

# Front Page News Story Archive

June 2021



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# News Stories Posted Tuesday June 1, 2021



## Georgia College professor and student name new species of amphipod

[Biology & Environmental Sciences, Department of](#): Tuesday June 1, 2021

[Microscopic image of amphipod that's similar to the new species.](#)

It may seem like scuds are the lowest creatures on earth.

And that's because they are—literally—the lowest.

Scuds are bottom dwellers at the bottom of the food chain. They suck up nutrients in the muddy depths of lakes, rivers, streams, marsh and ocean—only to become food for larger aquatic invertebrates and fish.

About 10,000 different species of these shrimplike creatures are known to exist.

Now one more's been added to the list.

Georgia College Assistant Professor of Biology Dr. Kristine White and junior environmental science major Sally Sir of Duluth have discovered an amphipod never before identified by anyone else. They found it in a collection of about 7,000

amphipods White collected in the mid-2000s as a post-doctoral student in Okinawa, Japan.

[Dr. Kristine White and junior environmental major Sally Sir talk about their discovery.](#)

They dissected their little ivory-colored scud—about 4 mm in size (imagine a stack of four dimes). They took 3D images of it with a DSLR camera on a stacked imaging system. They described and drew it. Most importantly, they gave it a name and sent the information off to the international journal, Zootaxa, where several peer reviewers will determine once-and-for-all whether it's a new species. They should hear the news by August.

Until then, the organism's new Latin name—bestowed by White for its hairy appearance—cannot be disclosed.

"I'm very excited," White said. "I was even more excited to have a student here to work on it. It was a group effort. We both decided together that this was a new species."

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**It feels really nice to be teaching a new taxonomist how to do this. This is a really great example of the undergraduate research that we do here and a really nice way to show that students really are involved in research, and they're not just washing dishes in the lab.**

**- Dr. White**

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Early on freshman year, Sir approached White after a departmental meet-and-greet, where professors told students about their research. Not many undergraduates want to work with amphipods, so White was thrilled to have Sir onboard. She taught her how to dissect the small creatures, how to identify a species, how to draw and identify parts.

“

**...every day, she introduces me to something new.**

**- Sally Sir**

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Dr. White with Sir in the lab.

Sir spends 10 to 30 hours a week in the lab. From the start, she was hooked.

“I just thought they were just kind of neat little aquatic things I’d never seen before—something different than you’d come in contact with in your daily life. I just thought it was interesting. So, I met with Dr. White again and, every day,” Sir said, “she introduces me to something new.”

By sophomore year, Sir had helped single out and describe a completely new species.

She recalls the day they found the hairy little scud.

The team was studying the professor’s multiple collections from Japan. As a post-doctoral student, White had described 24

new species in Okinawa, an area she called “uncharted territory” for amphipods.

“Most people haven’t looked in a lot of habitats. If you look” for amphipods, White said, “you’ll find them.”

Her assortment of amphipods laid dormant for years, as White began a career in higher education at the University of Tampa. She joined Georgia College in 2019 and now uses her post-doctoral collection to teach Sir taxonomy, the science of classifying organisms.

Using dual-head microscopes, White and Sir simultaneously saw their unique specimen. It was notable for its feathery setae—or hairy bristles—which were more numerous than usual. It also had a leg without serrated or jagged edges.

The team knew at once they’d found something special. It stood out from the others in a “funky” way, Sir said.





It took weeks to verify. They scoured science literature and identification keys on amphipods. But they couldn't find anything else like it—which says a lot. Amphipods are part of a larger group called arthropods, which make up 75 percent of all animals on earth.

“Every paper and key that we used was a dead end,” White said. “It never matched the known species. So, after a lot of literature we decided it was, in fact, a new species.”



A student studies a research poster on amphipods.

Scuds—microscopic in length to as large as 5 inches—swim here and there unnoticed by most people. But they are vitally important. Their sudden disappearance from an area can be an environmental indicator of trouble—a new predator, toxin or pollutant in waters that could eventually affect the fish we eat.

“Amphipods are especially sensitive to toxins and pollutants in the environment. So, if there is

some type of new pollution,” White said, “they would show it, usually by dwindling numbers.”

This fascinates Sir as an environmental science major. Someday, she may want to be an amphipod taxonomist and keep an eye on the health of marine ecosystems.

She feels “incredibly lucky” to be at Georgia College, where undergraduate research—as early as freshman year—is encouraged. She’s learned to use identification keys, dissect and draw small organisms, illustrate and take images of amphipods. She’s comfortable with microscopes and more confident overall. Most importantly, White said, Sir has learned invaluable critical thinking skills, seeing research from step one through to publication.

She’s now helping White gather dissected parts of the new species for permanent storage at the National Museum of Nature and Science in Tokyo.

