

Front Page News Story Archive

May 2022



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News Stories Posted Monday May 2, 2022



Liberal arts approach leads alum to fulfilling career

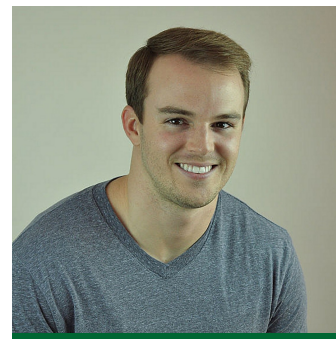
[Communication, Department of](#) : Monday May 2, 2022

Clint Burkett, '15, did not finish his collegiate journey where he expected, like most Georgia College & State University (GCSU) graduates.

Instead, the Bacon County native discovered his passion for rhetoric through GCSU's liberal arts approach—dynamic classes for beginning students.

Burkett enjoyed his rhetoric classes, and found them more compelling than his major in early childhood development. That breakthrough led him to where he is now—pastor at The Bridge Church in Blackshear, Georgia.

Since graduating, Burkett has worked in ministry. Before his current position as pastor, Burkett worked as an associate pastor and student director at the church.



Clint Burkett



Clint Burkett

“Whether it be a small setting or a large one, rhetoric helped define my people skills and made me a more confident speaker,” Burkett said. “I developed skills to use in my career, and my rhetoric classes and faculty allowed me to be my authentic self.”

“I joke with people that I went to college to get a degree, and I have the piece of paper, but really what I got out of college was the friendships that will last me a lifetime,” he said.

For years since his graduation, Burkett and his Bobcat buddies

made it tradition to travel with their families and catch up. They meet up every year and take a group vacation to the lake.

As they enjoy fun in the Milledgeville sun, the reminisce on their days at GCSU. As the years go by and their families evolve, one constant remains: Burkett and friends will always be Bobcats.

“We are all a work in progress, no one is perfect and we are all growing and moving,” Burkett said. “GCSU and the rhetoric department helped me learn and accept that.”

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We are all a work in progress, no one is perfect. We are always growing and moving. GC and the rhetoric department helped me learn and be ok with that.

- Clint Burkett

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“In most degree paths you finish work and assignments. In the rhetoric department, you are the assignment,” he said. “You are only as good as how much you are willing to change and learn about others.”

Burkett now spends his days working in ministry and enjoys being with his family. He also is very excited for the next chapter in his life. Burkett is the proud husband

of Alaina Burkett and father to Joy, who had her first birthday this year.



Class of 2022: Student gains appreciation for history

[History & Geography, Department of](#): Monday May 2, 2022

Deanna Sorrells didn't realize she liked history until she walked into Dr. Stephen Auerbach's World Civilization classroom as a first-year student at Georgia College. The Savannah-born and -raised history major now can't get enough of it.

"Dr. Auerbach's the reason I wanted to major in history. The way he taught it was more like he was telling a story," she said. "It was more narrative than just providing dates and names. And I have not looked back."

Sorrells has taken four courses with Auerbach, and though each one is different, she feels they build on top of each other.

"I can go back to that first course and be like, 'Oh, this applies here,'" she said. "Connecting the dots has never been an issue with his teachings."



Deanna Sorrells sits on the front porch steps of Andalusia.

Sorrells works at Andalusia—the home of famed writer Flannery O’Connor—as a docent. She enjoys meeting new people and sharing information about O’Connor and her home.

However, she finds the most exciting part of her job is working with the peafowl. There is a peacock named Astor and hen named Mrs. Shortly on the property. Sorrells feeds them and cleans their pen every day.

“They’re mostly pretty chill, but Mrs. Shortly is more territorial, she said. “If she’s not in a good mood, I just toss the food in and go my own way. Astor is very laid back. They’re in a pen for their own safety. But they’re fine with people walking up to them to say ‘hi.’”

Although Sorrells heard about Flannery O’Connor in middle and high school, it wasn’t until she took Dr. Bruce Gentry’s Flannery O’Connor English course that it clicked with her. She drew from her experience at Andalusia and then coupled it with O’Connor’s literature to gain better insight into who O’Connor was.



Meet Astor.

Sorrells was recently initiated into Phi Alpha Theta—the American Honor Society for history. She’s also in the History Club, where she enjoyed meeting other history majors and English and liberal studies majors.

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“I can never look at a museum the same way. I’m always dissecting the exhibits. Through that experience and learning Dr. Auerbach’s way of educating history to others through stories, I’ve learned what profession I want to pursue.”

- Deanna Sorrells

Matt Davis, director of Historic Museums at Georgia College, taught two of her museum studies courses. She applied what she learned to her Andalusia job, working in collections.

“I can never look at a museum the same way,” Sorrells said. “I’m always dissecting the exhibits. Through that experience and learning Dr. Auerbach’s way of educating history to others through stories, I’ve learned what profession I want to pursue.”

Sorrells has been accepted to the Graduate Library Science program at the University of Alabama, where she will begin her studies in the fall.

