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Future teachers experience what it’s like to have dyslexia, learn specialized reading techniques

Teacher Education, Department of : Wednesday November 3, 2021

Defined as a language-based learning disability, dyslexia can take on many forms. Traditionally, it’s thought of as flipping similar letters like b and d. Georgia College junior early childhood majors recently learned it’s much more than that.

In small groups, they filtered through stations presenting different challenges associated with dyslexia.

In one scenario, students had to cover their non-dominant hand and use the reflection from a mirror to write certain things. At another station, they were asked to follow verbal directions while background noise and side conversations muffled what was said.

Through all six of the 10-minute sessions, the students facilitating—who acted as...
Students write using the mirror.

teachers—hurried the participants and said things like, “If you can’t do this, you won’t move on to third grade.”

“The whole point was that we were supposed to be really mean and create like a worst-case scenario for the students that were taking our auditory spelling test,” said junior Grace Pifer, early childhood education major and student facilitator for the training. “So, I basically just recreated classrooms that I had been in as a kid when I was labeled a ‘problem’ for being disruptive.

After multiple sessions for over an hour, the teacher candidates reported feeling mentally exhausted, frustrated and even embarrassed they couldn’t do some of the tasks.

“I did get really frustrated. I understand why kids want to quit, and why they act out in class.”

- Junior Rilie Edenfield

“It was an eye-opening experience because I didn’t know how common dyslexia is,” said junior Rilie Edenfield. “I did get really frustrated. I understand why kids want to quit, and why they act out in class.”

Connecting those dots is exactly why this training is important.

“My number one goal is they would realize that students are not lazy or incompetent, but instead that they look and dive deeper into the whole child,” said Stephanie Starr, ’09, who is a structured literacy, dyslexia interventionist.

Starr received her undergraduate degree in early childhood education from Georgia College. After pursuing her master’s degree and specialized dyslexia training, she started her own tutoring business.
“Dyslexia does not have anything to do with IQ. In fact, I would argue, the students I work with that have dyslexia are really brilliant and do really amazing things,” said Starr. “They just aren’t able to express it in written format or at least not without some support.”

She worked with Dr. Stacy Schwartz, professor of Early Childhood Education, to secure two rounds of grant funding from the International Dyslexia Association—Georgia Branch to support the simulations and equipment to use in classrooms to help struggling children.

“The first year of the grant we bought materials to help with the tactile nature of learning—tools children can write with and touch, like writing on the bumpy board or in sand,” said Schwartz. “We also bought the kit that allows us to do the dyslexia simulation.”

The grants also funded REAP (Reading is Essential for All People) training for all early childhood majors over the last three years. A non-profit organization dedicated to improving reading proficiency in Georgia public school students, REAP provides public school teachers with specialized training in reading instruction called structured literacy. Early childhood majors will graduate with approximately 50 hours in structured literacy training.

“This makes our students very marketable because they’re going to counties where they may not have had the time yet, especially now with COVID, to get all their teachers trained,” said Schwartz. “When applying for jobs, our students are able to talk about the fact that they are trained in structured literacy and have been trained through REAP.”

For junior Amelia Herbert, the training especially hits home. Diagnosed with
dyslexia as a child, she knows first-hand the challenges kids can face at school.

“I think it’s a gift, and I have really embraced it,” said Herbert. “But people have always said, ‘Having dyslexia must be so easy for you because you get accommodations, and you get that extra help from people.’ I actually work 10 times harder than the average person. That's been really hard, but I found ways to cope with it.”

She brings her experience dealing with dyslexia into her future classroom and hopes to help children who face similar challenges.

“When I was diagnosed with dyslexia, I decided I wanted to help other kids who have issues learning to not hate school like I did,” said Herbert. “I want school to be like a safe space for them.

Understanding their future students’ needs and the best way to provide help is one of the primary goals for Starr and Schwartz. Through their experience, they also hope the teacher candidates pass along their knowledge to others.

“We hope they take this simulation to their host schools and are able to offer a little mini-training on this,” said Starr.
Graduate award recipients take studies overseas

In 2020, Georgia College graduates Amara Tennessee and Cain Gantt each received awards for post-graduate study that would take them out of the country during a time of tightening travel regulations in the midst of the global pandemic. Both have since been carrying on their studies as Covid continues to create obstacles to overcome as well as new opportunities to learn. “Obviously, the pandemic put a pause on the program and has thrust Fulbright into a new format of teaching, but I wouldn’t trade this opportunity for anything,” Tennessee said.

Tennessee received a Fulbright to teach English in Columbia at la Universidad de Boyacá through May of 2022, “Many of the courses at my university are still online due to the pandemic,” she said, “the situation is teaching me to be adaptable and patient as we navigate this online learning platform together.” Tennessee received the news that she had won the Fulbright scholarship while walking her dog shortly after the national shutdown went into effect, “I remember the news bringing me to my knees while I cried,” she said.
“Obviously, the pandemic put a pause on the program and has thrust Fulbright into a new format of teaching, but I wouldn’t trade this opportunity for anything.”
- Amara Tennessee

Cain Gantt is in a similar situation at the Universität Hamburg in Germany, having been awarded a Study Scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) award (Germany’s equivalent to the Fulbright) last year. “It has been a unique set of challenges to adapt from in-person undergraduate studies at the relatively small GC to online graduate-level courses at the very large Universität Hamburg,” Gantt said. He’s currently working on getting his Master’s in Mathematical Physics and will be in Germany throughout the duration of his graduate work.

He was notified of his acceptance in August of 2020, before he’d even finished the application process to the university, “All of the time in between was nerve-racking, not least due to the uncertainty the pandemic introduced,” he said.

However, despite the disruption that the pandemic has caused to overseas learning, it has done little to dissuade his enthusiasm for learning the culture. “I have no experience with the German education system outside of the pandemic,” he said, “my classes over the winter ‘20/’21 and summer ‘21 semesters were taught entirely online, which has been a challenge to adapt. However, this winter semester (mid-October through end of January) will have in-person and hybrid classes for the first time, and I am excited to meet my colleagues!”

Both Tennessee and Gantt both say that studying abroad continues to be a tremendous and worthwhile investment in their future despite the impediments of Covid. “I cannot overstate how influential my time abroad has been on helping me expand my perspective on the world,” Gantt said. Tennessee agreed, “traveling provides the opportunity to see and enjoy so many other places,” she said, “feel the fear and do it anyway.”
In addition to how much both have learned of their respective countries of study, they both credit the National Scholarships Office with its help in finding and processing their applications. “The office assisted me in selecting a county to apply to, understanding the application process, reviewing each of my application essays and more,” said Tennessee. Gantt added, “Ms. Whiteside (National Scholarship Office Coordinator Anna Whiteside) has been an invaluable resource for me over the years... By far, the most salient thing is her seemingly endless ability to revise draft after draft of application cover letters and personal statements. This sort of writing used to be a weak point of mine. Her feedback over countless applications has taught me how to stay short-and-sweet and on-topic while highlighting the aspects of my experiences that are most relevant for each individual application.”

Despite the challenges that the pandemic has placed in their way, many students are still finding ways to travel and learn abroad. The National Scholarship Office is the best place to start for students interested in expanding their reach beyond the states after graduating and overcoming any obstacle that might stand in their way, no matter the size.
Teacher of the Year provides students with real-world experiences

Northview High School 2020-2021 Teacher of the Year Meredith Meaders Evans, ’12, ’13, believes in giving her students real-world learning applications. She projects a passion for journalism to her students, who benefit from her lessons to become self-starters.

Evans teaches American literature, journalism and broadcast journalism—a new class that she created this year.

“I’m loving this class,” she said. “We’re learning how to create podcasts, film them and do different styles of broadcast journalism. The students are learning all kinds of real-world journalism techniques and posting those online through Apple,
Meredith Evans holds the Teacher of the Year plaque, which bears her name, for Northview High School.

Students lead the journalism classes.

“They’re learning everything from ad sales to printing a newspaper to creating an online newspaper publication,” Evans said.

This is by far her favorite class. Evans guides students as they work with the school’s national award-winning newspaper “The Messenger.” Since the COVID-19 pandemic, this newspaper has gone completely online, winning 44 awards, last year alone.

“These students work hard and are rocking it,” she said. “They're amazing.”
For Evans, the most impactful experience in the classroom happened in early 2020.

