

Front Page News Story Archive

January 2022



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News Stories Posted Monday January 10, 2022



Alumnus gains well-rounded experience from Georgia College

[Athletics](#) : Monday January 10, 2022

Chandler Snell, '11, was a four-year starter in baseball at Georgia College, playing shortstop. Baseball provided a wealth of experience that, later, would help guide his success in the workplace. Today, he helps support the team to show his gratitude for his life's lessons.

"Time management and organization were probably the biggest lessons I learned," he said. "Baseball also taught me to be disciplined. If you're not organized, everything can feel like clutter, and almost overwhelm you to the point where you can't succeed. I learned early on that if I wasn't organized, I wasn't going to be successful on or off the field or in my career."

He hopes the baseball team can continue to recruit and perform at a high level, eventually bringing home a National Championship. More importantly, Snell wants the program to continue to put disciplined, well-rounded professionals into the

workforce that represent Georgia College everyday through their actions.

“GC’s baseball program is nationally recognized, and it’s bringing in young men from all over the country to develop them for the next stage of their life,” Snell said. “The way they perform is a reflection of GC and the community Coach Nolan Belcher is building.”

Since playing baseball, he has come to appreciate the experiences provided to him as a student-athlete.

“My favorite experience at Georgia College was during my senior year,” Snell said. “We won the regional tournament. Then, we moved on to the World Series. We lost in the semi-finals, but we had a good team that year. I learned a lot from my team members.”

He also learned the power of teamwork.

“You’re one of nine people in the starting line-up,” Snell said. “You can only control what you can control during the course of the game. You depend on your teammates to be accountable for what they do during the game.”

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“Georgia College felt like a community. I knew everybody from my coaches, to my trainers, professors, teammates and classmates. Today, I try to bring a community feel to our company. I get to know employees on a personal level and understand what everybody's battling every day. I really just make sure I’m a leader they can come to and understand my door’s always open.”

- Chandler Snell



Chandler Snell throws the ball to his teammate.

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Snell's favorite professor was Dr. Barbara Funke, because she worked with his baseball schedule.

"She was always easy to work with in the classroom and respected me being an athlete," he said. "When I was away from the courses, she was good about catching me and my teammates back up on assignments."

Being a student-athlete taught Snell the value of discipline and commitment to baseball and his studies. His day began at 5 a.m. to make 6 a.m. workouts. Then, classes began at 8 a.m. He had to be on the baseball field at 2 p.m. until 5 or 6 p.m. After that, Snell had to fulfill his commitment to studying, ensuring his grades were sufficient enough to participate on the playing field.

Snell is an assistant vice president at E.R. Snell Contractor, Inc., where he's a fifth-generation owner of the company, which is 98 years old.



Chandler Snell at work.

"Georgia College felt like a community. I knew everybody from my coaches, to my trainers, professors, teammates and classmates," Snell said. "Today, I try to bring a community feel to our company. I get to know employees on a personal level and understand what everybody's battling every day. I really just make sure I'm a leader

they can come to and understand my door's always open."

The teamwork Snell learned on the ballfield benefits him in his job every day.

"Our team is our company," he said. "It's nothing but a bunch of small teams who want to succeed every day."

Snell leads the estimating and sales teams comprised of 27 people.

"Working as a team is important because of what we do—we can't do it alone," he said. "It already requires enough of us that if somebody on the team is not pulling their weight, it's felt. We all count on each other to pull the company forward."

Since graduating, Snell has enjoyed reconnecting with Georgia College. He serves on the Alumni Board and the Scholarship Committee.

"I enjoy meeting a whole new network of alumni through the Alumni Board and Scholarship Committee," Snell said. "I'm in year one, and so far, I've really enjoyed being back on campus."

By serving on the Scholarship Committee, he reviews and votes on which students have the best applications.

"I hope that these funds are a way to take some of the pressure off the students," Snell said. "Everybody knows school is hard, especially when you throw in a financial burden on top of it. Hopefully, these funds will make an impact, not only in students' day-to-day lives, but they might help out their parents, as well."