“I will take the archival certificate route, working in museum archives and even state archives,” she said, “I’m very excited about this endeavor.”

News Stories Posted Tuesday May 3, 2022



Class of 2022: Special education major wants to end late diagnoses of disabilities

[Teacher Education, Department of](#) : Tuesday May 3, 2022

When her friend was diagnosed with a learning disability in high school, special education major Ileana DeJesus was ignited with passion for children with learning disabilities—and supporting them in the classroom.

“I wanted to be a doctor, and it’s kind of a funny story, because I was horrible at biology in 9th grade,” she said. “Now, I teach high school biology, so I’ve come full-circle.”

Right now, the Henry County native is a student teacher of biology at Jones County High School in Gray, Georgia. With her partner teacher, DeJesus teaches three classes with a mix of students—those without disabilities, alongside special education students. Her students typically have a mild disability, but the work still presents challenges.

“A lot of our students have low reading levels,” she said. “I have kids who are in 9th, 10th and 11th grade who have the reading level of second graders and the

reading comprehension of third graders.”

The challenge, though, is why she does it. In one classroom, DeJesus may have children in her class who need attention, have trouble with motivation or lack vocabulary. To teach them she has to be creative and break complex topics into their most basic parts.

“Reward doesn’t come that day, the next day, in a week or in a month,” she said. “It’s very frustrating—I don’t want to sugarcoat it—but when a student gets a concept, it’s like we made it together.”

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**When a student gets a concept,
it’s like we made it together.**
- Ileana DeJesus

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Some of her students are placed in her class because of behavior. This presents DeJesus with a unique opportunity to make a mark on their lives.

“I’m glad when I have a second to talk to them, like they’re people,” she said. “They might not get it now, but hopefully they’ll look back and think, ‘That one lady told me I can’t be rude to others because of what I’m going through.’”

Her approach to teaching, informed by experience and her Georgia College professors, is soft but firm. DeJesus’ cohort leader Mary Hiller Crook, limited term lecturer of teacher education, inspired her approach through encouragement and support.

“I had a professor who said ‘the earliest and easiest respect is learning somebody’s name correctly,’” DeJesus said. “That really stuck with me. I think about my friends who went to other schools in classes of 270 and their professors aren’t learning their names.”



Ileana DeJesus.

DeJesus is on her way to become a two-time graduate of Georgia College. She will start the master's in special education program at Georgia College online in June. In tandem, she'll teach at the Boyce L. Ansley School in Atlanta, Georgia—a nonprofit, private and tuition-free school for children who have or are experiencing homelessness.

“When I’m an educator, I want to allow space for being a soft and supportive person, but also that person who holds you accountable,” she said. “When a student is happy to see you, that’s the biggest thing.”



From 1994 to now: College of Business honors nontraditional management major

[Management, Marketing, & Logistics, Department of](#): Tuesday May 3, 2022

Jason Silvey, senior management major, is married with two children and has 20 years of work experience—he's also been selected as the Outstanding Management Major for the College of Business (COB).

This title is bestowed on a graduating management senior who demonstrates exemplary performance and involvement. The selected student represents their department at the COB annual awards banquet, Atkinson Honors.

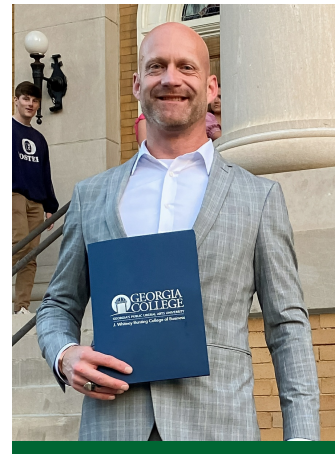
"I'm really excited and still in awe that I won outstanding management major, because I've seen quite a few people I thought were more deserving," Silvey said. "I am honored that I was able to leave a mark on enough people that I was elected."

His journey into higher education began in 1994, when Magnolia Ballroom was the nave of a church. A few years later, that trajectory was cut short when Silvey withdrew.

In the following 20 years, he worked in the metals, recycling and scrap industry, where he drove sales, business development and manufacturing for European companies.

He'd always wanted to go back to school, and when he was laid off during the pandemic it became imperative. By this point, Silvey already had a family and lived in the North Atlanta area.

But the 99-mile, one-way commute didn't stop him. And despite his unique obstacles, Silvey never faltered in his studies.



Jason Silvey.

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Even with the experience and success that I've had, having that piece of paper and knowledge that comes with a degree goes a long way in getting you a few steps ahead of anyone else.

- Jason Silvey

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“We knew there'd be some sacrifice on my part, but my wife and kids have been supportive the entire way,” Silvey said. “Even with the experience and success that I've had, having that piece of paper and knowledge that comes with a degree goes a long way in getting you a few steps ahead of anyone else.”

He would say he didn't accomplish this alone, though.

“The professors I've taken have all been great,” Silvey said. “I've been excited about the classes I've had and the professors I've had because I feel like that's been worth more than if I took all the same classes at a different school.”