“Before we shut down during COVID, my newspaper class was printing actual newspapers,” she said. “Within one week my editorial staff of 10 to 12 students came together and created a website with different news outlets, where we could still report the news.”

The students were living in different places and interviewed subjects from their homes. They also designed, wrote and edited the newspaper online.

“Most of all, I want for my students to be good humans by going out into the world and be difference makers,” Evans said. “I want them to know that they have a voice, and that their voice is powerful.”

- Meredith Evans

“I informed the students that they have other things to do, so we can stop the newspaper,” Evans said. “They said, ‘No, this is the news. This is the time for us to report it.’”

“That was so uplifting for me, because, as teachers, we always hope we're making a difference,” she said. “For our kids to take charge like this was an incredible moment.”

Dr. Chris Greer’s technology in education class at Georgia College made a strong impression on Evans. She applies what she learned from that class to her lesson plans today.

“Technology is vital to teaching, especially with the way our world has been with the pandemic,” Evans said. “I try different ways of doing things and incorporating new kinds of lessons using technology.”

Greer’s class exposed Evans to many possibilities so she could show students how to create a website and online portfolios to better prepare them for the working world.
Meredith Evans teaches a student how to edit a podcast.

“I've actually taught students how to use online portfolios in my newspaper class,” Evans said. “And I taught this to my honors classes a few years ago because it gave students a portfolio to take with them to college or use for a resume. They can put all of their work in it, including photos, videos and articles they write for my newspaper class and place it on a public domain site.”

Evans always explains to her students the purpose behind assignments. That allows them to see the correlation between real-world application and things that matter to them. Some students told her they got a job because of her lessons on interviewing, resume and cover letter writing.

“It's really cool for my students to learn real-life skills,” Evans said. “As much as I would love for them to write the perfect paper, I think that making sure they know how to go out into the world and do different things to find good jobs is equally important.”

Ultimately, she hopes students will use their passion to reach their goals.

“Most of all, I want for my students to be good humans by going out into the world and be difference makers,” Evans said. “I want them to know that they have a voice, and that their voice is powerful.”
Since Evans has been teaching, she’s amazed at how students push their abilities to the limits.

“Kids are so much more capable than the world sometimes gives them credit for,” Evans said. “Getting to watch them apply those things and see that reward for themselves is awesome.”
Lucas Newton, ’12, believes outdoor education is more important than ever, considering most students were stuck learning behind a computer during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He is the director of Kanuga’s Mountain Trail Outdoor School—a 1,400-acre outdoor classroom located in Hendersonville, North Carolina. Newton is in charge of their educational programs, budgeting, risk management and hiring and training of staff.

He has facilitated outdoor experiences for students/campers since 2003 and also serves as an adjunct instructor for the Wilderness Leadership and Experiential Education program at Brevard College.

His students appreciate the hands-on experience they get from learning about nature and its vital role in the world. And it shows.
Lucas Newton and his students discuss sourwood trees and how to identify them.

“I've had a lot of personal experience facilitating backpacking, mountain biking and rock climbing,” Newton said. “But Dr. Will Hobbs’ class at Georgia College really taught me how to teach and connect with students in the outdoors and bring them to a place where they feel comfortable.”

His favorite class was Principles of Field Leadership taught by Hobbs.

“My path led me to Georgia College to get my master's degree, and I’ve had so many great connections with kids and just being outdoors,” Newton said. “I'm just grateful that I've discovered something I'm not only passionate about, but something that's for the betterment of education and the world.”

- Lucas Newton

“That class really opened my eyes to what experiential education can be,” he said.
Lucas Newton instructs students about how to use a small type of wood (kindling) to start a fire.

“Dr. Hobbs put the onus on students to come up with the curriculum and design the class, making it not so focused on the teacher as the bearer of all knowledge.”

Newton was teaching even before receiving his master's degree from Georgia College. But he didn’t realize he could be more effective in educating others about the outdoors until he experienced Hobbs’ class.

“Dr. Hobbs really emphasized the student-first learning aspect of it,” Newton said. “That was an eye-opening experience that taught me you can learn from your students, as well, because he would give us the opportunity to plan our trips.”

“I see him as a professor—the first one to be like, ‘I don't know all the answers,’” Newton said.

The class went on a wilderness trip to Oconee National Forest near Monticello, Georgia. Then, for their second trip, Hobbs informed them they could go anywhere they wanted to, including flying to Utah. The students chose the Big South Fork recreation area in Kentucky, where they did lessons for seven days. To this day, Newton wishes he could take this course again because of the experiences he now applies to his work.

Newton starts his days welcoming approximately 100 students to Mountain Trail Outdoor School. He oversees staff to make sure they’re able to facilitate this experience for the students. At the school, they conduct two, three-hour classes during the day. The classes include forest ecology, canoeing, geology and more.

“The students really take these classes seriously,” Newton said. “It's that special kind of connection to nature and others because they don't get a lot of that in school.”

He developed a nature explorers’ program for home-schooled children ages four to 12 years on Tuesday afternoons. Newton told the students to disassemble a beaver dam one day, but also led a discussion about the flood damage a beaver dam can cause.
“Just seeing these kids in the outdoors and some of the things that they say and do just cracks me up,” he said. “The kids were in the creek just ripping apart this beaver dam. This little girl, Priscilla, said, ‘this is the best day ever.’”

“This really just made my heart happy,” Newton said.

“ Seeing kids being able to play outdoors has really been missing as far as social and emotional learning goes,” Newton said. “For the past year-and-a-half I just feel bad for kids having to learn behind computer screens at such a young age for extensive periods of time.”

The value he sees in outdoor learning stems from experiences like leading a two-week backpacking trip and canoeing class in the Adirondacks of New York. His group summited Mount Marcy—the highest mountain peak in the state.

Newton’s group of students had diverse backgrounds. Some students were from Brooklyn, New York. There was a child actor who hated the outdoors but went on the trip so he could appreciate his more comfortable life in the city. Another student, a ski instructor, was so charmed by the outdoors that he tried to catch fish with his bare hands.

“I'm getting chills up my spine just thinking about this experience,” he said. “We had a big, challenging summit day. We had big packs on us while we were climbing over rocky boulders. We couldn’t see anything due to heavy fog, and the kids were struggling. But, when we reached the top, the clouds broke for us for an ephemeral amount of time. So, we could see a 360-degree view of all the mountains. The wind was ripping through us and the clouds were coming up at us.”

The students bonded over this moment, and it’s still one of the most powerful experiences Newton’s had.

“I really believe this type of tactile, experiential learning is what inspires me in this world,” he said. “As a learner, I didn't do well with sitting in class with books or behind a computer screen, but then I discovered this type of hands-on learning. You can still learn science concepts by getting outdoors. Its practical knowledge.”
He also enjoys mentoring staff. Newton attributes this joy to the people who mentored him along the way, like Hobbs.

“'I've had mentors throughout my outdoor education career,” Newton said. “And now that I’ve become a director, I couldn’t have gotten here without the guidance from Dr. Hobbs and the professors/supervisors I’ve worked with.”

“My path led me to Georgia College to get my master's degree, and I've had so many great connections with kids and just being outdoors,” Newton said. “I'm just grateful that I've discovered something I’m not only passionate about, but something that’s for the betterment of education and the world.”

For more information about Mountain Trail Outdoor School go to mtos.kanuga.org.
Public health professional partners with Georgia College; aspires to be a "gatekeeper of the community"

Health Promotion, Office of : Friday November 5, 2021

Abbigale Thompson Clifford, ’19, ’20, began working for District 4 of the Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH) in March 2021, and she’s already collaborating with public health partners, like Georgia College, for a healthier community.
As a chronic disease prevention manager for District 4, serving 12 counties across west central Georgia, Clifford, with the help of some Georgia College students, will apply what she’s learned to a real-life public health campaign.

Recently, Clifford discussed collaborating with her mentor, Dr. Damian Francis, assistant professor of public health and director of the Center for Health and Social Issues at Georgia College. They thought to conduct a windshield assessment of tobacco retailers in Jackson, Georgia, located in Butts County. The county has the most adult smokers in district four.

“We came up with the idea to have GC students do field work that will give them some great experience,” Clifford said. “We're contracting them through an MOU (memorandum of understanding) between the university and District 4 Public Health. This assessment is something the students can put on their resume.”