Every day Snell meets professionals who have one thing in common—Georgia College. He feels now is the time to give back to the university.

"Giving back in any way I can is powerful," Snell said. "I stepped away from campus for too long. I hope alumni understand that Georgia College is a great school to get plugged back into. Hopefully, they can feel proud of where they came from and want to immediately start getting back in as alumni of the school."

News Stories Posted Tuesday January 11, 2022



Young alumni take ownership in Georgia College

Alumni : Tuesday January 11, 2022

Amber Bennett Brannon, '09, '10, Evan Karanovich, '12, and Zach Mullins, '11, have taken ownership of what they say is their responsibility to Georgia College. They know the power behind helping students in need through their scholarships, but they also invest their time and energy in their alma mater.

All three have done service on the Alumni Board. Brannon currently serves on the College of Business Leadership Board. Karanovich and Mullins serve on the Alumni Board. And Karanovich previously served on the Young Alumni Council.

"I started donating to Georgia College in 2012, a few years after I graduated," Brannon said. "I became involved with the Alumni Association in 2012 and, through this involvement, I saw the importance of financial contributions, like my scholarship, to the university."

Karanovich and Mullins were Student Government Association presidents.

Together, they offer the Mullins Karanovich Campus Leader scholarship, which stresses the importance of students learning leadership skills.

They rallied behind a purpose that they could both relate to.

“I’ve given on a monthly basis since graduating,” said Mullins, who believes small, frequent donations are as important and impactful as large gifts.

“I gave \$20.12 as my first gift because that was the year I graduated,” Karanovich said. “But then it was on a more reoccurring basis when Zach and I first developed the idea of this scholarship. It just felt even better to give a more purposeful gift, knowing where the funds are going and being able to feel connected to it.”

“We found a lot of value in being involved on campus. That experiential learning added to my education—it was learning by leading,” Mullins said. “That is what drove us to want to help provide support for a student who could experience the same.”

Karanovich added, “For me, it was belonging in student government. My hope for this scholarship is to provide support and encouragement to student leaders. Often, these leaders are so busy involved in two or three organizations on top of going to school and trying to work. Any assistance would go a long way.”

Karanovich mainly wants students to know there are alumni who care about them and their climb towards achievement. This can be accomplished through giving time, talent or scholarships.

“When I was that age—just having a lot of questions and learning in-and-out of the classroom—I would’ve loved to have had young alumni, like myself, invest in me,” he said. “My hope is for students to understand we are here to encourage and cheer them on for success.”

Although Mullins was not always top of his class with grades and tests, he learned



Amber Bennett Brannon



Evan Karanovich



Zach Mullins

a lot about himself, his friends and the community in GC's liberal arts setting.

"I learned about a ton of different things as a student by being involved on campus, which continues to help me today," he said. "After having that experience provided to me by Georgia College, I want to provide another student who may not be as academically successful, the same opportunity to succeed both in and out of the classroom like I did."

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"If Georgia College alumni impacted your student experience—pay it forward. I recall alumni and community volunteers being my first feedback on a resume and a mock interview when I was a business student. Their willingness to give a few hours of their time had a lasting impression on me as a student."

- Amber Bennett Brannon

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Like Mullins and Karanovich, Brannon also believes in the power of giving back.

"If Georgia College alumni impacted your student experience—pay it forward," she said. "I recall alumni and community volunteers being my first feedback on a resume and a mock interview when I was a business student. Their willingness to give a few hours of their time had a lasting impression on me as a student."

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"Some young alumni served as my mentors and gave me something to aspire to be. Now, at 31, I'm in that seat. But my hope is that as people are stewarding, they're looking at what's next and being very present and intentional with how they're investing their time, talent and/or treasure."

- Evan Karanovich

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All three want young alumni to consider giving their time, talent or treasure to Georgia College.

"It's our responsibility, as alumni, to give back and help those behind us," Mullins said. "Part of leadership is boosting up others. And for those who have gone ahead, it's very important to turn around and help bring the next generation and class up. I think that's a fundamental piece of your responsibility as alumni. We

have to help the next generation of students who are going to be leaders. It should be a natural part of our university stewardship, and our duty as good alumni citizens.”