“It really kind of clicked,” Sir said. “I really love the learning and, every time I came in, I was just learning so much.”

It really fulfilled a lot of things I was looking for in research, and Dr. White is the best mentor I could ask for. She is so incredibly patient with me. She's just been really encouraging, and I've enjoyed it every day. It's been great.

- Sally Sir

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# News Stories Posted Friday June 4, 2021



## Environmental science and people skills learned at Georgia College prove useful for alumnus

[Alumni](#) : Friday June 4, 2021

Andy Davis, '13, took what he learned from Georgia College and AmeriCorps and ran with it. He started a new role in December 2020, as special projects coordinator for the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority (NRGRDA) in southern West Virginia. Now, he looks forward to learning more from the region.

"I like working in the community. Economic development provides a chance to hear people's stories, and, in a way, become part of them," he said. "I also enjoy helping folks find the resources they need to take whatever steps they're working towards, whether it's revitalization of a downtown, recruitment of industry or the creation of jobs—it's part of an ongoing story."

Davis and his staff work with public, private and non-profit organizations to support and promote economic and community development within four counties of southern West Virginia and across the broader Appalachian region. As special



projects coordinator, he helps manage projects that often intersect issues like environmental remediation, historic preservation, workforce development and economic diversification.

“I am excited to be working currently with our partners to ensure sustainable development around the recently designated New River Gorge National Park and Preserve in the heart of our region,” Davis said.

He feels his new role is a natural fit with his background in environmental sciences.

“I look forward to connecting the projects I'm working on with things I've seen before,” Davis said. “Also, in recognizing what makes these projects and communities unique and really promoting that.”



Andy Davis



Andy Davis (far left) and Fayette County Resource Coordinator Gabe Pena (far right) are pictured with Dartmouth College students touring southern West Virginia.

At Georgia College, he was in the Environmental Science Club. This kept him busy and led to activities outside the classroom, where Davis worked with other students and Georgia College staff on-campus initiatives. One such event was the Earth Fest celebration held on campus each year, in which the club hosted a week-

long series of events that were well attended.

“One particularly compelling activity was the campus waste audit,” he said. “People would come by to drop off garbage on campus. We weighed it, broke it down and then reported to campus what students and others were throwing away.”

This effort ultimately led to some of these greater initiatives on campus, like the creation of the campus green fee and the existence of an industrial-scale food composter.

“All the data was collected from the work we did,” said Davis. “It felt really good to know that our work was going towards a purpose.”

Belonging to the Environmental Science Club and learning alongside students, faculty and staff in the classroom provided him with various leadership opportunities, as well.

“Because we were able to apply our knowledge in practical ways, it allowed us to see ourselves as more than just students,” he said. “Leadership was the biggest thing I was able to take away from that experience.”

After Davis graduated, he worked with Georgia College staff and students on the “Skip the Curb” initiative—a pilot program they started through Keep Milledgeville-Baldwin Beautiful to collect and recycle materials that would’ve otherwise been thrown away at the end of the semester.

“We recognized a pattern, need and an opportunity, which was to reduce waste,” he said. “So we donated the items to the local Habitat for Humanity ReStore. A few years later, I understand the program was formally adopted by the Office of Sustainability at Georgia College.”

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**“My professors led me to believe, ‘I can do this.’ Whether it was biology, community ecology, sedimentology, geographic information systems, chemistry, hydrology, plant systematics, small-group communication or folklore—they all benefited me in my career. I really have every one of my professors to thank.”**

**- Andy Davis**

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After college, Davis served in AmeriCorps VISTA in West Virginia for two years. The program is designed to help alleviate poverty throughout the United States.



“The program was my ticket to try something new,” he said. “It’s a great chance to apply the knowledge and experience you have toward real issues that have been identified in real communities. Being in AmeriCorps is also a great bridge from higher education into the professional world.”

Every day, Davis applies the confidence he gained from his Georgia College professors to his role.

“My professors led me to believe, ‘I can do this,’” said Davis. “Whether it was biology, community ecology, sedimentology, geographic information systems, chemistry, hydrology, plant systematics, small-group communication or folklore—they all benefited me in my career. I really have every one of my professors to thank.”

Over the years and in his current role, he’s learned to find common ground in his interactions with elected leaders, civic groups, nonprofit organizations, economic development professionals, university employees and local businesses.

“Always consider the circumstances of why you’re talking with someone,” Davis said. “It’s always useful to think about what their personal and professional perspectives may be.”

For fun, he’s been a part-time whitewater rafting guide for 13 years. The trips range from six to 14 miles a day along the New and Gauley Rivers.



Andy Davis, pictured left, guides a whitewater rafting trip.

“The best part is getting to be a part of people experiencing and enjoying the outdoors. I get to nerd out a little bit too,” Davis said. “I’ll throw in some of the local ecology, geology and cultural history in the flatwater sections between the rapids.”