The concept is a win for both District 4 and Georgia College public health students. District 4 will procure valuable data to help guide its Tobacco Use Prevention Program. Five undergraduate students and one graduate assistant are Tobacco 21 Law Awareness Ambassadors. They will gain valuable transformative learning experiences outside of the classroom.
“One quarter of adults in Jackson smoke,” Clifford said. “And I wonder what that looks like. I'm excited about this assessment.”

Clifford feels that her graduate epidemiology class provides the foundation for health program planning she often uses today.

“I'm inspired by ways that health professionals really cater to populations. I just think it takes a special person to connect with the community. And I really admire when somebody does that well, serving as a gatekeeper to that community. I would love to be that person one day.”

- Abbigale Clifford

“You can't just think of an idea for a community: There has to be a need,” Clifford said. “And one of the ways to figure out that need is through data. That class made me really comfortable with pulling data, analyzing it and sharing the numbers in a meaningful way.”

Another one of her favorite classes was health communication and social marketing, taught by Dr. Ernie Kaninjing, assistant professor of public health and public health program coordinator. Clifford feels she uses this class the most, because communication has rapidly evolved over the past several years.

“I feel communication is ever-changing and definitely a huge part of my job,” she said. “So, in class, I really loved learning about effective ways to connect with people.”

Once Clifford has the results of this assessment, she’ll make a report on the climate of tobacco usage in Butts County.

“We're going to talk with the leaders of the Butts County School system and see if
they need to update their tobacco policies within their schools,” she said.

Clifford will also conduct a district-wide community strength survey, where individuals will note what they feel is the biggest health issue in their county. The assessment will also reveal which populations are disproportionately exposed to tobacco retailing.

“We are updating our community health assessments for District 4 now,” she said. “And we are doing exactly what I shared with the community survey in class by conducting key informant interviews and working with community partners.”

Soon, Clifford will begin a cohort for a Diabetes Prevention program, which she looks forward to.

“I'm inspired by ways that health professionals really cater to populations. I just think it takes a special person to connect with the community,” Clifford said. “And I really admire when somebody does that well, serving as a gatekeeper to that community. I would love to be that person one day.”
Advocate at work

Alumni : Friday November 5, 2021

Heidi Schureck, ’19, (they/them/their) is enthusiastic about working with others to create a more just world. They don’t think twice about getting involved. While a student at Georgia College, Schureck worked with school and community entities, and continues to do so in their profession as an education facilitator at the Fernbank Museum of Natural History and a play facilitator at the Children’s Museum of Atlanta. They also lead the charge for community alliances as the director of Partnerships for the National Emerging Museum Professionals (EMP) Network.

At Fernbank, Schureck engages with youth through educational programs. It’s their favorite thing to do as a museum professional.

“It’s incredibly rewarding, especially when you see them light up about something,” they said. “I’m a life-long learner. When I work with kids, they keep my imagination flowing and motivate me to keep opening my mind to new concepts, because they’re so creative. The questions they ask sometimes blow my mind.”

Schureck’s also involved in the museum’s newly-formed Community Action Committee, which seeks to develop partnerships while strengthening existing ones.
“We wish to further the mission of Fernbank, which is about science, nature and human culture, as well as igniting the curiosity and exploration around that,” they said. “I’m a little enthusiastic when it comes to being involved.”

Schureck’s a member of the Southeastern Museums Conference’s Equity and Inclusion Action Team and co-chair for the Atlanta EMP Network.

“Surround yourself with people who support you and those around you. When you see someone succeeding that means you are capable too. It takes small steps to make big ones. Build your community. I believe we are interdependent. Think of who you are connected to. How can you propel each other forward? I think this will give us the potential to accomplish our dreams.”

- Heidi Schureck

They got their start in leadership at Georgia College, where they were a double major in art and liberal studies.

Schureck was head art editor with The Peacock’s Feet Journal, the literary and arts journal of Georgia College; co-president of the Student Museum Association and treasurer of the Environmental Science Club. Schureck was also a member of the Creative Arts Alliance, Gardening Club and Pride Alliance.

They always sought to belong to organizations that brought people together through art, culture and nature.

“Joining these organizations helped me do just that—to work with people who had common goals and find a community to have a sense of belonging,” they said.

“Because I was drawn to many different organizations, I was also able to collaborate with them,” they said. “If I saw an organization working on something, and it correlated with what another one was doing, I'd create a partnership. I
especially loved those moments when we had different realizations in what could be.”

For three years, Schureck was a docent and interpretive guide at Georgia’s Old Governor’s Mansion (OGM). They interpreted a 19th century collection for guests on guided tours, installed new exhibits and led school programs.

“I'm very fortunate to have facilitated the conversations I had with guests,” they said. “A lot of them were about pretty traumatic historical events.”

"Some of the conversations I had at the OGM are the most formative conversations for me as a white person,” they said. “It helped me recognize my responsibility to continually unlearn racist ideologies and organize towards collective liberation. I think having a welcoming environment for folks to reflect on these historical events and structural inequities and injustices we’re seeing reverberated today is so important.”

Matt Davis, director of Historic Museums at Georgia College was a huge mentor to Schureck.

“He's constantly lifting up his employees, student workers—past and present,” they said. “Matt really opened up his network of museum professionals to me and always makes me aware of opportunities.”

Davis got them in touch with the Southeastern Museums Conference, which recently featured Schureck in “Ones to Watch.” This profile highlights up-and-coming, talented museum professionals, who are making an impact across the region.

They tear up as Schureck reminisces about their time at Georgia College. One of their favorite things was studying in the library with friends and chatting with former Georgia College Custodian Carl Hubbard. He brought them through a difficult time.
“Carl was always there to say I could get through this, and that I was going to do great,” Schureck said. “He also came to my capstone event.”

Schureck fondly recognizes their professors and mentors: Dr. Sabrina Hom, Dr. Sunita Manian, Ernesto Gomez, Valerie Aranda, Bill Fisher and Dr. Fadhili Mshana.

Another special memory was spending time with friends on Front Campus and participating in Earth Fest held on Earth Day. Since they were an officer of the Environmental Science Club, they helped organize the events.

“It was so amazing,” Schureck said. “A lot of local organizations were able to work with me to bring up really important issues like the coal ash ponds at the former Georgia Power Plant. We also worked with Keep Baldwin Beautiful, the Harrisburg Community Garden, Green Market, the Georgia College Sustainability office and our sister clubs on campus to discuss important issues.”

Georgia College was a safe environment, where Schureck could speak their mind.

“My professors made sure students respected each other during class discussions. They taught us to really listen to what other students had to say,” they said. “We would sit in a circle, so we were facing each other. This arrangement was a welcoming environment to hold discussions.”
The class would discuss what they had read and debate points on which they didn’t agree.

“This was such a challenge,” Schureck said. “It really taught me to think independently, because combing through a lot of research and coming from the mindset of others that you may not agree with, makes you understand why you think the way you do and even change your opinion, which is an important lesson.”

Today, Schureck applies the leadership skills they learned at Georgia College to their career and community involvement.

“Oftentimes, we're taught we're not capable of being a leader, because our attributes are the opposite of what a leader 'should' be,” they said, “and that being vulnerable is usually 'not' a sign of a leader.”

Schureck’s experience at Georgia College taught them that emotional intelligence and vulnerability are valuable leadership skills.

“I learned to recognize my intersectional identity, because I'm not just a queer femme neurodivergent person,” they said. “I'm also white and come from an economically stable family. And I think it's important to recognize those biases and listen to the multitude of perspectives around us, so we can unlearn oppressive systems and really imagine what an inclusive system can be and work towards that.”

Schureck’s time organizing with others at Georgia College taught them crucial concepts.

“Surround yourself with people who support you and those around you,” Schureck said. “When you see someone succeeding that means you are capable too. It takes small steps to make big ones. Build your community. I believe we are interdependent. Think of who you are connected to. How can you propel each other forward? I think this will give us the potential to accomplish our dreams.”
New LinkedIn page to provide connections for students and young alumni

Alumni : Friday November 5, 2021

The Georgia College Young Alumni Council has created a community through LinkedIn, where young alumni and students can engage with each other. It may even lead to job prospects.

“We are creating a mutually beneficial space for networking, collaborating and linking GC students with GC young alumni,” said Sarah Rose Harrill, ’14, ’18, president, Young Alumni Council. “The intended benefits for young alumni are either to deepen their connection to or re-engage with Georgia College.”