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“I think if you build the habit of giving over time, like most things, it will lead into something great. That’s the approach we took and has allowed us to be able to do that. We give in a very routine, systematic and thoughtful way in hopes it builds and leads to more.”

- Zach Mullins

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Karanovich loves the idea of stewardship, as well.

“Some young alumni served as my mentors and gave me something to aspire to be,” he said. “Now, at 31, I’m in that seat. But my hope is that as people are stewarding, they’re looking at what’s next and being very present and intentional with how they’re investing their time, talent and/or treasure.”

For Brannon, it’s also important to contribute time, talent and funds to Georgia College.

“I love spending time mentoring students, reviewing student resumes and listening to elevator pitches,” she said. “This has allowed me to give back to current students. By donating towards a scholarship, I’ll continue to support a future student and their education each year.”

All three alumni find value in giving scholarships, therefore it easy for them to budget for them.

“My husband and I value philanthropic giving and work it into our personal budget,” Brannon said. “If you’re trying to start a giving habit, the key is being intentional and purposeful. Pick altruistic missions that resonate with you and your personal values.”

“It’s not difficult at all because I set it up as an auto draft and have been doing it since 2011,” Karanovich said. “You have to start somewhere. I started at \$20 a month, and over time, it builds up to be quite a bit. The next year, you can bump it up to \$10 or \$20 more.”

“I think if you build the habit of giving over time, like most things, it will lead into something great,” Mullins said. “That’s the approach we took and has allowed us to

be able to do that. We give in a very routine, systematic and thoughtful way in hopes it builds and leads to more.”



Department of Continuing and Professional Education grows to support professional needs

[Continuing & Professional Education](#) : Tuesday January 11, 2022

Angela Criscoe, '04, '06, MFA, interim executive director of the School of Continuing and Professional Studies wants to help Georgia College alumni flourish in their chosen professions and passions. But she needs your valuable input in selecting educational and enrichment opportunities to benefit you, or ones you may want to teach.

“Georgia College is growing its continuing education programming to support workforce professionals who need to upskill and advance their knowledge for professional development, career advancement or leadership opportunities,” Criscoe said.

The Department of Continuing and Professional Education provides workforce development, as well as enrichment, educational and children’s programming. Programs are offered in a variety of formats to include virtually, in person or hybrid.

“The enrichment programs are opportunities to explore new interests and hobbies,” Criscoe said.

“Alumni are able to share their hobbies with community members by teaching



Angela Criscoe

them through continuing and professional education. The more you teach others your hobby, the better you get at it.”



Six-time Food Network Champion Reva Alexander Hawk (standing) and her class (seated) show their holiday decorated cupcakes from the workshop.

Enrichment programs also benefit the people in the community who have an interest in discovering their creativity and expanding their knowledge.

“Alumni can share their hobby by contributing to established Georgia College programs or proposing a course or program idea,” Criscoe said. “We are always looking for diverse and unique program ideas and for people to teach these courses.”

“I’m sure we have alumni who are working as accountants, computer programmers or business professionals who are really good artists,” she said. “If they want to come back and teach an art class, then I ask that they contact me. We will work through a program idea to develop what they want to teach and how they want to teach it. Then, we’ll make it happen.”

In preparing for the course, the Department of Continuing and Professional Education at Georgia College provides advertising, reserves space, runs registration, pays the presenter and evaluates the program. For example, Criscoe recently brought Reva Alexandra Hawk, a six-time Food Network cake baking champion, to Georgia College to teach 10 individuals how to decorate six cupcakes in six different ways.

“We first came up with a course idea developed the curriculum, identified what supplies she needed, then I hired her,” Criscoe said. “Reva also completed Georgia College training. Now, we're going to send a survey to attendees to evaluate the course.”

Gaining new knowledge is a need that's growing extremely fast.

“In today's rapidly changing world, workers may have over 20 different careers over the course of their lifetime and are in need

of short-form credentials,” Criscoe said. “We have job recruiters who indicate they see a value in short-form certificates.”

