major and chemistry major—have accepted REUs at a variety of schools in the United States and abroad. They'll work with laser optics, synthetic and molecular biology, cell signaling pathways and biomedical techniques.

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**Georgia College's long-standing and strong track record of student acceptance into extremely competitive REU programs speaks to our students' high level of research preparedness and outstanding faculty mentorship.**



“These experiences provide an excellent opportunity for our students to further explore their research interests while broadening their professional network. In our department,” Mills said “we’ve had several students gain acceptance to graduate school with an invitation to join their REU mentor’s research group. And, we’ve had a few students publish their REU projects in peer-reviewed publications, bringing national recognition to our department and Georgia College.”

This year, the lab experiences will mostly be virtual, but two are in person.

Most REUs are sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and generally last eight to 12 weeks, beginning in late May and early June. They give students the opportunity to learn laboratory work ethics and research techniques, while using state-of-the-art equipment at other universities. They work alongside graduate students, as well as other undergraduates, and post-doctoral researchers. REUs help deepen a love for learning and exploration. Students often leave internships with a career network that includes professional scientists.

“REU’s increases the chances of our students getting accepted to graduate programs and winning highly-competitive scholarships and awards which, in turn, helps us to maintain our status as a leader in undergraduate research and provider of high-quality undergraduate education,” said Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge, assistant professor of physics.

Students participating in 2021 REUs are:



Evan Dunnam

Evan Dunnam of Acworth, Georgia. Dunnam’s a sophomore majoring in physics. He’ll be doing a virtual REU with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) in the area of theoretical physics and materials research. He’ll team up with Mahabaduge to look at magnetic and electrical properties of certain materials, using advanced equipment like electromagnets and laser optics.

Mahabaduge teamed up with other students over the years to conduct summer research at UNL. This created a connection between the two schools. Maintaining that connection helps secure continuing spots for Georgia College students, Mahabaduge

said.



“It is important for us to develop the necessary infrastructure here at Georgia College, so our students can make the best use of these opportunities,” Mahabaduge said. “Evan will be completing his research work from Georgia College. Over the years, we built our lab to include such research capabilities.”

The team’s goal is to observe various materials and characterize them, so the materials can be applied in real-world systems. Dunnam looks forward to getting this practical experience and working with lab equipment.

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**Being able to work and become familiar with the equipment that I’ll use for years to come will give me an amazing head start on my future.**

**- Evan Dunnam**

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“This is my first research, but I am excited and eager to begin,” Dunnam said. “The general field of materials research interests me greatly, due to the abundant applications that can come from it.”

“Being able to work and become familiar with the equipment that I’ll use for years to come will give me an amazing head start on my future,” he added. “By getting hands-on experience early-on, I hope it’ll help me grow to be a successful researcher.”

After graduation, Dunnam would like to get to an engineering degree at Georgia Tech, then conduct research in physics as a career.

“So far at Georgia College, I feel as though I’ve been given amazing research opportunities,” he said. “Under Dr. Mahabaduge’s mentorship, I’ve been able to start working with the same equipment that the summer research will require, giving me the much-needed confidence to thrive in this experience.”

**Nicholas Campbell** of Snellville, Georgia. Campbell’s a senior majoring in chemistry. His REU is in-person at the University of Kansas and mixes biochemistry with chemistry. Campbell is doubly excited to begin his REU, since the one he obtained last year fell through, due to COVID-19.

Campbell will be working on the protective layer around brain nerves in mice and how they form and degrade. He’ll conduct tests to see what can be done to delay degradation of nerve cells. He’ll also try to discover the element that leaves brain nerves unprotected and find ways to prevent that from occurring.

This work can be applied to neurological diseases like Alzheimer’s and Multiple



Nicholas Campbell

Sclerosis.

"An REU seemed like an excellent way to gain experiences in my field's differing subsets and get experience in research not being done at our university and gain experience with machines that our university does not have," Campbell said.

"I am most looking forward to working with a topic I have very little to no experience with and learning new techniques the lab," he said. "I'm hoping, when I come back from my REU, I have gained knowledge of techniques and practices I can then apply to research

I'm doing here."

Dr. Wathsala Medawala, assistant professor of chemistry, said extended exposure in a research university lab will enhance Campbell's experience as a chemist. She hopes he'll bring back and share his newfound knowledge with classmates and incorporate them into his own research at Georgia College.

After graduation, Campbell plans to get a master's and Ph.D. in chemistry or biochemistry.

"Georgia College has done an excellent job preparing me for my REU," Campbell said, "by allowing me to do undergraduate research and giving me the chance to go into this new research group with an excellent foundation in research."