Silvey stood out to his professors because he showed up early to lectures and consistently performed at the top of the class. In their nominations of him, his professors described him as diligent, outgoing and polite, all while actively participating in discussion.

“Jason has not only been great at teaching his professors, but he is more than happy to share his wealth of experience with students,” said Aric Wilhau, assistant professor of management. “He's an ideal student. He will always have an answer. And when I arrive at 8 a.m. classes, I know he'll be sitting there studying.”

Silvey has two more classes before he graduates in the summer, but he will walk with this year's spring graduates. He was hired by an Austrian metal company in April, and he'll take what he's learned with him.

"I'm still kind of in shock," he said. "My first time in school, I wasn't known as being studious. To receive any kind of award is still a foreign feeling. It feels good, and I'm honored that I was chosen."



Kendall Stiles honored with the Giving Tree award

[Community Engagement and Service, Office of](#) : Tuesday May 3, 2022

You may have read the book “The Giving Tree” by Shel Silverstein as a child. It follows the life of a tree and a boy. As the boy grows, he takes more and more from the tree, yet the tree continues to willingly give.

The book has a much deeper meaning than just helping young children learn to read. It highlights the lasting impact those willing to “give” can have on others.

This book inspired an award at Georgia College by the same name. Since 1996, it’s been given by the GIVE Center to a person who has left a lasting legacy of service at the university. A tree is also planted in their honor.

This year, the honoree’s impact on Georgia College and the Milledgeville community can hardly be quantified.

“To me, the Giving Tree Award is one of the best awards we do,” said Kendall Stiles. “It’s a neat thing to have one now in honor of me.”

Stiles founded the GIVE Center, which serves to connect students with service opportunities on campus and in the community, in 1997. She’s worked with thousands of students over the years and left a mark in each person’s heart. This

year she was recognized with the Giving Tree award.

“Her support and encouragement have meant so much to me—as it has to so many of us through the years. Yet, Kendall’s story of mentorship and friendship is not unique to me. It’s just how Kendall is,” Dr. Jennifer Graham, director of the Women’s Center and interim chief diversity officer, said at the ceremony.



From left to right: Jennifer Graham, Barbara Coleman and Kendall Stiles.

“So many of us who worked with Kendall through the GIVE Center have been blessed by this mentorship and friendship, and it didn’t stop when we graduated, as evidenced by the fact that there are so many of us here today,” Graham added. About 20 alumni came back to Georgia College to honor Stiles. Each echoed Graham’s sentiment about the impact Stiles had on their lives.



Photo fo the dedication event.

“I never saw myself as a leader,” said Sabrina Bryant, ’19, “But she’s been, frankly, like a mother to me while I was here— she’s like family.”

“Kendall really showed me how to give back to the people who pour into you,” said Bianca Diaz, ’17. “She also taught me how much a small impact can make and how that can motivate others around you to continue to make that impact.”

“Really no other person thought that we could bring something like Campus Kitchen to Georgia College’s campus. Kendall was the first person who thought we could,” said Cameron Skinner, ’18. “Even after that, as I stayed on as full-time staff after graduating, Kendall became one of my best friends, and she’s always just been very supportive of any student endeavor ever possible.”

Staff, faculty and community members also attended celebrating Stiles’ impact throughout Milledgeville and beyond.

“It was good to see everybody and to see how things are going,” Stiles said. “You know, having the alumni here, that was wonderful. That was so touching.”

During the ceremony, Kristy Johnson, director of Student Activities & Organizations, read the book “The



Giving Tree.” Emily Jarvis, executive director of Student Engagement and director of Parent and Family Programs, gave a history of the award and spoke about the legacy Stiles has left after her recent retirement.

Emily Jarvis speaks at the ceremony.

“Students who may never have the privilege of meeting Kendall will continue to benefit from her vision, her passion and her incredible spirit,” Jarvis said. “She has made an indelible impact on Georgia College. She has shepherded 1000s of students through their journeys of service and servant leadership. She established the culture of giving back that distinguishes the Georgia College experience.”

The tree planted was a Ginkgo, which was the same species as the one planted for the first Giving Tree ceremony in 1996. As the tree grows, so will the culture of giving at Georgia College—thanks to the strong foundation Stiles set in place.

“I can't wait to see her legacy continue to grow on campus and how Georgia College will continue to provide opportunities for students that are into service,” Skinner said. “Hopefully, they continue to maximize the GIVE Center’s potential.”

Graham—who was also a Giving Tree award recipient as a student—said Stiles did more than just support students in their ideas. She offered space, organizational and project management skills and ways to hone their passions to help make the community better.

“We celebrate Kendall and all of the ways that she has contributed to this institution, to the greater Milledgeville community, to the GIVE Center and most importantly, to all of us,” Graham said. “I can't think of a better way to recognize her legacy than through the Giving Tree Award.”



Alumni of the GIVE Center came to honor Stiles.