“Returning to Georgia College to upskill is an opportunity to gain a quality education that is affordable, accessible and accelerated,” she said. “Many of our online graduate certificates are taught by Georgia College faculty and can be completed in less than a year.”

Criscoe believes that it will be beneficial to have as many alumni as possible complete the Continuing and Professional Education (CPE) Alumni Survey.

“The survey will inform alumni of some of the online graduate certificate programs we recently initiated,” Criscoe said. “It will also provide our department with information to better serve alumni who are seeking educational and enrichment opportunities for personal growth or to teach.”

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“Returning to Georgia College to upskill is an opportunity to gain a quality education that is affordable, accessible and accelerated. Many of our online graduate certificates are taught by Georgia College faculty and can be completed in less than a year.”

- Angela Criscoe

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Alumni and workforce professionals are important to Georgia College's Department of Continuing and Professional Education.



National Baking Champion Reva Alexander Hawk, pictured right, instructs a class member on how to frost cupcakes.

“We hope, as alumni explore their options to continue their education, they will reach out to us, share their program ideas and participate in our continuing and professional education programs that are ingrained with Georgia College’s quality education and experience,” Criscoe said.

Share your continuing and professional education needs and suggestions for workforce professional development or enrichment activities to Georgia College’s Department of Continuing and Professional Education by completing the [CPE Alumni Survey](#) by Jan. 31, 2022.

To learn more about continuing and professional education opportunities currently available, visit Georgia College's [Department of Continuing and Professional Education](#).



Newly-formed College of Business Alumni Council President requests your help in putting students first

[College of Business & Technology](#): Tuesday January 11, 2022

As we ring in the new year, the Georgia College J. Whitney Bunting College of Business would like to introduce you to our new Alumni Council. The Alumni Council was formed in 2021 and is led by an executive team of myself, Kyle Aldridge, president (BBA, '99), Fred Koeck, vice president (MLSCM, '17) and Lori Hamilton, secretary/events (MMIS, '09). The executive team has been busy at work putting together a mission and goals for their upcoming two-year service term.

The executive team created the mission to reconnect, foster new and maintain existing relationships with business school alumni and friends and to support the personal and professional growth of current and former business students through communication, fundraising and events.

The initial goals of the organization consist of the following:

1. Connecting “experts” (alumni and friends) back to the classroom to assist professors in guiding current



Kyle Aldridge

students.

2. Creating a network of alumni and friends for current students to assist them in job searches, industry mentoring, etc.
3. Fundraising and scholarship development.
4. Reconnecting alumni and friends back to Georgia College.

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"These goals may sound considerable for one of us individually, but if we band together, we can move mountains. Each of us had someone along the way who gave us a chance, mentored and helped guide us. Be that person for a current GC business student."

- Kyle Aldridge

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While these goals may sound momentous, let me tell you a bit about alumni from the College of Business. Currently, we consist of some 13,000-plus strong alumni and friends. We represent each state in the U.S. except North Dakota. We also have alumni and friends in the Virgin Islands, Canada, Netherlands and those serving in the military. In addition, we are represented by those graduating in the 1930's all the way up to the 2020's. The collective knowledge and ability in this group is outstanding ... it's our job to harness it and use it for the best of Georgia College.

How can you help? Thanks for asking.

1. Please send us an email to (COB_Alumni@gcsu.edu) with your name, contact information, company, title, degree and year, industry expertise and your willingness to speak to a class or mentor a student.
2. Support your local GC business school alumni events. Follow this link (<http://alumni.gcsu.edu/alumni-hc2022>) to register for the College of Business homecoming alumni social coming up Feb. 25 at Atkinson Hall, as well as additional alumni events scheduled for Homecoming weekend.
3. Contribute to the business school or let us help you create your own scholarship.

These goals may sound considerable for one of us individually, but if we band together, we can move mountains. Each of us had someone along the way who gave us a chance, mentored and helped guide us. Be that person for a current GC business student.