Day-in, day-out, he enjoys collaborating with community leaders and others working on projects to revitalize the economies of small towns. He also likes getting to show people “the ties between the man-made and natural world.”

“I think what I enjoy most about my career is getting to apply the lessons of history and a science-based education toward the decision-making processes of the present and the future,” Davis said. “I enjoy it, because I can approach everyday with the strong foundation that Georgia College and life have provided.”





## Championing safety in the lab for the sake of others

[Alumni](#) : Friday June 4, 2021

Amy Turns, '08, environmental, health and safety engineer —developed a passion for lab safety from her professors and by accident.

Now putting her skills to use at Lincoln, Nebraska's Zoetis, Inc.—the largest animal pharmaceutical manufacturer in the world—she learned the importance of lab safety when she was a sophomore taking inorganic chemistry.





Amy Turns at Zoetis, Inc.

"In the lab, I threw every solution I didn't need in a waste bottle," she said. "I just figured, it's okay. It's just a waste bottle. No, it wasn't safe. I definitely learned this the quick way. When it started smoking, I could feel the heat from the exothermic reaction."

That's when Turns realized the importance of safety and chemistry.

"They're not separate. Safety and chemistry are one of the same," she said. "I carried that with me throughout the rest of my time at Georgia College and well into my career."

Drs. Kenneth McGill and Catrena Lisse also made a significant impression on her. McGill was her advisor and research professor. And Lisse was her chemistry professor.

"Success is failing 99 times, but succeeding that one time," she said. "Dr. McGill used to say that all the time. We would research something and then go down this little rabbit hole and realize, well, if that doesn't work, it's OK. Let's start back over

from either the beginning or from the point of failure.”

Turns drew from the energy and passion Lisse exuberantly displayed in the classroom. Lisse inspired her to realize women can go far in the science field.

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**“In chemistry, there's a certain level of respect that comes from it that I've gained from my time at Georgia College, and also in the field that it can be both beautiful, but dangerous. I love getting people to understand the why behind working safe. That's my favorite part of my job.”**

**- Amy Turns**

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“We can rock it,” she said. “Dr. Lisse taught me there's strength in intelligence. That was a beautiful thing for me to learn as an 18, 19 and 20-year-old, growing up, trying to figure out my way in the world.”

Turns loved learning how women can flourish in a male-dominated field of chemistry.

“Dr. Lisse pulled me aside and said, ‘The beauty about being a strong woman is you can literally do anything you want,’” Turns said. “My professors taught us, as women in this field, it's going to be a hard, uphill battle, but we can do it with strength, dignity and grace.”

Turns belonged to the Women in Chemistry Alliance and the Chemistry Club. She also was a teaching assistant in the lab. Most of her time was spent in Herty Hall.

“I didn't see my apartment very often,” Turns said. “I saw more of my research laboratory, but I loved it. That was life. I worked and breathed chemistry there. And I absolutely wouldn't change it for anything.”

Her first job was as a lab process chemist at Lincoln Industries, which she loved. Turns was in charge of laboratory safety for the metal finishing company.

“The industrial manufacturing plant reminded me of why I got into chemistry,” she said. “The job was dirty, analytical and chemical-oriented.”

Although Turns loved the puzzle-piece and chemistry aspects of the job, she especially enjoyed championing safety. Since Turns was the only chemist on staff, she was the authority on chemical knowledge and interactions.



"It's one thing to go in to work and say, 'You need to wear safety glasses.' It's another thing to say, 'there's a reason for it,'" Turns said. "I broke it down for them on a chemical and biological level and also told them, because of that, these things will protect you. And if we can protect you from those things, it means you still get to go home to your family and live life."

She saw how many other people were making similar mistakes to the one she had made at Georgia College—not being safe around chemicals. Turns was compelled to address the unsafe work practices with her colleagues.

"I get that," she said. "Some people are unaware they need to take precautions, like wearing personal protective equipment and doing research on the chemicals involved and looking them up on the material safety data sheets."

In December, Turns got her master's degree in industrial hygiene, which is the practice of safety for the occupational worker.

Today, Turns is the expert in charge of wastewater and air safety at Zoetis, Inc., She likes when her colleagues ask her for safety advice.

"It's so fun getting people to understand why they can or can't do something because of safety," she said. "I've seen my colleagues get excited about safety too. I just love having that initiative and passion, and to be able to instill that in others is a great thing."

A typical day in the office for Turns starts with safety meetings with her client group to go over any personal protective equipment issues, injuries or accidents.

"This helps keep safety in the forefront of the operator's mind," she said. "If we've had accidents or injuries, we'll do an investigation including the area or personal assessments."