News Stories Posted Wednesday May 4, 2022



Class of 2022: Psych major researches cognitive and neuro-behavior with dog by her side

[Psychological Science, Department of](#) : Wednesday May 4, 2022

Mackenzie Van Boxel

From: McDonough, Georgia

Why Georgia College: My lovely sister inspired me to take a chance and come to Georgia College. I was really swayed by the small class sizes and the intimate relationships students were able to craft with their professors.

Major/Minor: Psychology with a minor in creative arts therapy.

Medical Alert Dog: Artemis, a 9-year-old golden retriever, though we call him rose-golden because he has a little red in his coat. He's a medical alert dog for narcolepsy and panic attacks. He assists me due to my various sleep disorders. When I fall asleep, he either tries to wake me up, get someone else to wake me up or lays on me for security. I often fall asleep in reaction to high emotions, stress, and exhaustion. This came to a head when I was a freshman and fell asleep in an



Van Boxel and
Artemis

alleyway at night. My mom decided I needed someone who could look after me 24/7 and Artemis was chosen!

Research: I was active in research in my department, signing up for two labs—cognitive psychology and neuro-behavioral psychology—as well as doing my own thesis on rest. I've been a part of more than five research projects, between my two labs and thesis. In my neuro-behavioral lab, we focused on manipulating cricket and tardigrade behavior. Through this, I learned how to design and execute procedures on a small scale with subjects that cannot understand reasoning. Though frustrating at times, I thoroughly enjoyed it. In my cognitive lab, we focused on

decision-making in humans. I learned how to design a study from scratch and work in a group research setting. The research I'm most proud of is my senior thesis on rest and wayfinding. I've always been passionate about sleep research, and this was my chance to dip my toes into the field. The feeling of creating and running a study on my own was exhilarating and exhausting. I learned resilience, patience and the joy of seeing my research come to fruition. Unfortunately, most of the results from my various projects were insignificant. But just because the results aren't significant doesn't mean we can't learn something from them!



Biggest achievement: Proving to myself that I'm worthy of success. I've dealt with a lot of imposter syndrome in my life. When I was honored with the Euri Belle Bolton Award for outstanding research, it solidified that I am a competent and professional researcher.

Favorite professor: I would say the professor I got the closest too was Dr. Young from the psychology department. She pushed me to do my thesis and has been an amazing advisor over the past year. She encouraged me to be the best version of myself and treats her students with compassion. Her talent and wisdom cannot be spoken of highly enough.

Most impactful moment: For me, it would have to be the SEPA (Southeastern Psychological Association) conference. Being able to nerd out about research and interact with fellow researchers and professors in a casual way was, for sure, a highlight. It was also the one time I let Artemis off harness and everyone got to pet and play with him. It was a great experience for both of us.



What she'll miss most: The community and relationships I have built within the program. I've always been sort of a loner. So, having this built-in community of like-minded people was amazing for me. I think I'll miss my professors the most, though. I've worked hard to develop strong relationships with most of the professors in my department.

Advice for incoming freshmen: Get in a lab ASAP! Not only will you experience hands-on research in creative ways, but you'll also strengthen your relationship with peers and professors. My lab mates like to say we were 'trauma bonded' from all the work we did. It really is a wonderful experience, both socially and academically.

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It can often feel like you don't have time to do everything, and that's okay. Make sure to take time for yourself and check in with how you're feeling throughout your time here. If you are too focused on the grind, there may be nothing left of you by the time it's all over. Make friends, make memories and make mistakes. That's what college is for.