Chase Lueder

Chase Lueder of Johns Creek, Georgia. Lueder's a senior majoring in biology with a minor in chemistry. He'll attend an in-person biomedical REU at Augusta University, called the Star Program.

Lueder applied to many REUs nationwide, spanning multiple disciplines, to find one that paralleled medicine. He's interested in attending medical school after graduation. His REU's particular goal is to foster biomedical research techniques in undergraduates. Lueder's waiting to be assigned to a professor. He will work closely with this mentor and study whatever topic that professor's researching.

"I hope to gain valuable experience in the biomedical sciences that'll help me achieve a medical degree in the future. I have taken many lab classes at Georgia College, so I feel confident in a lab environment," Lueder said.

Dr. Ellen France, professor of biology, helped all four biology majors extensively with their applications. France was there “every step of the way,” Lueder said. Her mentorship enabled him to “hone in my applications and greatly increase my chance of acceptance. The amount of work Dr. France is willing to put in for her students is a marvel,” he said, “and I am truly grateful.”



**Peter Opara-Nadi**

**Peter Opara-Nadi** of Woodstock, Georgia. Opara-Nadi's a senior majoring in biology with a minor in chemistry. This summer, he'll participate virtually in synthetic biological research program at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. Opara-Nadi's tasks will include performing computational techniques to solve complex problems related to cell signaling pathways.

The goal of this REU is “to design and develop chemically inducible kinase variants, along with designing genetically encodable biosensors using fluorescent proteins,” he said.

Opara-Nadi's said France provided him with the research tools to be successful in this program and work well with others in a collaborative lab environment. After graduating in December 2021, Opara-Nadi plans to go to graduate school and gain more research experience.

“With this REU, I look forward to working with like-minded undergraduates and knowledgeable scientists, who can provide me with advice and information that'll help me in my future endeavors,” he said.



**Molly Bullington**

**Molly Bullington** of Cordele, Georgia. Bullington's a senior biology major with minors in chemistry and environmental science.

Her REU in molecular biology will be virtual with the University of Saskatchewan-Saskatoon in Canada.

This REU scholarship gives Bullington the chance to experience research opportunities outside Georgia College. She'll be doing data analysis of experiments done in the lab by colleagues. She'll scrutinize genetic manipulations of the fruit fly and study specific genes responsible for courtship behavior in the male.

“Genetic crosses and behavioral studies will be set up that I will analyze to ultimately better understand the development of the neural circuit responsible for

courtship behavior,” Bullington said. “We are trying to clarify what portion of the fruit fly’s genome is responsible for male courtship behavior. The next step would be to find out where these genes are expressed in the fly’s body and, ultimately, to understand how location in the body plays a role in courtship behavior.”

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**I believe the liberal arts education I’ve received at Georgia College has prepared me...**

**- Molly Bullington**

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Bullington’s looking forward to forming professional relationships with other researchers. After graduation, she plans to get a degree in veterinary medicine. It’s an ambitious goal, she said, but one Georgia College has prepared her for. She has worked in France’s lab since freshman year.

“Throughout the application process, I had the opportunity to reflect on the experiences I’ve had at Georgia College and formulate them into a narrative that showcases my academic and professional capabilities,” Bullington said. “I believe the liberal arts education I’ve received at Georgia College has prepared me to competently understand problems presented to me, as well as prepare solutions from a unique perspective of a well-rounded and educated student.”



Lucy Beck

Lucy Beck of Tucker, Georgia. Beck is a senior biology major with a minor in chemistry. This summer, she’ll do a virtual internship at Liang Lab at the Emory University School of Medicine. Emory just established its cryo-electron microscopy core facility. The structural cell biology lab uses technology that garnered them the 2017 Nobel Prize in chemistry.

“As soon as I read through the details,” Beck said, “I knew this was the perfect opportunity for me, because I genuinely enjoy studying and learning at the molecular level. I’m most looking forward to everything I’m going to learn and all the connections I will make.”

Beck will research an assigned topic and write a literature-review paper. Although her job doesn’t have the same hands-on experience as working in the lab, she’s looking forward to collaborating with scientists who share her passion for molecular biology.



After graduation, Beck plans to get more research experience before seeking a master's in cellular biology.

"Dr. France has played a big part in getting me out of my comfort zone," she said. "I've grown to be more confident in applying to opportunities like this."

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**“Georgia College has prepared me to be successful in so many ways. The professors have really made an impact on my life and helped me discover what it is I want to do.**

**- Lucy Beck**

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