Students can also benefit from the Young Alumni Council’s new LinkedIn page.

“The intended benefits for students include the opportunity to network, learn about potential job opportunities, ask for career advice and build a support system as they transition from student life to post-grad life,” said Brian McDaniel, ’09, ’15, treasurer, Young Alumni Council.

As one of the only professional social networking platforms, most recruiters and those in hiring positions use LinkedIn to scout for talent.
“Creating a fully-developed LinkedIn page will significantly increase a job seeker’s chance of getting noticed by an organization and may even increase their chances of securing a position.”

- Lauren Easom

“Whether you are looking for an entry-level position or hoping to advance in your career, networking is the most effective yet under-utilized strategy to gain employment,” said Lauren Easom, director of the university’s Career Center. “The GC Young Alumni Council’s page provides an avenue to network with professionals you already have something in common with: GC, in a way that isn’t intimidating.”

Employers know the importance of having a LinkedIn page for networking.

“Creating a fully-developed LinkedIn page will significantly increase a job seeker’s chance of getting noticed by an organization and may even increase their chances of securing a position,” said Easom. “A 2006 survey by Jobvite found that 87 percent of recruiters find LinkedIn most effective when vetting candidates during the hiring process—especially those under 45 years of age, which yield 90 percent.”

The Career Center at Georgia College offers the same free services to alumni who are searching for jobs as it does for students. The most popular career services used among alumni are resume reviews, job fair participation and mock interviews.

Easom encourages job seekers to strategize their job search by not limiting themselves to just one well-known platform like Indeed. Instead, she recommends including job search boards often found on professional organization websites and using LinkedIn to learn about new organizations in their field via the “pages people also viewed” feature.

The council’s goal is to promote its LinkedIn page and build memberships before the holidays. The measure of success will be based on the number of individuals it assists, in addition to the opportunities and relationships the group develops.

To boost the number of young alumni and students on the council’s LinkedIn page, they plan to share its connections, post on social media feeds and encourage
professors to share this resource with their junior and senior students.

“We would like to have open training or helpful sessions with students and alumni at some point,” said Harrill. “But, first, they need to know it exists. Then, we need to create meaningful content and spark conversations to get folks to engage and work with students and other young alumni.”

Visit the Young Alumni Council’s new LinkedIn page to see how you can benefit.
Celebrating 25 years of the liberal arts mission: Alumni reflect on their experience

**GC Journeys**: Wednesday November 10, 2021

*In 1996, the Georgia Board of Regents designated Georgia College as the state’s public liberal arts university. We celebrate 25 years of this designation and showcase how the liberal arts comes to life on campus today.*

Since its humble beginning in 1889, thousands of students have walked the Georgia College campus. They've moved on to successful careers leaving their marks on the world.

Meet four alumni as they share how their liberal arts education at Georgia College impacted their lives and guided them to their career path.
Matthew Hilliard, '14, had a passion for learning. "When I visited Georgia College, I met with Dr. Ken McGill. He got me on board that the chemistry major was for me," he said. "Then I finished my calculus classes for chemistry, I was like, 'I don't want to stop learning math,' so I decided to add on the math major."

As part of his chemistry major, he also took some physics classes which he really enjoyed as well. "Dr. McGill said, 'You know, you can take a few extra classes, and we'll count some of these as electives. Then, you can major in physics too,'" said Hilliard. "I only added a year of undergraduate studies to finish the three different majors. I just really enjoyed learning, obviously."

After Georgia College, he attended Auburn University receiving his Ph.D. in chemical engineering in 2019. He completed postdoctoral work at Auburn and now works at Danimer Scientific—a pioneer in creating more sustainable, natural ways to make plastic products.

"I'm a hybrid position. I'm a microbiologist IV, but I'm also a process engineer," he said. "Our company produces biodegradable plastic. We are on track to be the largest commercial producer of biodegradable plastic in the world."

He credits the foundation set for him at Georgia College with much of his career success.

"I wouldn't be where I am without my time at Georgia College," said Hilliard. "Working closely with Dr. McGill, Dr. Hauke Busch and the other professors in the chemistry and physics department was critical to expanding my outlook on how we approach problems and think critically."
“What was the most helpful is having personal connections with the professors, being able to interact with them more directly and doing undergraduate research in the chemistry department. That really laid the foundation for moving into a research position in graduate school,” Hilliard added.

For Altimease Lowe, ’18, her mass communication major and political science minor, as well as her experience in Student Government Association (SGA), led her to her career.

“I really enjoyed my time in SGA, and that is actually what led me to become interested in law school,” she said. “When I came to Georgia College, I chose communications to be a communications strategist. But when I joined SGA, everybody was so passionate about advocacy, myself included, and I was like, ‘Okay, well, what career can I choose to where I could do that on an everyday basis?’”

She graduated in May 2021 from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, William H. Bowen School of Law. She credits the experiences she gained in her undergraduate classes for helping her succeed in law school.

“I think a lot of the writing experience I gained from Georgia College helped me through law school,” said Lowe. “In my research, writing and analysis class, my professor would always commend me on being a concise writer and an effective writer. I definitely gained that from being a mass communications major and the rhetoric classes that I took.”

Now she lives in Chicago and works for the Cook County State’s Attorney's Office in the Criminal Appeals Division.

“I feel like I couldn't have chosen a better school than Georgia College. It was the
"It was a mixture of being at the right place at the right time, and then having such great people around me that poured into me — students, faculty and staff. If I had been at any other school, I don't think I would have ended up being an attorney now."

For Lowe and Hilliard, their journey after Georgia College took them across the country, but for some, they come full circle back to Milledgeville.

Dr. Justin Adeyemi, '10, '11, received both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Georgia College. He transferred in from LaGrange College after deciding he wanted to pursue athletic training.

“In looking for programs, I saw that Georgia College had an athletic training program,” he said. “Seeing that it was a liberal arts institution, that’s what drew me here.”

His original plan was to be a high-school-level athletic trainer and teacher.

“At the same time, I was interviewing for a particular job at the high school. I also was completing an interview for the same type of position, but at Central Georgia Technical College,” said Adeyemi. “I said, ‘well, if I take this opportunity this will be a really unique opportunity because I’d be their first athletic trainer.’”

Being nimble and open to change, he took advantage of the new opportunity, which also led to his first experience teaching at the college level. From there, doors continued to open.

“I remember getting an email from one of my former faculty who knew I was interested in teaching. She said, ‘We’ve got an opportunity here as a lecturer to come in and teach,’” Adeyemi said. “I jumped at the opportunity to come back and teach at my alma mater. That is special to me to give back to the institution that I felt gave me so much.”

Adeyemi proudly notes he got two degrees from Georgia College, works here and met his wife here. It all came together through the relationships he built.
“I don't think that I would be in a position that I'm in now without the relationships that I formed here at Georgia College,” he said. “My current supervisor, the department chair, was my former professor for the master's program here, and now I'm in a position where my former faculty members are now colleagues. I believe that really played a huge role in me even being in this position.”

Dr. Brooke Conaway, '03, associate professor of economics, has a similar story. She too transferred to Georgia College her sophomore year and immediately saw the value of the liberal arts experience.

“Right off the bat my first semester here, I already felt I was part of the community,” said Conaway. “The economics department was fantastic. Within that first semester, I got to know all my classmates, most of the professors and even students in other majors.”

That “collegial kind of family” from when she was a student, led her to want to come back.

“I loved it so much as a student that I wanted to be on the other side and help perpetuate that for other students,” Conaway said.

“When I got to grad school, everyone talked about what they planned to do in the future. I would say I hoped to come back to teach here,” she said. “Everyone's said, 'you know, that's probably not going to happen, right?' But that was my dream.”

She’s been teaching 11 years in the economics department, where three faculty are alumni. It’s the personal connections with both students and colleagues, she says, that makes Georgia College special.

“We have the first-year seminar for econ students, and at the very beginning of the semester, all of the faculty come in and introduce ourselves. So, it's not like students are just seeing a professor the first time when they take a class,” she said. “Our classes are also small, which also allows you to get to know the students well.”

Those connections and an undergraduate research requirement help give economics students a leg up for grad school or their career.
Every day, Conaway and Adeyemi see students at work. The professors experience first-hand the light bulb going off for students as they finally comprehend a difficult subject or make the grade they’ve worked so hard for. The students research, collaborate and think critically about subjects and problems presented to them.