Turns maintains safety of the company's wastewater and air emissions. She makes sure the dust collectors are working to collect all of the active



Amy Turns suits up in Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training in 2020.

pharmaceutical ingredients.

"We want to be sure that we're capturing those, because a lot of those can be aquatic and human toxins," she said. "The same goes for water emissions. If someone rinses a vial that has a toxin in it, we would contaminate our wastewater, because that will go out to the river."

Her afternoons are spent checking in with employees to make sure they're working safe in the mile-and-a-half long facility.

"A lot of times people won't necessarily come to me, but if I go to them, they'll speak up about different safety concerns or ideas they have," she said. "I treat those as learning experiences."

After that, Turns meets with her colleague in charge of hazardous waste and director to apprise them of any safety issues.

Turns leads by example, just as her professors taught her.

"In chemistry, there's a certain level of respect that comes from it that I've gained from my time at Georgia College, and also in the field that it can be both beautiful, but dangerous," she said. "I love getting people to understand the why behind working safe. That's my favorite part of my job."

Turns feels that the last 12 years in her career have been amazing. She's grateful for the influence her professors had on her success.

"Sometimes there's beauty that comes from failure," Turns said. "It's important to have an open-minded perspective where if you fail, get back up and try something new."



Amy Turns at work as an environmental, health and safety engineer.







## **Limitless opportunities for the Georgia College community to experience the world**

**[International Education Center](#)** : Friday June 4, 2021

Border-Free GC leverages the global reach of technology to put the world at the finger-tips of students, faculty and staff. With endless possibilities, they have the opportunity to engage with individuals across the globe, without the barriers associated with physical travel.

The International Education Center (IEC) has teamed with GC faculty and universities and other entities worldwide to create border-free study abroad programs, classrooms and academic programming, plus student development, staff and professional development.

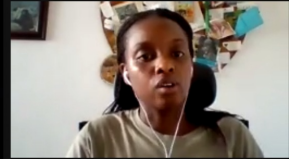


## CONCLUSION

- We did not only successfully identified fragments of **the studied key food plants** in mountain gorilla fecal samples, but also the **plant parts** where the fragments were from.



*Mountain gorilla feeding on Galium sp. Photo: Gudula Nyirandayambaje*



Marie Fidele Tuyisenge of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund presents to Dr. Melanie Devore's Biology-4580 class.

Border-Free GC is a powerful concept, with “border” understood here not only in the sense of a boundary separating geographical entities, but also in the sense of a barrier to be surpassed or, ideally eliminated.

“Border-Free GC is designed to provide access to international experiences and opportunities to all, and especially to those who can benefit most,” said Dr. James Callaghan, senior international officer, assistant vice-president for international education and director of the International Education Center.

“Access is freed from barriers of all sorts whether actual—such as, financial, disabilities/physical mobility or time and responsibility constraints—or perceived,” he said. “Additionally, as a framework for internationalization embracing fully six categories of participation, and not just study abroad—and which makes it, therefore, utterly unique to my knowledge—it makes the goal of every GC student having an international experience before they graduate fully achievable.”

Although he had been working towards border-free since the 1990s, what crystalized the full concept for Callaghan was the period in 2020 when the pandemic was putting a crushing grip on things, forcing study abroad programs to shut down.

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**“The IEC will not only help you secure funding but will work with any faculty interested in developing a truly border-free experience in their classroom. GC’s IEC is a leader in this mode of instruction and the only organization, to my knowledge, openly building a border-free program of this scope.”**

**- Dr. Melanie DeVore**

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“At that very same time, our international students were literally running for planes to get home before everything closed,” he said. “In our highly-mobile world, borders are often just dotted lines on paper, no? That week, impenetrable 40,000-foot-tall dotted lines were suddenly everywhere. One student’s home nation border closed right away, and she could not go home. I thought to myself, ‘What if she had never had to leave home?’”

That’s when International realized that not only could mobility no longer be taken for granted, but that through now matured technologies, an opportunity existed to create and expand international opportunities of all sorts—and offer them to more diverse populations.

Border-free opportunities are also available not only to students and faculty but to staff, as well as the wider regional and global community through conferences, workshops, symposia and more.

“Through Border-Free GC, the Georgia College community has access to far-reaching opportunities like conferences and workshops for a broad audience,” said Liz Havey, assistant director of Education Abroad. “For example, the [African Writers Festival](#) in February, co-sponsored with the Creative Writing program and the English Department, was a border-free event at Georgia College that truly embodies the global nature of the initiative.”

Dr. Chika Unigwe, assistant professor of creative writing, co-hosted the virtual festival with Dr. Kerry Neville. They brought together many globally-prominent African writers who shared their passion for critical issues and their works with participants.