- MacKenzie Van Boxel

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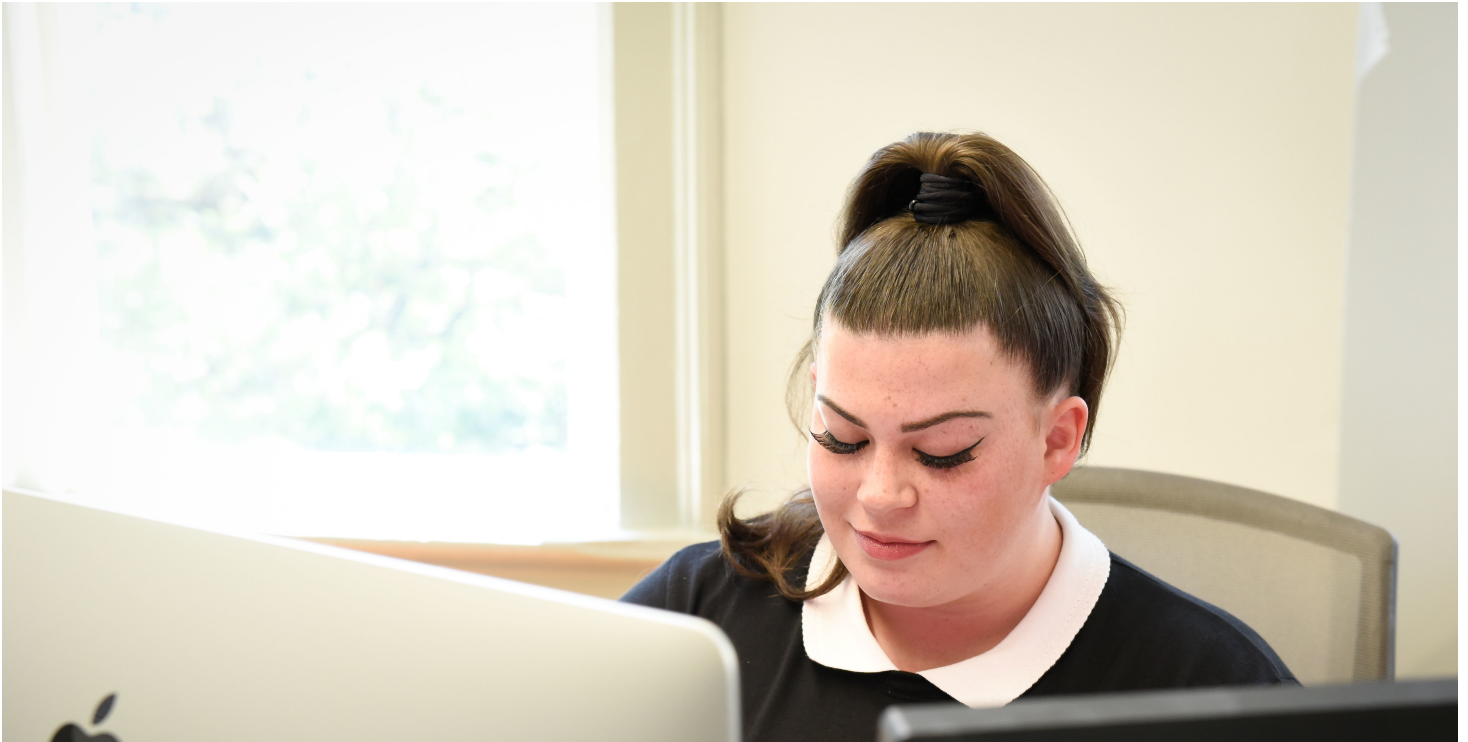
Key to success in college: Time and emotional management. Too often, have I allowed my ambitions in school to take over my social life and mental health. It can

often feel like you don't have time to do everything, and that's okay. Make sure to take time for yourself and check in with how you're feeling throughout your time here. If you are too focused on the grind, there may be nothing left of you by the time it's all over. Make friends, make memories and make mistakes. That's what college is for.

How she's changed in four years: I've become more emotionally intelligent and more resilient. I've also learned to be kinder to myself. I used to cry and panic over every little mistake I made. Now I'm confident in my abilities and can navigate through tough situations in a mindful way. One bad test grade isn't the end of the world, and it doesn't represent who you are as a person.

Future plans: I plan on following my passions and going into the sleep research field. My long-term goal is to become a somnologist, a doctor who diagnoses and treats sleep disorders. I want to help people who have the same experiences and worries as I do. While there's no specific sleep program at Georgia College—the psychology program taught me how to be an effective researcher and how to pursue a professional career. They don't just teach you psychology but also how to apply it to your life moving forward, whether that be getting your doctorate or going straight into the workforce.

News Stories Posted Thursday May 5, 2022



Class of 2022: Mass Comm student chosen for prestigious youth exchange program to Germany

[Communication, Department of](#) : Thursday May 5, 2022

A graduating mass communication major is the first Georgia College student to be awarded a competitive young fellowship award through the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Senior Jenna Byrd of Alpharetta was named a fellow for the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) Program for Young Professionals. She will join a cohort of 75 other young graduates of all majors and disciplines from around the United States for a yearlong learning and working adventure in Germany.

"This is a very exciting program that is going to allow Jenna to have an immersive experience in Germany, where she'll put into practice skills she learned in her German classes at Georgia College, as well as in her mass comm classes as she will complete an internship. It's a very competitive program, so it says a lot that Jenna was selected," said Anna Whiteside, coordinator of the National Scholarships Office at Georgia College.

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The entire program is formatted to make us young diplomats.

- Byrd

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The CBYX program is completely funded by the German Bundestag and U.S. State Department. Each year, 75 American and 75 German young professionals, age 18 ½ to 24, swap countries. Many live with host families for an authentic experience, immersed in a new culture, while taking language and university classes in their chosen fields. The program ends with a four-month-long paid internship abroad.

Byrd flies to Washington D.C. July 27 for a three-day orientation then to Germany on the 30th. The first two months are spent learning German—something that won’t be as difficult for Byrd, since she took four years of German in high school and two in college. After language classes, she’ll be assigned to a German university to learn more about mass communication and other related topics. Her time there will end with an internship.

“The entire program is formatted to make us young diplomats.” Byrd said. “I’ve been in ambassador positions with other companies but being an ambassador for Congress is really exciting. I’m told a lot of alum from this program tend to work in international marketing or international relations. I wouldn’t mind that at all. It piques my interest because I love traveling.”



Jenna Byrd

Byrd describes herself as an extrovert. It’s an understatement to say she’s been busy at Georgia College, putting her university years to good use.