-Kyle Aldridge, president

Georgia College J. Whitney Bunting College of Business Alumni Council



Homecoming 2022 predicted to have higher-than-normal attendance

[Alumni](#) : Tuesday January 11, 2022

Tre' Johnson, assistant director, Awards, Collaborations and Reunions, expects Homecoming attendance to be one of the highest ever. The event takes place Feb. 25 - 26, 2022.

“Since Homecoming 2020 was the last major alumni event held before the Covid-19 pandemic shutdown, and Homecoming 2021 was virtual—this has only fueled the fire for many alumni to be back on campus,” he said. “The biggest benefit of attending Homecoming is alumni reconnecting with their alma mater.”

Georgia College alumni from all over the country travel to Milledgeville to connect with former classmates, friends and colleagues while also interacting with students.

The university is excited to bring back a few annual, in-person events, starting with the Homecoming concert. Although the headliner has not yet been announced publicly, Johnson thinks alumni will enjoy the performance.

On Saturday, Georgia College will host its annual alumni tailgate during Tent City. The university's tent is catered by Amici complimentary of its owner Jonathan

“Bob” Ewing, '06. Alumni who register for this event get great food, plus admission into the Men’s and Women’s Homecoming basketball games.

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“Based on our Alumni Week attendance, it seemed our alumni really missed campus and in-person interactions. That will only continue to grow with warmer weather and the typical buzz about Homecoming.”

- Tre' Johnson



Homecoming 2022

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The final event of Homecoming is “Taste of Milledgeville”—an annual event hosted by the Young Alumni Council. Some of Milledgeville’s finest eateries will be in attendance vying for the Taste of Milledgeville Champion trophy. This year, there will be different categories, so more than one establishment can take home a prized award.

“I’m excited to have this event in person once again, because it’s an affair that the whole community of Milledgeville can enjoy,” Johnson said.

There will be some additional reunions and exclusive alumni events throughout the weekend, including reunions for the 1996-1997 Men’s and 2001-2002 Women’s Basketball teams who won the Peach Belt Conference Championship. These groups are celebrating their 25th and 20th reunions, respectively.

“Based on our Alumni Week attendance, it seemed our alumni really missed campus and in-person interactions,” Johnson said. “That will only continue to grow with warmer weather and the typical buzz about Homecoming.”

To register for events throughout the weekend, visit:
<http://alumni.gcsu.edu/alumni-hc2022>.

The registration deadline is Feb. 17, 2022.

For any questions, please email: alumni@gcsu.edu.

News Stories Posted Friday January 14, 2022



Newell Scholar looks to impart an appreciation of indigenous sacred dance

[Philosophy Religion & Liberal Studies, Department of](#): Friday January 14, 2022

The love of dance runs deep for Dr. Carla Walter. It's not only the aesthetic value of it she enjoys but how it allows people to express their feelings and emotions and connects them to the world around them.

"I have always loved dance," said Walter. "From the time I was a young child, but also now, I love the spirituality of it."

As the Martha Daniel Newell Visiting Scholar for the Spring 2022 semester, Walter will teach Global Perspectives of Indigenous Dance and Religious Histories.

"Students are going to learn to analyze a culture's sense of being as it's related to indigenous dance," said Walter. "We will look at locations from Egypt to Africa to Mesoamerica over to the Polynesian Islands and Australia, back up to India, Mongolia, Tibet, back over to Persia, and then the Andes. So, the students are going to get a worldview."



Dr. Carla Walter.

Her career journey includes different fields and opportunities, but the thread that ties it all together for her is dance.

“Initially, I spent a lot of time developing my career in business, economics and finance,” said Walter. “At a certain point, the company I was working for was transitioning into a publicly traded corporation. That’s when I decided I wanted to go deeper into dance. I applied and got accepted to the doctoral program in dance history and theory at the University of California, Riverside with full fellowship.”

Just before completing her dissertation, she accepted a position as an assistant professor—but in the business department.

“My research started exploring the ways that dance can influence purchase behavior. I wrote and published books and articles in that area,” she said.

“One example of what we found through research was television commercials with dance in them increased respondents’ sense of connectedness and their sense of belonging, as well as, stimulated their feelings of awe and wonderment,” she said. “And these are important for impacting consumers through advertising.”