“It exposed the students to some of the best contemporary writers, thinkers and poets from the African continent,” Unigwe said. “An event like this fosters an understanding across borders at a time when the world is arguably, more polarized than it has been in a long time and contributes to the expansion of our world(s). Our theme was connections and illumination, and I am pleased we achieved both.”



**Maaza Mengiste (Ethiopian-American) 2020 Literature Award winner, American Academy of Arts and Letters; participates in the Georgia College African Writers Festival in February.**

Dr. Melanie DeVore, professor of biological sciences, held a border-free Maymester class, “GC2Y 10 Plants that Changed the World.” She also taught another border-free class—Biology 4580 with Marie Fidele Tuyisenge, a young botanist and conservationist who works as a researcher in the biodiversity program at the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund in Rwanda.

“Marie Fidele was able to join the class from Rwanda and present to my students in real time,” said DeVore. “Several of my colleagues from other institutions and organizations around the nation also joined us to chime in with their expertise.”

DeVore feels that border-free classes, events and programs provide experiences and produce authentic products, which can be used by students in portfolios or interviews to demonstrate competencies obtained in their studies.

“The IEC will not only help you secure funding but will work with any faculty interested in developing a truly border-free experience in their classroom,” DeVore said. “GC’s IEC is a leader in this mode of instruction and the only organization, to my knowledge, openly building a border-free program of this scope.”

Another recent border-free offering included Georgia College management information students collaborating with University of West Georgia and University of Muenster students in Germany to present a solution to a simulated worldwide problem. The case was set up by Professor Armin Stein in Germany, through his

relationship with the company that provided the case study.

“We plan to do this every year, but in 2022, we’ll travel to the Netherlands, Germany and France. The collaboration project will take place while we’re in Germany,” said Dr. Joy Godin, associate professor of management information systems. “Even though the session was virtual this year, we can do pretty much anything we can do when we travel.”

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**“Border-Free GC can benefit not only students, but also faculty, staff and our community. I hope people will seek out or create—and we are happy to help—border-free opportunities, that they will enjoy those experiences, see and understand the world and its wonderful diversity in an enhanced way and—to paraphrase Vitruvius—leave a more lasting remembrance for all as a result.”**

**- Dr. James Callaghan**

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Looking ahead, the IEC is also in talks with partners abroad to develop shared virtual spaces for Georgia College employees to discuss and learn more about different professional topics that pertain to our work in higher education, including possible collaborative training programs. Soon, colleagues will be able to connect abroad to explore in-depth topics of interest or concern and interact with others by sharing opinions and solutions.

The IEC is happy to assist faculty, students and staff in connecting with colleagues and exchange partners and elsewhere, as well as other professional contacts throughout the world. Whether it’s the pursuit of academic studies, collaborative research or cross-cultural perspectives on day-to-day tasks, Border-Free GC is a great way to evolve, grow and expand knowledge, plus gain valuable insight and solutions.

“My goal is for every GC student to graduate with some kind of international experience,” said Havey. “Ultimately, I hope those students who engage in a border-free experience will seek out physical travel either as part of a study or internship abroad experience or even personally or in their future careers.”

“Border-Free GC can benefit not only students, but also faculty, staff and our community,” said Callaghan. “I hope people will seek out or create—and we are happy to help—border-free opportunities, that they will enjoy those experiences, see and understand the world and its wonderful diversity in an enhanced way and—to paraphrase Vitruvius—leave a more lasting remembrance for all as a result.”

[Learn more about Border-Free GC.](#)





## Alumni's historic preservation makes HGTV show

[Alumni](#) : Friday June 4, 2021

Ross Sheppard's, '13, and Jacob Hawkins', '14, investment has made an impact on the southern area of Milledgeville. So much so, their renovation to the [c. 1838 Samuel Rockwell House](#) was broadcast May 1, 2021, on [HGTV's "Life Under Renovation"](#) with additional episodes available on Discovery+streaming app.

The casting director in Atlanta messaged Sheppard on Instagram, because she'd been following his page throughout the early stages of renovation.





Ross Sheppard

“She reached out to me as a realtor asking if I knew of a client who would be a good fit for the show,” said Sheppard. “I mentioned we were about to start the second phase, and she said, ‘That’ll be great. Your house will be perfect for this.’ So, we made the casting tapes.”

Sheppard’s project was then selected for the “Life Under Renovation” show.

“It’s been fun,” said Hawkins. “We love Milledgeville, and Ross is from here. He’s a big salesman—he sold me on reinvesting in Milledgeville.”

Hawkins was originally looking to invest in homes in Atlanta. However, when Sheppard, a real estate broker and historic preservationist, approached Hawkins about investing in the Rockwell House, Hawkins, who respects Sheppard for his business acumen, said “yes.”

At first, they thought it was a crazy idea, but soon realized investing in the Rockwell House would have a significant impact on the town.