Her resume is hard to fit on one page. Byrd worked with Bobcat Media Productions for three years. She’s a member of Alpha Omicron Pi Fraternity, Order of Omega Honors Society, the American Marketing Association’s GC chapter and the student chapter of the Broadcasting Education Association.

Byrd worked as director of public relations and vice president of the university’s PRSSA organization (Public Relations Student Society of America). She is in the national communication association honor's society, Lambda Pi Eta, and found time to walk dogs at Baldwin County Animal Shelter. She also volunteers with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Big Brothers Big Sisters in Macon.

One summer, Byrd did an internship with a small coaching business, Mitchell+McClure in Atlanta. She did photography, graphic design and general planning for them. On campus, she promoted Guayaki Yerba Mate, a Brazilian tea, and worked with Amazon Prime Student.

Byrd gushes with thanks to all her professors, who prepared her for this next challenge in life. When she arrived, Byrd thought she'd immediately transfer to another school. But she's grown to love and appreciate the small-school atmosphere and deep connections she made here.

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Being a young woman, I will never be quiet. I will always be talking and fighting for what's important to me. This little tightknit community really changed that for me, and I wouldn't trade my experience for the world.

- Byrd

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Her advice for incoming freshmen is to speak up in class and get involved in organizations. A lot of “amazing people come out of Georgia College,” she said, “and if you utilize your tools, you could be one of them.”

“When I first got here, I was extremely and deeply insecure,” Byrd said. “I had a ‘fake it ‘til you make it’ mindset. Eventually, I stopped faking it. I realized you can take pride in small accomplishments; you don't have to be humble all the time; you can brag on yourself.”

“Being a young woman, I will never be quiet. I will always be talking and fighting for what's important to me,” she said. “This little tightknit community really changed that for me, and I wouldn't trade my experience for the world.”

Byrd particularly thanks Dr. Mikkel Christensen, assistant professor of strategic communication. In May, she's going on a study abroad trip with mass comm students and Christensen to his home country, Denmark. One of their excursions there will be to the National Danish Broadcasting Corporation, where Christensen used to work.

In June, Byrd will visit with family at Lake Tahoe in California. Then, she's off to D.C. and Germany in July.

This hectic lifestyle fits her bubbly personality. She loves hiking, kayaking, swimming, traveling, modern art, podcasts and Squishmallows™® stuffed animals. Her dream is to live in a beach house near a nice city and one day own a public relations agency.

“When I get back from Germany,” Byrd said, “I see myself putting the work in and reflecting on what I took from being a young diplomat, because that’s just the craziest thing. I’m some college kid from Georgia. It’s weird to be flipping gears and working with Congress in this internationally recognized organization.”

“But it’s also really cool, and it’s something I’ve worked hard for,” she said. “So, I have a feeling only good things will come from it.”

News Stories Posted Monday May 9, 2022



Georgia College students coordinate statewide event for girls with disabilities

[Student Organizations & Clubs](#) : Monday May 9, 2022

It's a day filled with primping, poise and personal development. Run like a pageant, the Miss Amazing event teaches self-advocacy skills to girls and women with disabilities in a fun environment.

Participants take part in an interview, a passion presentation that showcases a talent or hobby, get their hair and makeup done, then bring it all together for the final show.

"Miss Amazing is an advocacy program for girls and women with disabilities," said Caroline Pederson, junior special education major and Georgia director for Miss Amazing. "We work to dispel stereotypes and build confidence in a safe environment."

Pederson began working with the program in high school. Since then, she's taken on several different roles and served as director of the Georgia chapter for the last two years. During that time, she brought the event from Atlanta to Milledgeville and

created a registered student organization for Miss Amazing at Georgia College.

“We’ve got a good number of participants and student volunteers now, but we also have volunteers from across the state since it’s a statewide event,” Pederson said.

During this academic year, the group worked to raise money and awareness about the project on campus.

“Miss Amazing has been a way for me to get more involved and get more experience with working with women with special needs,” said junior Halle Staples, a special education major.

“I’m currently the fundraising coordinator, so I’ve been working to create events to raise money for our big event in April.”

This year, Pederson says they’ve raised more money than in the last several years thanks to the efforts of Staples and others. The funds are used to buy supplies and other items for the main event. The remainder is used to help send the division queens to the national competition in Nashville.

“For the girls that win our division, they get to go to nationals,” Pederson said. “There’s a national fee that they have to cover, and we can help their family with travel expenses.”

For some, it may be the first time their family has traveled to an event specifically for their daughter with exceptionalities.

“I’ve had parents tell me before this is the first time that we’ve ever gone out of state or gone to a weekend event just for our daughter with a disability,” said Pederson. “They say ‘We have other kids and go to sports tournaments all the time for them, but it’s always about them. It’s never about my daughter.’”



A participant and volunteer pose for a photo.



Participant smiles before she takes the stage.

Miss Amazing is all about them. Each girl is assigned a buddy, which is a Georgia College student who becomes “their best friend that day,” Pederson says.