This research, she says, led her back “to the spirituality of dance.”

“Because when I was writing my book, ‘Dance Consumerism and Spirituality,’ I had the opportunity to review some of the emergent sources of biblical texts that were not included in some editions of the Bible,” she said.

What she found was that dance was often eliminated during the early translations of the Bible. This piqued her interest and led to more research.

All the while, she continued to take on new roles in higher education, but dance remained her passion and her research continued.



Students in Walter's class practice a movement routine.

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“The big religions have all tried, but dance is resurfacing because of the power that dance has for humanity, in terms of helping people with all kinds of human circumstances—transitioning and rituals, rites of passage and death, and questions about living.”

- Dr. Carla Walter

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“I started looking at different cultures, and I found that a lot of these major religions—Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism—most of them did a systematic silencing of sacred dance at different points in time,” said Walter.

“The big religions have all tried, but dance is resurfacing because of the power that dance has for humanity, in terms of helping people with all kinds of human circumstances—transitioning and rituals, rites of passage and death, and questions about living.”

Now serving as the Newell Scholar, she brings her research and experience to Georgia College students and the community.

She will host several presentations for the campus and community. The first takes place Tuesday, Jan. 25 at 7 p.m. in Peabody Auditorium of Kilpatrick Hall and is titled “Indigenous Sacred Dance and Religious Histories.” She will present some histories of indigenous sacred dance and religion from various points around the globe, dating before the Common Era. She says participants at the lecture may be inspired to join in simple choreography as they relate to particular indigenous peoples.

Two other presentations later in the spring semester will feature the work of her students. Those will be April 5 at 7 - 8 p.m. and April 26 at 7 - 8 p.m. Both take place in Ennis Hall 201.

Walter received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of California, Riverside in economics and a Master of Business Administration from California State University, San Bernardino. Her Doctor of Philosophy focuses on dance history and theory.

She has published several books including “Sacred Dance Meditations: 365 Globally Inspired Movement Practices Enhancing Awakening, Clarity, and Connection,” “Arts Management: An Entrepreneurial Approach” and “Dance, Consumerism, and Spirituality.”

The Martha Daniel Newell Visiting Scholar program was established in 2011 with an

endowment from Georgia College alumna, Mrs. Martha Daniel Newell. The Newell Visiting Scholar program promotes the Georgia College liberal arts mission by bringing to campus eminent scholars from the arts, humanities, social sciences and physical sciences, the disciplines at the heart of our liberal arts mission. More information is available [here](#).



Walters works with her class.

News Stories Posted Tuesday January 25, 2022



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

[General Institution](#) : Tuesday January 25, 2022

Several Georgia College graduate programs received national recognition in the recently published [“Best Online Programs Rankings”](#) for 2022 from U.S. News & World Report.

The highest-ranked in the state, the university’s online graduate [nursing programs](#) ranked 29th in the nation. These programs include the Master of Science in Nursing with track options of Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP), Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP), Women’s Health Nurse Practitioner (WHNP), Nurse Educator (NE) and Nurse Midwifery. Post-Master’s certificates in these concentrations are also offered for MSN-prepared nurses seeking certification.

The online master’s [degrees in business](#) (non-MBA) were listed 41st nationally—the second-highest ranked in the state. That includes Georgia College’s Master of



Graduate nursing students work in the lab

Logistics and Supply Chain Management and Master of Management Information Systems.

The [Master of Business Administration \(Georgia WebMBA®\) at Georgia College](#) was also recognized among the best in the country ranked at 69th—the second-highest public university in the state. The

program allows professionals to earn an MBA completely online without interrupting their work and personal lives.

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



WebMBA Banner

"The continued recognition of our online graduate programs as top tier in the state and the nation shows the exceptional quality of the education provided through the programs," said Dr. Costas Spirou, provost and vice president for academic affairs. "This would not be possible without the dedication of the faculty and staff who work within each program to ensure each student receives a high-quality education."



MAT students work in class.