“We have a special connection with Milledgeville’s history, and the south side has as many important places as the rest of the city,” said Hawkins. “But there’s a severe lack of investment. Rockwell was passed over by many, but we envisioned a bustling pillar of activity for the Midway community.”



“The closing of Milledgeville’s only historic inn last summer was a big concern for us too, said Sheppard. There’s a huge need for a flexible inn and event space for everyone from parents and alumni visiting to students gathering and celebrating. It’s a unique place for people to explore Milledgeville’s past and present.”

[Before the renovation, the house was dilapidated.](#)

“I really wasn’t thinking we’d do this,” said Hawkins. “Then, Ross told me to research the history of the house. So I started diving into the past, and I absolutely fell in love with it.”



Jacob Hawkins

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**“Both Ross and I have strong connections to historic preservation. We’ve grown up and lived in communities that have seen damage to their historic fabric. We want to help preserve the vibrant histories of Milledgeville while creating space for them to thrive in today’s world.”**

**- Jacob Hawkins**

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He discovered it was once the home of Georgia Governor Herschel Johnson, who led the state’s anti-secession movement and was also a vice presidential nominee. There was even a state senator who lived in the house.

“Both Ross and I have strong connections to historic preservation,” said Hawkins. “We’ve grown up and lived in communities that have seen damage to their historic fabric. We want to help preserve the vibrant histories of Milledgeville while creating space for them to thrive in today’s world.”

Although Hawkins wasn’t a part of the HGTV show, he’s an investor in the project, among his other endeavors. Former Georgia College Professor Dr. Scaffidi instilled in him the importance of being a visionary, and he puts that energy into a lot of different projects. Hawkins is still in contact with him today. He’s also learned by seeing what Sheppard’s vision was and helping him get there. In addition to

investing in the Samuel Rockwell House, Hawkins owns a few businesses, plus he's an executive director for a charitable foundation.



(Left to right) Ross Sheppard, Jacob Hawkins and Will Walker at the pre-renovated c. 1838 Samuel Rockwell House in Milledgeville.

After earning his graduate degree in historic preservation from the University of Georgia, Sheppard sought out investment opportunities in historic homes.

"This is just literally the intersection of everything that I love—Milledgeville, preservation and real estate," he said. "I saw a unique opportunity in this house. Rockwell had many close calls that almost resulted in its destruction, and we could save it again while building a future for the property that supported the surrounding community."



Sheppard and his partners have already bought a couple of houses across the street from the Samuel Rockwell House and would like to buy more to continue investing in the existing community.

"We thought this would be a good anchor business for the immediate proximity of this house," said Sheppard. "Anything anyone does contributes to the snowball effect that's happening in this neighborhood. So, doing something big like this in the community, nobody can overlook it, right? It can draw attention to this part of town in an effective way."

"We saw this as an opportunity," he said. "We could save the priceless architectural features of the home, open the property to the entire community and renew interest in an undersupported community of Milledgeville."

Sheppard felt compelled to turn this house into a treasure for all to enjoy. So far, several parents of Georgia College students have stayed at the Rockwell House. One family even rented the entire house for graduation.

"It's an amazing resource for the Georgia College community too," he said. "I felt a sense of duty to do that."

Sheppard and his team worked on the house in two phases. The first phase involved getting the house habitable. The second phase was recorded for the show.

"Last summer, we started another 10-month renovation and finished everything," said Sheppard. "That's what you'll see on the show. The pretty things people want to see like the kitchen, paint, furniture and landscaping."

Hawkins and Sheppard hired mostly local people to work on the house, like the Brick Mason Mr. Woody, who was featured in the show. He's done masonry for over 30 years and did all of the home's brick work.

"There was a lot, because historic bricks are really soft and will deteriorate," said Sheppard. "They just don't last like modern bricks do. Mr. Woody grew up around there. And it's really fun to hear him say, 'I've been driving by this house for my whole life. Now to get to participate in saving it.'"



The post-renovated c. 1838 Samuel Rockwell House.

They also had a historic preservation student research and write blogs about the house, which will appear on the website.

The work crew included approximately four exterior and four interior painters, two plaster and three woodwork workers, three people who worked on the 3-D printing to replicate some handmade moldings, three tile workers, four plumbing crew members to replace all of the plumbing, one carpet person, two preservation consultants and Sheppard and 10 of his friends who did all of the floor sanding.

It's built in the same year and way as Georgia's Old Governor's Mansion was—timber framed on a granite foundation. The outside color was also indicative of the time period.

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**“Many people see old homes—especially in Rockwell’s previous condition—and think it’s an insurmountable task. It’s not easy, but saving homes like this can be done with a combination of DIY and skilled labor. It was really fun to share my preservation expertise with the crew and audience and show that anyone**

can do this important work.”