Caroline Pederson

“That’s our goal— to be best friends with the participants,” Pederson said. “The whole concept is to make friends and help them learn to love themselves.”

Girls can participate as young as five. There’s no age limit, but this year, the oldest of the 14 participants is 41 years old.

Throughout the year, the Miss Amazing organization on campus connects with girls across the country in many ways.

“My friend who runs South Dakota’s Miss Amazing told me one of her participants got assaulted at her school dance,” Pederson said. “Our organization wrote letters and words of encouragement for a little pick me up for her.”

They did the same for another participant whose house burned down a few months ago.

It’s the small things that sometimes that have the biggest impact for these girls, who know what it’s like to be different.

“For the main event, it’s great to see such a lively environment. You can tell everybody is excited to be there and everyone is so encouraging,” Staples said. “The participants are so kind to one

another. It’s just so sweet to see how everybody interacts with one another, which is honestly most impactful to me.”

For Pederson, the work to coordinate an event of this size can be grueling at times. But she’s proud of the team she’s established and the effort everyone put in the



A winner is crowned.

make this year's event a success.

"To see the joyous smiles on each of their faces makes it all worth it," Pederson said. "They've probably taught me more about self-confidence than any other experience in my life."

More information on the Miss Amazing program is available [here](#).



Student recognized with the Leadership in Moral Courage Bobcat Award

[Psychological Science, Department of](#) : Monday May 9, 2022

Moral courage is the fortitude to take actions for moral reasons despite the risk of adverse consequences. It's a trait often developed through personal hardships and challenges. It is driven by empathy and compassion for others and a desire to stop injustice or pain.

It's not just the recognition of a moral challenge and choosing how to act morally, but also following through to create change. Moral courage does not have to change the world. Sometimes the greatest acts change the world for just one person.

This past April, Georgia College granted the 2022 Leadership in Moral Courage Bobcat Award to junior psychology major Milo Morris for her courage to challenge what she believed was wrong and followed through with an open letter to create change. Morris was also awarded an academic scholarship from two anonymous donors for her efforts.

The day of the award presentation, Morris was a bit down from a challenging semester and didn't want to attend.

“Receiving this award felt a little like imposter syndrome at first,” she said. “Now, it feels surreal getting that kind of recognition.”

The award bolstered Morris, giving her energy to finish the rest of the semester strong.

At the start of the 2021 fall semester, Morris noticed there were no COVID mandates. So, she started typing a letter out of concern.

“In the letter, I wrote that I was really upset with the expectation that I plan events, as a Community Advisor (CA) for University Housing, which are meant to draw in crowds during COVID,” Morris said. “It felt wrong to me.”

She wrote about her personal concern along with their professor’s concern of exposure to COVID.

“There was a lot going on in my head, so I just had to get it out by writing,” Morris said. “I didn’t know if I was going to send the letter to anyone. I just wanted to get my feelings out and ended up writing three pages.”

The letter was sent to administration through the student complaint form. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Jim Schiffman, former associate professor of communication, asked if he could publish the abridged version for GC 360—the student news station.

“I was super concerned because I thought if this message was public, there are anti-vaxxers at the school who don’t believe COVID is a big deal,” Morris said. “And I was afraid of being targeted on campus and being discriminated against by professors. But I just had to take the leap of faith to see where it would go.”

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“It’s really important to not lead through dictatorship style, but to empower other people to take action. I did that in a tangible way. So, this experience helped me realize the impact I can make. It’s cool seeing it in action.”

- Milo Morris



Milo Morris with her Bobcat Award.

Her letter ended up going viral.

“I hoped that putting that pressure out there would help inspire change on campus,” she said.

Morris applied independent thinking and creative leadership skills she’s learned during her time at Georgia College.

“This might be the boldest I’ve been, at least in a very visible way,” said Morris. “So, Georgia College helped me realize that I’m completely within my rights to express my opinions, as long as I do so in a way that doesn’t disrespect people.”

After graduation next year, she aspires to become a counselor specializing in women with PTSD and individuals with chronic and terminal illness.



Milo Morris

In a way, Morris gets practice now as a CA listening to concerns of students who’ve just graduated from high school.

“As a CA, I’m their role model for how a college student acts,” she said. “In my first year working as a CA, I became really close with the students enrolled in the Bridge Scholars Program throughout the building.”

With the scholarship ready to go and “good vibes” shared as the recipient of the award, Morris is ready to take on senior year.

The willingness to take action taught her to be courageous.

“It’s really important to not lead through dictatorship style, but to empower other people to take action,” Morris said. “I did that in a tangible way. So, this experience helped me realize the impact I can make. It’s cool seeing it in action.”

News Stories Posted Tuesday May 10, 2022



Ennis Hall inspires namesake

[Alumni](#) : Tuesday May 10, 2022

Ennis Hall has such heart-felt significance to Seth, '14, '15 and Kristina Patterson, '15, that they named their business “Ennis Park” after the structure.

As a student, Kristina appreciated the building’s beauty before it underwent renovation. She was fascinated by the architecture.