U.S. News & World Report is a multi-platform publisher of news and information, which includes www.usnews.com as well as the digital-only U.S. News Weekly magazine. U.S. News publishes annual print and e-book versions of its authoritative rankings of Best Colleges, Best Graduate Schools and Best Hospitals. For more information on Georgia College's online graduate

programs, visit gcsu.edu/graduate.

News Stories Posted Thursday January 27, 2022



Art professor creates mural in downtown Macon

[Art, Department of](#) : Thursday January 27, 2022

For Abraham Abebe, creativity runs through his veins. With his skills, he can take a blank canvas and turn it into something both beautiful and meaningful.



Abraham Abebe works on the mural. (Photo from MTA)

From mid-December to mid-January, he worked most days from sun-up to sun-down installing a mural on Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority's Historic Terminal Station. Abebe braved the cold and wind working through both Christmas and New Year to complete "The Spirit of Macon."

"I started on Dec. 18. Then, from there, I just continued working every day—except two days in between there was rain, so I couldn't work," Abebe said. "I would go in the morning and finish when it got dark."

He scheduled the work between his semesters of teaching at Georgia College. Abebe is an associate professor of art and graphic design. This semester he's teaching Graphic Design,

Studio II, Graphic Design Studio III and Special Topics in Design.

“This was a great opportunity for me to have this kind of experience so that I can teach the techniques, the process and the ups and the downs of creating a mural for my students,” he said. “I hope they will be able to learn from my experience and also do things like this in the future when they get the opportunity.”

[The Spirit of Macon Mural](#)

Abebe created four murals—two indoors and two outdoors— while living in Las Vegas. This is, however, the largest he’s completed.

“I saw the announcement from the Macon-Bibb Transit Authority (MTA). Then I created and submitted two different proposals,” Abebe said. “The committee selected one of my proposals, and that's how I was chosen to do this.”

He based the design on the connection between the MTA and the community.

“I tried to develop the mural to magnify the significant service and contribution the MTA provides for the citizens and community in Macon,” Abebe said. “At the same time, I tried to reflect the diversity within the community as well. I used the power of the color in the warm energy just to show the harmony and unity in the diverse community.”



Along one side, the mural features an MTA bus with recognizable historical and modern buildings in Macon. It turns the corner to include several birds, a mosaic and sun.

“The MTA bus is a central element to bring the community together. I used it as a symbol to highlight its significant contribution,” said Abebe. “I also used birds as a conceptual element to reflect service of excellence, progress and achievement.”

“Macon is rich in history and culture. Therefore, the historical buildings were used to represent the historical significance of the city and the modern buildings were used to magnify the change and progress,” he said.

MTA was awarded the funds for this project through a Downtown Challenge Grant, 2.0 from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the Peyton Anderson Foundation.

“My exact words on the grant proposal were ‘the goal is to inject the dreary corner of Fifth and Poplar Streets with a bold injection of art,’” said Jami Gaudet, public information officer for MTA. “It was one of the most depressing corners—just awful—and now it's alive with color.”

Gaudet led the process to have the mural installed. From writing the original grant proposal to having a committee review the 12 applicants, she personally wanted something created that everyone could enjoy.

“These buses—every day we operate, multiple times a day—they all come past that corner,” Gaudet said. “I thought, wouldn't it be amazing for our bus operators and for our riders to see something beautiful, electric and inspiring.”

Although he faced some challenges along the way, Gaudet said Abebe aced the design and execution. Now the MTA drivers, riders and the community have something beautiful to enjoy.



Abraham Abebe (Photo from MTA)



Finished mural

“One day it was wind, and one day it was rain. One day, it was ice that melted,” Gaudet said. “Every day he's had a challenge, but he's unflappable. He never is cross about anything. He's just been delightful to work with.”

Proud to bring color and hopefully happiness to those who pass it, Abebe is grateful for

the opportunity to share his

work.

“It's a great feeling that I'm contributing something that's visual because 1000s of people every year pass through that station,” Abebe said. “They will be able to see this work and appreciate it because the wall was empty. There wasn't any kind of attraction. Now there's something they can see and appreciate.”

For more information on the mural and to see a day-by-day documentation of the process, visit <https://www.facebook.com/maconbibb.transit>.