- Ross Sheppard

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“Yellow is the original color scheme we discovered in an analysis,” said Sheppard. “We didn’t just choose to paint it yellow. It was more common than most people think for houses not to be white. Most houses were not white until the early 20th century.”

Sheppard thought the best part of the HGTV experience was sharing the preservation process with a national audience.

“Many people see old homes—especially in Rockwell’s previous condition—and think it’s an insurmountable task,” he said. “It’s not easy, but saving homes like this can be done with a combination of DIY and skilled labor. It was really fun to share my preservation expertise with the crew and audience and show that anyone can do this important work.”

Sheppard has been in real estate since 2008—when he was 18 years old and bought his first home at 19 for \$100,000. He rented the other rooms to his friends, and that paid for his mortgage. Since then, he’s followed his passion for real estate.

His interest in historic preservation began when he belonged to the Watson-Brown Foundation Junior Board of Trustees, Milledgeville Chapter at Georgia College—where a panel of high school students from central Georgia research, fund and support historic preservation projects in the Milledgeville area. The board also functions as part of the educational programming at Georgia’s Old Governor’s Mansion.

“Matt Davis, ’02, ’04, was my first preservation mentor,” Sheppard said. “He encouraged me to not pursue preservation as a career, but to incorporate it into what I was already leaning towards, which is exactly what I ended up doing.”

“I really credit Matt with what I’m doing now, because who knows if I would’ve stumbled on preservation or falling in love with it if I hadn’t had that experience,” he said. “So being involved in Georgia’s Old Governor’s Mansion and seeing Matt become a success story really set an example for me.”

At that time, Davis was the graduate assistant during the restoration to the Old Governor’s Mansion and served as curator during Sheppard’s time on the Junior Board. He currently serves as director of Historic Museums at Georgia College.

“Matt planted the seed for me there to become a preservationist,” Sheppard said.

When Sheppard served as a Georgia College Alumni Board member, he sponsored an endowed scholarship. Now, he would like to use the Samuel Rockwell House as a way of raising funds for the scholarship.

“We want to use the house as an economic engine that’s a key piece of the Hardwick community infrastructure,” he said. “We’re working on ways for Rockwell to support community members through access and continued financial investments, like a scholarship for a student from Hardwick.”



# News Stories Posted Monday June 14, 2021



## Class of 2025: Accomplished student is drawn to medical field

[Biology & Environmental Sciences, Department of](#): Monday June 14, 2021

Henry "Hank" Harbin

Henry "Hank" Harbin is well accomplished. The biology/pre-med major was named salutatorian and STAR student of his graduating class and Mr. Southwest Georgia Academy by the entire school.

He's also no stranger to Georgia College. The Colquitt, Georgia, native attended the Hugh O'Brien Youth Leadership Conference held at the university the summer before his junior year in high school. As Harbin walked on campus, he gave serious thought to attending Georgia College.

"Fast forward to my senior year. I had my mind set on another college, but then I remembered GC," Harbin said. "So, I had a tour where I was shown around by my amazing Admissions Counselor Brittany Bryan. After that tour, I just had this gut feeling that Georgia College felt like home. I could truly envision myself there."

He is grateful for all he achieved from his hard work in high school.

“I knew I had spent so much time and effort in studying and making sure I made good grades,” Harbin said. “To know my hard work paid off truly gave me an empowering feeling that if I work hard enough, I can accomplish great things.”



Hank Harbin, Mr. Southwest Georgia Academy

And, he continues to accomplish great things at Georgia College, where Harbin received the Trustee Scholarship. His steadfast work ethic helped him obtain the scholarship. The process included two stages. First, he was paired with a few student competitors and a faculty member to have a meaningful discussion about their personal thoughts on a designated short story.

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**“So far, I’ve only met a few faculty members, but they all seem incredibly kind and care about the success of their students. I also am looking forward to meeting other students and forming close bonds that will last a lifetime.”**

**- Hank Harbin**

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“After that, I had an interview with two incredibly friendly faculty members—Drs. Brian Newsome and Kelly Manning Massey—in which I was asked some personal questions like what goals I have in life, etc.,” said Harbin. “I am very humbled to say that I was one of the very few from the hundreds of applicants to receive the highest scholarship offered at Georgia College.”

Harbin, who comes from a small town, looks most forward to meeting new people from various backgrounds and cultures at Georgia College.

“So far, I’ve only met a few faculty members, but they all seem incredibly kind and care about the success of their students,” he said. “I also am looking forward to meeting other students and forming close bonds that will last a lifetime.”

Although Harbin is unclear which route he’ll take after college, he’s particularly drawn to the medical field.



“I’ve shadowed numerous surgeries at my local hospital, and the thought of being able to help someone in such a way that it can save their life fills me with so much joy and excitement,” he said. “I believe with that enthusiasm I would actually enjoy my job – which is a really big deal.”