Lowe and Hilliard show those skills learned in the classrooms and through extracurricular activities on campus translate to skills for a lifetime. They still value the relationships built through their undergraduate experiences and know first-hand the value of a liberal arts education.
The Bridge Scholars Program is adapting students to academic challenges by turning them into leaders

First-Year Experience: Thursday November 11, 2021

For Rachel Locke, Georgia College was always at the top of her list for colleges. Graduating from a larger high school in Alpharetta, she was interested in the smaller and more intimate class sizes that GC offers. She applied to Georgia College before any other school, but by the time she’d received a letter notifying her that she’d been recommended to the Bridge Scholars Program, a summer transitional program required as a contingent of acceptance, she’d already been accepted at other institutions. “So, I’m like, I don’t know about this,” Locke said, “maybe they don’t, you know, really want me.”

According to BSP Graduate Intern Jasmine Carter, this could not have been farther from the truth.

“Georgia College sees great promise in these students, and they have great potential,” she said. "They just need some time to transition to what college is like.”
Many incoming students that GC is interested in, but who haven’t quite met the testing or GPA requirement, still have a shot through this intensive five-week summer course, in which around 130 students occupy the West Campus housing complex, Village 6, and go through a rigorous academic summer schedule with robust programming that focuses on academic success, diversity and inclusion, community building, and wellness. BSP Coordinator Dr. Hali Sofala-Jones added, “Bridge is actually a year-long residential learning community. The summer program is a big part of it, but we are unique in the country in that we have three dedicated semesters of support for Scholars. We also are a Residential Learning Community (RLC), which is a big deal because it shows our commitment to building a supportive community for Scholars to thrive.”

Bridge Scholars Program Video

Locke decided she would give it a shot, “Oh, but then the pandemic hits,” Locke said, “So now I don’t even know if Bridge is happening.”

This was the summer of 2020, when the Coronavirus pandemic was at its height and the uncertainty of the fall semester loomed large. Bridge students did live on campus, but with strict social distancing and courses mainly taught virtually. This summer, Locke decided to come back and be a Peer Mentor, as Bridge students often do because the five-week program draws them so closely together. That’s where she met Ellie Smith, an incoming mass communication major, and one of the students of the 2021 class of Bridge Scholars.

Smith went through a competitive interview process to become part of the BSP from Parkview High School in Lilburn, GA, a town much smaller than Milledgeville where she was coming to live away from home for the first time.

“It’s a lot of work,” Smith said, “because you’re doing a week’s worth of work in a day, so you have a week’s worth of homework you have to finish outside of class.”

“Even from a staff perspective, I still have close relationships with the students,
and I live in the building so we grow close together, we know each other, we see each other in the halls, and we see the same faces every day. We lean on each other. We’re there for each other, and we have fun with each other. It’s like we’re in our own little world.”

- Jasmine Carter

The intensified course instruction is key to not only preparing students for the fall, but for building a well-bonded community in such a short period of time.

“Even from a staff perspective, I still have close relationships with the students,” said Jasmine Carter, who taught the Student Success course this summer, “and I live in the building so we grow close together, we know each other, we see each other in the halls, and we see the same faces every day.”

"We lean on each other. We’re there for each other, and we have fun with each other. It’s like we’re in our own little world,” Carter said.

In addition to a student success course that runs Bridge Scholars through the gamut of strategies for taking notes, tests, and organizing their time, other courses can include Economics, Philosophy, Art, or any number of core classes featuring some of the best faculty on campus.

“I was surprised at how rigorous the classes could be,” said Locke, “It was a bit more intense than I thought. Of course, it makes sense that it would be challenging because it’s also somewhat of a last chance, you know? If you don’t pass, you don’t get in. But even then, it still shocked me.”

In addition to course work, the on-site staff and faculty hold around 12 social events that are all optional for the students so long as they attend at least four of their choosing.

“We have a program called ‘Sex and Chocolate’, which is a favorite for the students because they learn about sexual health, but they also get chocolate. We also had the big ‘Summer Splash’, where we had a water obstacle course and water
slides,” said Carter.

This year, BSP also hosted outdoor parties, a talent show, trivia and painting parties, among several other events to keep students engaged outside of academic hours.

“It’s definitely not like camp,” said Smith, “this is the first time where you have to go out and buy your own groceries. You have to make sure you’re on top of your own schedule. You’re really in charge of your own life at this point. I’ve learned a lot about self-discipline, which has really helped. Living on your own definitely has some struggles you have to work through, but it also comes with a lot of plus sides, I’ve found out.”

Carter, who is getting her Masters of Higher Education and Student Affairs from the University of South Carolina, said that Georgia College’s Bridge Program is unique because it doesn’t require its students to attend Bridge courses alongside normal academic programming over the school year, which can be isolating for some students. Instead, the program runs from mid-June to mid-July and the BSP students who return for the fall semester come fully acclimatized to the college lifestyle.

“Bridge students go on to become Community Advisors. They go on to become orientation leaders. They go on to have on-campus jobs and get involved in organizations being top leaders in those organizations,” Carter said, “They go on to do those successful things that any traditional first-year student can go on to be, but they have those skills built initially in the Bridge Scholars Program that resonates with them and translates into further involvement. We already have rockstar students now that I can see becoming great leaders for Georgia College.”

Students like Ellie Smith and Rachel Locke, who are already demonstrating a set of fundamental values taken from their time within the BSP.

Jess Butler, an accounting major, who has served as Community Advisor for the Bridge Program for two consecutive years, is now the president of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated and has served as the Secretary for the Black Student Alliance on campus as well as an RSA before becoming a BSP Community Advisor.

“The GC1Y class, ‘Into the Wilderness’, most definitely helped me understand the aspects of being a leader,” Butler said, “Also the Student Success course on how to be successful in college helped me make a roadmap for how to navigate college for the next four years.”

During the summer, the college is not as empty as you’d think. All of the extracurriculars and academics and parties and student/professor conferences are still chugging forward at lightning speed within the complex of Village 6.
“Because this is such a rigorous summer, students build time management skills, they build determination skills, and they have more grit,” said Carter, “They have more persistence than typical first-year students coming in because they’ve already built those things. That’s what the Bridge Scholars Program does.”
Students win numerous awards at Model of African Union conference

Georgia College students won awards in practically every category in November when the university hosted the 24th Annual SEMAU (Southeast Model of the African Union) conference.

SEMAU is like a mock trial or Model UN (United Nations), where students act as real delegates and heads-of-state to debate issues that affect African nations. The exercise demands lots of preliminary research, quick thinking on their feet, a readiness to compromise and work with others but, also, the drive to take the lead and solve conflicts.

“It can’t get any better than this,” said Dr. Charles Ubah, professor of criminal justice and SEMAU advisor. “This is, in my view, very important for any school but
more important for Georgia College, because we are the Liberal Arts University of Georgia."

"To engage students in multiculturalism, learning beyond the classroom experience, experiential learning, internationalization of the university’s curriculum, diversity and inclusive excellence—all of these are enshrined in this exercise," he said.

Video

The event is a real-world simulation based on the national Model of the African Union, held every year in Washington D.C. Student delegates sit on committees for social matters; peace and security; democracy, governance and human rights; Pan Africanism and continental unity; and economic matters. They discuss matters of finance, food security, disease, immigration and war.

Each school comes to SEMAU with resolutions that are pulled apart and remade through two days of debates. On the final day, student heads-of-state vote to adopt or reject final resolutions.

Ubah co-directed this year’s conference with retired English Professor Dr. Eustace Palmer, who chaired the university system’s African Council for four years. He played a big role in starting SEMAU in 1997 and continues to support students at conferences.

"Hosting the event helps Georgia College showcase it's concern for diversity and internationalization. The community as a whole becomes aware of what is going on in a continent that will have two billion people by 2050 and play an extremely important role in world affairs.

- Dr. Eustace Palmer"

Five university system schools participated with Georgia College: University of Georgia, Georgia State University, Albany State University, Savannah State University and Middle Georgia State University. Advisors from Kennesaw State University and Fort Valley State University were in attendance, as well.

The three-day simulation began Wednesday night with Milledgeville city officials and university faculty and staff welcoming two African diplomats: Ambassador of the Republic of Togo Frederic Edem Hegbe and Ambassador of the Republic of Mozambique Carlos dos Santos.
Duties of state were interspersed with social and cultural activities, like African Night with a performance by the Atilogwu Dancers from the Atlanta Igbo School.