Hank Harbin

# News Stories Posted Thursday June 24, 2021



## New database offers support for faculty award applications

[Center for Teaching & Learning](#) : Thursday June 24, 2021

For the past year, Dr. Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, associate professor of Music and Faculty Success coordinator, and Dr. Steve Elliott-Gower, associate professor of Political Science, have been busy establishing an extensive database of over 850 grants, fellowships and awards. And that number is expected to grow to over 1,000 by the end of the summer.

"It's not only about creating a website or a database; it's about creating a culture in which faculty are encouraged and supported as they research and apply for awards," said Dr. Jim Berger, director, Center for Teaching and Learning. "Dana and Steve's goal is to make faculty aware of opportunities that are available, and make the awards database a tool to assist faculty in that process."

The database is part of the Faculty Awards initiative to



Dr. Dana Gorzelany-

promote external faculty awards and assist them in receiving the recognition and professional development that come with such awards. Faculty can also suggest awards to include in the database.

Mostak

“While supporting faculty as they apply for awards certainly requires excellent writing, editing and networking skills, there isn’t a blueprint for how to get the job done,” said Berger. “It was Steve’s idea to model the Faculty Awards initiative on the success of the National Scholarships Office at Georgia College.”

The awards database is geared to efficiently connect faculty to opportunities for funding Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, research, gaining professional visibility and collaborating with individuals doing similar work.



Dr. Steve Elliott-Gower



Georgia College has a variety of affiliations.

After some research, Gorzelany-Mostak and Elliott-Gower discovered that Georgia College is one of the few institutions to have an awards database in such a streamlined format which is tailored to the university's mission.



“Dana and Steve are available to assist applicants in refining their writing and in compiling materials,” said Berger. “Overall, the success of the university depends on the success of its faculty, the development of the awards database and the efforts of Dana and Steve, who push the institution towards that ever-present goal of national preeminence.”

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**“Being a new faculty member with no experience of how to apply for an award, I relied on her expertise. Dr. Gorzelany-Mostak was a lifesaver.”**

**- Angela Roberts**

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The application process can forward one’s career and increase professional visibility in a way other types of scholarly activities do not.

“Just going through the application process helps faculty clarify their professional development goals,” said Elliott-Gower, “and in the case of recognition awards, reflect upon their professional journey.”

Angela Roberts, lecturer of nursing, applied for a national Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. She found Gorzelany-Mostak extremely helpful in the application process.

“She helped me format my CV to bring it to professional standards,” said Roberts. “She also critiqued my personal statement, so I stayed within the required guidelines and submitted my information to the award committee. Dr. Gorzelany-Mostak was quick to respond to my emails and even provided template letters to send my faculty requesting letters of recommendation for submission.”

“Being a new faculty member with no experience of how to apply for an award, I relied on her expertise,” Roberts said. “Dr. Gorzelany-Mostak was a lifesaver.”

Dr. Rob Sumowski, associate professor of special education and program coordinator for the Master of Education and Education Specialist programs in the Lounsbury College of Education, was recently named the winner of the Charles Dunn Award for Faculty from the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC).

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**“This faculty is a collection of amazing individuals and impassioned teachers. It**

is truly humbling to be surrounded by teaching and learning at the level one finds here every day. It is profound. In fact, it's magic."

- Dr. Rob Sumowski

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After being nominated for the award, Sumowski was asked to forward information on his approach to building relationships with students to Elliott-Gower, who helped in the application process.

"The assistance I received made all of the difference," said Sumowski. "Dr. Elliott-Gower gathered information from the various documents I provided him, and then we had an extended conversation prior to his penning the university-level nomination. He is a master of his craft."

Regarding awards, Sumowski learned from World War II Veteran Judge Taylor Phillips, who was awarded the Navy Cross, that about half of a successful nomination lies in the merit of whatever was achieved while the other half involves how well the achievement is written up.

"Upon my receipt of the award, my first thanks were to Steve," he said. "The last thing one thinks about when attempting to reach students is an award. Watching my graduates enter the field and become wildly successful is enough for me. Still, I was humbled beyond belief to be recognized nationally, especially coming from a faculty as talented as the one here at Georgia College. I stand grateful."

Sumowski appreciates that Georgia College believes in the importance of institutional memory.

"This faculty is a collection of amazing individuals and impassioned teachers," he said. "It is truly humbling to be surrounded by teaching and learning at the level one finds here every day. It is profound. In fact, it's magic."

For more information, [check out the External Grants, Awards and Fellowships page on CTL's website](#), which features an Awards Spotlight, Previous Award Winners, and a link to the searchable GC awards database. For support during the application process, please contact [Gorzelay-Mostak](#) and [Elliott-Gower](#).