Georgia College students have participated in the conference every year since its inception. In the past, they represented the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Somalia, Liberia, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, the Sudan and South Africa.

This year, students represented Nigeria and Ethiopia. Nigeria is Africa’s biggest economy and one of the world’s largest oil producers. It’s the most populated nation in Africa, but little of its abundance trickles down to the people. Ethiopia, located in the Horn of Africa, has the second largest population but is fairly undeveloped and one of the poorest nations on the continent.
SEMAU isn’t done for class credit. Students don’t get a break from coursework to study African affairs. Everything’s done during free time. Students get only weeks to prepare—researching countries, studying issues of importance, learning what delegates do and how they act—before they’re dropped into a realistic arena and expected to perform professionally with students from other universities.

It is an exercise in international diplomacy. Students quickly adapt to rules and protocols of a real government committee. When addressing a board chairman, they say, “Your Excellency” or “Honorable Chair.” They dress in business attire and stand when speaking. No one speaks, unless they first call out, “Point of Inquiry.” No one leaves until meetings are “adjourned.”

"The conference is the pinnacle of what our students study and prepare for. The real action begins with the students. They manage the committee meetings. Faculty members are there to advise and guide. But the students elect officers, and they run the deliberations.

- Dr. Charles Ubah

Senior criminal justice major Carson Shuler of Savannah won an award for his role as Nigerian president on the executive council. He also won honorable mention for chairing the committee on peace and security. Other students won delegate awards for Ethiopia and Nigeria in economic matters; Pan Africanism; and democracy, governance and human rights. They took honorable mentions for leadership in committees.

Shuler joined SEMAU to learn about Africa and meet new people. As a member of the executive committee, he researched the on-going civil war in Ethiopia. Other committees sent in resolutions on how to deal with this crisis. The committee on economic matters, for example, found ways to fund the end of the war and protect and provide for refugees.

In the process, Shuler said he became more self-assured.

“I noticed everybody here in the executive council—we’re all first time doing this. We were very nervous at the beginning, and we didn’t know the proper procedures
Sophomore criminal justice major Rachel Locke noted an upswing in her confidence too. She joined SEMAU to practice her speaking skills. She came in a little nervous but left knowing more about Africa and the economic resources that can make a difference in Ethiopia.

"These are big issues that could really affect someone’s life..."

- Rachel Locke

As she offered solutions for shelter, medical supplies, food and water, Locke said it felt like she was presenting to a real board. People took her seriously and listened to what she had to say. SEMAU helped Locke build leadership skills she says she’ll someday use as a paralegal.

“These are big issues that could really affect someone’s life,” Locke said, “and we’re supposed to find a solution for it when we’re just college kids. There’s a lot of research involved, learning what’s out there and what can be done. It’s very exciting.”

Copies of final resolutions are sent to African Union headquarters in Washington D.C. From there, they’ll go to the yearly heads-of-state meeting in Addis Ababa, the capitol in Ethiopia, where some student decisions may be adopted and put into action. In the past, African leaders have referred to work done in Georgia by SEMAU students, Ubah said.

Potentially impacting the lives of real Africans is exhilarating. This real-world setting helps students acquire skills they’ll need in the workforce. Shuler wants to work for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. In the past, Georgia College participants have been inspired to work in Africa and build careers in international affairs.

“This has been a very rewarding experience because we’ve been able to meet new people, gain new connections. It feels really important, the work that we’re doing,” Shuler said.

“It feels like we’re making a real difference,” he added, “because we’re making our suggestions, we’ve done our research, and they can decide whether or not to heed those resolutions.”
Georgia College introduces new restorative justice process on campus

Campus Life: Tuesday November 16, 2021

It’s a growing movement worldwide—restorative justice. Primarily used in the criminal justice system, the restorative justice model has increasingly been used on college campuses to build community and offer an alternative to traditional student conduct hearings and discipline.

“There's some really good research around it being a good educational tool that still holds people accountable for their actions,” said Dr. Jennifer Graham, director of the Women’s Center, who is leading the effort on campus. “It can also lower recidivism rates.”
The Women’s Center has used the community building circles as a model for staff meetings.

Some colleges have moved from their traditional student judicial process completely to restorative justice. At Georgia College, we now have a blended model. It’s not only a different way to handle conduct violations. It’s also about community building.

“Restorative Justice is a constructive method for dealing with harms caused to a community by an individual or a group,” said Dr. Tom Miles, dean of students. “It is not solely a student conduct tool, but a way of addressing issues that may or may not violate The Bobcat Code.”

The restorative justice approach at Georgia College is three-tiered. Its foundation is built on fostering a sense of community across campus while providing a positive way to address issues and concerns.

“We call those community building circles. The goal is just to do that—to build community for our students,” said Graham.

“We hosted a community building circle at the beginning of the semester around coming back after COVID. It was a place to process this last year and a half and talk about the unique challenges we all have faced,” she said.

The structured conversation is led by a trained facilitator who prompts the group and ensures everyone’s thoughts are heard.

“A lot of the work, especially in the community building circles, is very similar to what we do at the Outdoor Center,” said Liz Speelman, director of the Outdoor Center and trained facilitator. “It’s about building relationships. Restorative justice goes further so that you can restore relationships between groups, and everyone can share and feel heard.”

Speelman co-facilitated the first community circle on campus early in the fall 2021 semester. She calls it “another way for us to better understand others rather than
just living in our own bubble.”

The second layer of restorative justice is an alternative to the student conduct process.

“That’s what we call a restorative conference,” said Graham “It brings together the person or persons who have been harmed by some actions and then the person or persons who did that harm with two facilitators.”

It’s different from a traditional student conduct process. At the conference, both parties are present and structured questions are asked by facilitators. The goal is to bring all the information about the incident out.

“The typical judicial process doesn’t offer people who’ve been impacted by someone’s actions the opportunity to ask questions like, ‘Why me?’ A restorative justice conference does,” Graham said. “It explicitly asks people who caused harm why they did the thing they did. So, victims and impacted parties get answers to their questions.”

After the open discussion, the conference moves on to the agreements phase. The person who caused harm must commit to do certain things to make right their wrong.

“These could range from writing an apology letter, community service, doing some kind of advocacy or awareness project on campus, research or paying restitution,” said Graham. “It's not just sticking somebody with a fine putting them on probation. They must be an active participant in making it right again, which I think is a really powerful thing for people. That’s how we use it as an alternative to the student conduct process.”

So far, Graham and her team have held one restorative justice conference. For a restorative justice conference to even be an option though, the student must accept responsibility for their actions. If the student agrees to go through the restorative conference and follows through with the agreements, they won’t have a conduct record.
It is extremely educational and provides the student with time to reflect on their behavior and an opportunity to fix the harm caused by their action.

- Dr. Tom Miles

“In the process, students come to understand how their behavior caused harm to the overall community and the need to address these harms,” Miles said. “It is extremely educational and provides the student with time to reflect on their behavior and an opportunity to fix the harm caused by their action.”

The final tier focuses on what’s called reentry and support circles.

“Sometimes a student has been separated from the institution— they've gone out on a medical withdrawal or they have been suspended because of something that they've done—and now they’re coming back to campus,” said Graham. “We want to help support them as they transition back to campus life.”

It’s not just for students either. Graham sees this as an opportunity to help faculty and staff when they adjust to changes in their life. One example she gave was new moms when they return to work after maternity leave. Reentry and support circles could connect new moms with resources on campus and help to smooth the transition back to work life.

“I hope it will be a whole campus initiative,” said Graham. “There are so many ways that we can use restorative justice to benefit our campus community.”
Class of 2021: Mock Trial team leader has sights set on law school

Daria Brown

What’s your major? Do you have a minor?  
Criminal Justice is my major, and I have a French minor.

Where are you from?  
Macon, Georgia

Why were you interested in criminal justice?  
Coming into college, I knew that I wanted to ultimately become a lawyer. I chose to pursue a criminal justice degree because I wanted to understand the sociological underpinnings of crime and deviancy to better empathize with and understand
some of the people that I anticipate interacting with throughout my legal career. Once I began taking criminal justice classes, the supportive faculty, engaging material, and friendships I found were all confirmation that I had made the right decision.

What was your favorite class/professor and why? My favorite class I took was Intro to the Law with Dr. Creel in Fall 2019. I enjoyed it because of Dr. Creel’s implementation of hypotheticals—often, humorous ones—to teach complex laws and legal principles. I loved when Dr. Creel would ask us to present oral arguments on the case briefs that we had prepared based on the hypotheticals he would provide during each unit. That class made me feel as though I was learning not only important information but also necessary skills and habits that would serve me well in life.

What are your plans after graduation? I plan to move back home and work full-time until Fall 2022 when I plan to attend law school.

What other activities, jobs or programs have you been involved with during your time at GC? During my time at Georgia College, I have been involved in several things that are important to me. First, I have been a member of the John E. Sallstrom Honors College and Georgia College’s Honors Student Association, Eta Sigma Alpha, since my freshman year.

Second, I was hired as an Undergraduate Peer Tutor in the Writing Center during my sophomore year, and I have enjoyed helping students develop their writing skills and encouraging them through what can be a stressful process.

Third, I am honored to serve as the President and A-Team Captain for the Georgia College Mock Trial Team. It has been the most fulfilling activity that I have been involved in during my time at Georgia College. As a team member and leader, I have experienced authentic joy and immense personal growth for which I will be forever grateful.

Anything else you’d like to mention? I may be leaving Georgia College for a while, but this educational endeavor has made a lasting impact on my life, and I will always be proud to call myself a Bobcat.
Georgia College publication for student research read worldwide

*Ina Dillard Russell Library*: Monday November 22, 2021

For anybody who thinks libraries are passé, dimly-lit rooms filled with dusty old books—take another look. An online repository called the Knowledge Box is maintained within the brick façade of Ina Dillard Russell Library. And, in that, is a publication called “The Corinthian.”

It has placed Georgia College on the map. Literally.

More than 200,000 people in nearly 200 countries worldwide have accessed the digital journal—which publishes about 10 undergraduate research projects per year.

“The Corinthian’ is our signature publication,” said Dr. Shaundra Walker, library director. “I love what we’ve been able to accomplish with ‘The Corinthian,’ because it pushes against that stereotype of librarians having buns and glasses and ugly
“For anybody who thinks we’re just over here reading a book, dusting off shelves, that’s not what’s happening here,” she said. “We’re doing really impactful work.”

Just as impressive as worldwide attention--research in “The Corinthian” has been downloaded by members of the U.S. State Department, the Senate and Congress, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Justice, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security and the Department of Commerce.

The U.S. Department of Education leads the way with 58 downloads from the 2020 “Corinthian.” Officials there seemed particularly interested in music education for students with disabilities.

More than 1,800 institutions-- including 82 of the top 100 universities in America listed by U.S. News & World Report also accessed articles from last year’s “Corinthian.” These universities included Harvard, Yale, Cornell and Duke.

“The Corinthian' fits really well into our liberal arts mission...”
- Dr. Walker

“The Corinthian’ fits really well into our liberal arts mission,” Walker said. “We’re uniquely positioned as a public liberal arts university. There’s a responsibility that comes with that, and I think Knowledge Box is one of the ways we can deliver on that responsibility of being good public stewards and making sure the knowledge that’s produced here is publicly available.”

Georgia College’s “Corinthian” has been around since the 1940s. More than 800 undergraduate students have published research in it over the years.

But their research never got the kind of attention today’s students enjoy.

In the past, it was standard to print, bind and copy research papers. Students got
copies and one would stay on the shelf at the university library, mostly unread. With Knowledge Box, the online repository allows anyone--grandmothers, neighbors, business owners, teachers and government agencies to access research conducted here.

Knowledge Box keeps track of downloads and geographical locations of interested readers. Students are sent a monthly report on the traffic their research generates. They can use this information on Linked-In, resumes and graduate school applications.

Jennifer Townes, scholarly communication librarian at Russell Library, doesn’t know why “The Corinthian” is so “wildly popular.” She started working at Georgia College in 2016 and was given the task of reviving Knowledge Box, which also houses academic papers, dissertations, theses and conference presentations.

Many other universities have repositories like Knowledge Box and ways to publish research. What differentiates Georgia College, Walker and Townes think, is its longtime emphasis on undergraduate research. Attention on this type of research is growing nationwide.

Georgia College already had a long history of supporting undergraduate research. With the help of Digital Archivist Holly Croft, Towne tackled the job of digitalizing 20 past issues of “The Corinthian.” This placed a huge amount of undergraduate research--and a variety of topics--online for people to peruse.

Research is submitted from all disciplines at Georgia College, especially from health sciences, history, education, literature and natural sciences. Education and literature mark some of the most downloaded topics.

In 2020, favorite topics read by government workers were about the effects of dehydration on cognitive functioning; effective prison management; the relationship between teacher morale and school climate; and comparison of two Machiavelli literary works.
The top searched Georgia College paper is about middle school students not completing homework assignments. It's been downloaded 12,000 times since 2018. Another popular subject was being a woman from Shakespeare's patriarchal perspective.

“The popularity of 'The Corinthian' speaks to the quality of our students’ research, as well as its relevancy,” Walker said. “It speaks to the responsiveness to our student research and the timeliness of it. Clearly, it resonates with a wider audience.”

This research is free to the public, not inaccessible behind “paywalls,” Walker said. That may be why readers in developing nations read the 2020 edition.


Readership of “The Corinthian” infer Georgia College students are impacting communities around them and beyond. It’s difficult to tie Georgia College research directly to U.S. policies. But Walker said, “We do know our research is being ready
Senior Emma Cargile.

Townes continues to marvel that the smallest content in Knowledge Box—“The Corinthian”—garners “exponentially” more attention than anything else there. It also provides students with real-world experience, she said. The publication is edited by a student.

This year, that editor is senior English major Emma Cargile of Brunswick. Cargile graduates this December with a minor in rhetoric. On “The Corinthian,” she does everything from sending invites to faculty reviewers to soliciting the art department for cover art. She sends acceptance and denial letters, copy edits all submissions, then uploads everything to Knowledge Box.

“Because ‘The Corinthian’ is run by students and showcases student research,” Cargile said, “there’s so much potential for this publication to take the shape of what students who are passionate about publishing want it to be.”

Cargile hopes more students will take positions at “The Corinthian,” because it offers great experience in copyediting, design, journal layout and digital publishing. She plans to pursue a master’s in fine arts. She’s confident the skills she acquired as “Corinthian” editor will carry her through graduate school into the working world of editing and publishing.

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- Emma Cargile

Dr. Scott Butler, professor of public health, believes in the importance of “The Corinthian” too. He’s had seven students publish research in it, and the experience helped advance their careers.

Officials at Emory University pointed to alumna Kathleen Ragan’s manuscript on
"Public Health Impact of the HPV Vaccinations: A Research Update" as the final impetus for her admission. Ragan graduated in 2010 from Georgia College and currently works at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta.

Dayne Sullivan, '11, was told his “Crohn’s Disease: An Elementary Review” was the reason he was accepted out of hundreds of applicants at Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine in Arizona.

Butler was so impressed with alumna Eliana Johnson’s manuscript, “Sex Education in the United States: Implications for Sexual Health and Health Policy,” he now makes it required reading for one of his courses. Johnson graduated in 2019. Research in “The Corinthian” helped her gain acceptance to the graduate program in counseling at West Texas A&M University.

Participating in “The Corinthian” mirrors what students would experience at the graduate level, publishing in a traditional journal. Students graduate from Georgia College knowing what it’s like to submit research and get feedback from a reviewer. They know what it’s like to establish themselves in a community of scholars.

"What we’ve been able to achieve with 'The Corinthian' helps us show the library in a different light on many levels. It makes student research available. It highlights the librarian's knowledge, skills and abilities. It gives students experiential learning. It supports undergraduate research, the focus of our university. It helps sell the university’s brand.

- Walker

"Plus, it’s a wonderful way for us to meet our obligation as a public liberal arts university,” she said. “It puts the library and the librarian at the center of that work."
Class of 2021: Graduate student gains practical experience in teaching Mandarin

Cheng Lam Ku of Macao is the beneficiary of a collaboration between Georgia College and the ALLEX Foundation—who provided graduate-level training with some of America’s finest experts in Asian language pedagogy (plus instruction in American standards of classroom management and instructional software, as well as student teaching), at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. She will receive her Master of Arts in English in December.
During Ku’s time at Georgia College, she gained valuable practical experience in teaching Mandarin in the World Languages & Cultures Department. The only Mandarin teacher at the university, Ku taught two courses each semester for two years. A graduate teaching assistant under the supervision of (first) now Professor Emerita Dr. Peggy Elliott, and most recently, World Languages & Cultures Department Chair and Professor of French Dr. Libby Murphy, Ku was responsible for course planning, activities design, and the teaching and evaluating of students.

“Dr. Murphy gave me many valuable and professional suggestions about teaching and classroom management,” she said. “Dr. Elliott encouraged and taught me a lot when I was a new teacher. I appreciate their help on my way to becoming a professional language teacher.”

Ku took the course “Teaching Writing Pedagogy” with Dr. Joy Bracewell, who shared many ideas in class. Her favorite teaching theory is learning while teaching. Ku plans to apply this concept in her profession.

“I used to think that teaching is one-sided, as teachers teach students new knowledge,” she said. “However, education is mutual—teachers learn from students too. This teaching theory helped me improve myself while teaching.”
“I am very proud of my students. Listening to them speak and read Chinese fluently after taking my class is very rewarding. They started with zero knowledge about Mandarin, and now they can do basic communication in another language. It’s something that I look most forward to in teaching.”

- Cheng Lam Ku

Ku’s students have ranged in age from preschoolers to adult learners, which includes her time teaching in Macao.

“I enjoy teaching little kids, because they are very imaginative and creative,” she said. “But I also like to teach adults, because I get a sense of fulfillment, helping people accomplish their dreams.”

Ku is passionate about seeing her students learn a new language and improve.

“I am very proud of my students. Listening to them speak and read Chinese fluently after taking my class is very rewarding,” she said. “They started with zero knowledge about Mandarin, and now they can do basic communication in another language. It’s something that I look most forward to in teaching.”

After Ku graduates from Georgia College, her love of teaching Mandarin will take her to different countries to teach non-Chinese speakers the language. At the same time, she’ll be learning about their cultures, as well.

Ku enjoyed the opportunities the International Education Center (IEC) and the International Club afforded her. She thanks the IEC staff for helping her transition to Georgia College.

“I really appreciate all the opportunities GC has given me,” she said, “especially the International Education Center, where Dr. James Callaghan helped and introduced me to the university. Mr. Jason Wynn helped me go through the paperwork. Ms. Susie Ramage cared and supported me, and Ms. Sandra Moore helped also.”
Other administrative units across the campus including Academic Affairs, the College of Arts & Sciences and many others, also contributed to Ku’s success at Georgia College.

She thrived during her time at the university.

“I like the inclusive culture at Georgia College,” Ku said. “No matter where you are from or what nationality you are, you will feel at home at GC.”
Math capstone: Using equations to solve real-life issues

Mathematics, Department of: Monday November 29, 2021

What do COVID, taxicabs and mindsets have in common? The answer may surprise you: math.

Math is the abstract science of using calculations, shapes and quantity to solve a problem. But multiple steps, numbers and signs do more than complete mathematical equations.

They can be used to unravel everyday problems, as well.

The purpose is to synthesize ideas learned in previous coursework to go beyond the prescribed curriculum in terms of content, depth and approach and
help our students develop the ability to work independently on a project of their choosing.

- Dr. Robert Blumenthal

That’s exactly what three seniors did in November for their capstone projects. They used statistics and data to answer real-life challenges like discovering a direct taxicab distance between two coordinates; seeing if students develop the mindset they’re not good at math; and whether the COVID shutdown effected grades at Georgia College.

“The purpose is to synthesize ideas learned in previous coursework to go beyond the prescribed curriculum in terms of content, depth and approach and help our students develop the ability to work independently on a project of their choosing,” said Dr. Robert Blumenthal, chair of mathematics.

In the past four years, 62 math majors have presented capstone research. Each chose a topic of interest and a professor to mentor them. Students engage in a year of reading, research and working mathematical puzzles. It ends with the annual Capstone Day, where they present findings in front of faculty and family.

Senior Seth Rozelle of Warner Robins is working on a degree in math with a minor in computer science. He chose to do his undergraduate research on COVID and whether online learning during lockdowns effected grades at Georgia College.
Senior Seth Rozelle presents his math capstone research.

He thought it’d be a timely and popular topic. His research required rigorous data analysis, studying grade distribution in 19 areas of study across campus.

Overall, he learned students performed better in the spring months of the pandemic, than previously.

“We were observing whether the distribution of grades at Georgia College changed significantly in any way. The short answer is it did,” Rozelle said. “In spring of 2020, there were significantly more A's, less failing grades and slightly more withdrawals in most categories. Then, in spring 2021, grades seemed to come back to pre-COVID numbers.”

“What gets me out of bed in the morning is I get to do work like this that substantially answers questions people want to know...

- Seth Rozelle

Rozelle said his research is “immediately relevant” and can shed light on academic learning during a global pandemic. Going forward, it can be used to determine if
hybrid learning is better in emergencies.

This project will also help Rozelle when he applies to graduate programs for statistics or biostatistics. In April, he'll present his work at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR).

“I've always had a knack for numbers. I want to be a statistician. Georgia College was the university with the most opportunities, conveniency and affordability for me,” Rozelle said.

“What gets me out of bed in the morning is I get to do work like this that substantially answers questions people want to know,” he said. “This project gave me priceless experience and insight on the kind of work I want to do.”

His mentor, Dr. Jebessa Mijena, associate professor of math, teaches courses in statistics, calculus sequences and differential equations. Capstone students interested in statistics, data science and machine learning generally come to him for direction.

It’s his job to offer suggestions and guidance but otherwise step back.

“These types of capstone projects teach our students about completing tasks independently without much help from the professors,” Mijena said.

Another senior math major, Natalie Taylor of Rossville, Georgia, did her capstone under the direction of Dr. Rodica Cazacu. Most people think the distance between two destinations is the mileage given by Google Maps—a direct line, what’s known in math as “Euclidean distance.” But traveling to another place often involves twists and turns. Taylor used horizontal and vertical distance between two points to find what’s called “taxicab distance.”

Senior math education major Morgan Grey of Dacula, Georgia, studied the stigma around math. She met several times a week with Dr. Doris Santarone, assistant professor of math education, for assistance. Grey was deeply interested in why some people believe their math abilities are predetermined and cannot change.

She collected data from hundreds of students in grades K-12 to determine their “mindsets.” She also looked at teaching methods to see if attitudes can be altered.
“From a young age, I wondered why some people called themselves a math person, meaning they could do math well, or why they weren’t a math person,” Grey said. “Contrary to this is a ‘growth mindset,’ when people believe they’re born with a set of basic qualities that can be changed and improved through hard-work and strategies that foster growth.”

Grey found most children start out with healthy mindsets. As grade levels increase in math, however, this positive attitude declines. A significant decrease occurs between kindergarten and 3rd grade, Grey learned, when multiplication and fractions are introduced and “students begin to doubt their abilities.”

She was surprised to find a similar problem with the mindsets of teachers. Teachers in higher grade levels are less convinced students can overcome difficulties in math.

This discovery could lead to finding out why and ways to fix it, Santarone said. Real-life problems are challenging to solve—and that’s why Santarone loves math. It’s also why so many students consider the math capstone to be the highlight of their college experience.

“When you’re given a problem and you don’t know how to solve it,” Santarone said, “you have to use problem solving skills, logic and critical thinking to apply what you know to find a solution.”

In his department, Blumenthal emphasizes critical thinking and making informed decisions based on evidence. Faculty focus on interdisciplinary work and making connections between disciplines.

The math capstone is the crowning glory.

“This is just one of the things that makes Georgia College such a great place for our students and faculty,” Blumenthal said. “It’s very rewarding to work with such talented and dedicated students.”

Grey hopes to take what’s she learned during her capstone experience and become a 6th-12th grade math teacher. She wants to show others they can tackle math and succeed.
Math can be rigorous and challenging, but it’s not impossible. That's what is so exciting about it. The challenges we face in math can also prepare us for any hardships life throws at us, so that we can persevere.  

- Morgan Grey

“I 100% believe this capstone has been nothing but a positive experience for me at Georgia College,” Grey added. “It’s taught me proper research skills and time management techniques, plus it helped me become more professional. I’m very thankful to have had this opportunity.”