“Even though it was empty at the time, I wanted to see the inside,” she said. “When Ennis Hall opened, it was so exciting for me to tour it and take courses there. I’m sure students who get to do even more than I did in that building have really enjoyed it.”

Although Ennis Hall was being renovated much of the time they spent on campus, Kristina took art history courses there after it opened her senior year.

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“Ennis Hall became that place at Georgia College, where all the art discipline

students came together into one gathering place. I thought Ennis Hall was a cool name. Ennis Park also represents what we do by bringing all of these high-quality artisans together into one place.”
- Kristina Patterson

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“It was really cool how Ennis Hall brought all the art students together, whereas before we were all spread out in small buildings across campus,” she said. “This is what our shop does for us now.”

The couple’s store is a collection of different artisan goods including pottery, woodworking, visual arts, textiles and more.

“It’s all of the arts brought together into one shop,” Seth said.



Kristina packs a box with an item from Ennis Park.



Seth and Kristina Patterson at Ennis Park.

“Ennis Hall became that place at Georgia College, where all the art discipline students came together into one gathering place,” Kristina said. “I thought Ennis Hall was a cool name. Ennis Park also represents what we do by bringing all of these high-quality artisans together into one place.”

“We also wanted something that was significant to us in our lives,” Seth said. “Ennis Hall was really a representation of Georgia College as a whole.”

“Every time I crossed Front Campus, I thought it was so beautiful,” Kristina said. “It’s just a representation of a bit of our years at Georgia College.”

Their Georgia College education helped prepare them to create and operate Ennis Park.

As an art major, Kristina refers to her education as very well-rounded. Not only did she take art courses, but she took business courses, as well.

Seth was a mass communication major with a concentration in advertising. He earned his MBA while serving as a senator-at-large in the Student Government Association (SGA).

“I love the MBA program,” he said. “It was a small group of us in that cohort. And

we became really close over the course of that year.”

Earning his MBA gave Seth the opportunity to go to Australia for an international business experience, which he called “amazing.”

“When you're starting your own business, there's no instruction manual on how to do it. So creative thinking is a huge aspect of that,” Seth said. “The other part is how GC’s reason, respect and responsibility applies. Our core values are centered in providing living wages to artisans worldwide. We want to make sure they're paid fairly, have safe working conditions and that the production of their goods is made in an environmentally friendly way.”

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“We also wanted something that was significant to us in our lives,” Seth said.

“Ennis Hall was really a representation of Georgia College as a whole.”

- Seth Patterson

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Seth works full-time in sales for Cisco Systems as a partner account manager in Atlanta, but he also works with Kristina at Ennis Park. He’s the in-house photographer for the website among other duties. From advertising to creating and maintaining a website to packing orders and finding artisans, the couple does it all.

Kristina and Seth are life-long learners. They especially enjoy the challenge of constantly learning and growing their business.

“I get really excited about that,” she said. “I think in this business, there's a feeling that you've never arrived. I’m always learning new things in every aspect of running a business. And that's what really excites me the most about it.”

Seth knows the importance of patience when starting his business. He advises those who are starting their own business to cultivate that virtue.

“It’s a lot of fun building something that you can call your own,” Seth said. “But it's also going to be difficult and take time. You’ll never know everything, so just jump in and expect it to be one big learning experience. Expect failures. Instead of quitting, use those moments to grow.”

[Learn more about Ennis Park](#)—Timeless housewares for simple living.



Class of 2022: Outstanding student receives medallion for two colleges

[Economics & Finance, Department of](#) : Tuesday May 10, 2022

Before commencement every year, each college of the university selects an outstanding student to receive a medallion commemorating their undergraduate achievement. This year, Savannah Taylor, senior economics and world languages and cultures double-major, won two.

The College of Business (COB) and College of Arts and Sciences (COAS) both awarded Taylor their 2022 Outstanding Student Awards. She was also named Georgia College's Newman Civic Fellow earlier in the year.

"There are so many people I wish I could thank," she said. "The list is so long, because it took an army to get me here. I'm blown away. I would not in a million years have thought this is where I would have ended up—I'm very thankful for it."

Medallion recipients are selected based on a mixture of academic achievement, campus and community involvement and additional undergraduate criteria. They are presented with the medallion at each colleges' awards ceremony and recognized at their graduation.

Outstanding students are selected from each major and chosen to represent the

college. For COAS, Taylor was the Humanities and Social Sciences division recipient.

When she graduates, Taylor will be the public policy and research manager at the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. In this role, she will be immersed in policy, working to introduce Georgia businesses to sustainable practices.

She will work with Chris Clark, president and CEO of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, an alumnus and speaker at spring graduation.

“A lot of people get scared when they hear sustainability,” Taylor said. “We want to rework that in people’s heads to show them how it will be good for their business and good for their people. As long as I’m doing what I’m interested in and working for groups that I care about, I’ll be happy.”

The possibility of earning a sustainability certificate is one factor that drew Taylor to Georgia College. While here, she’s been a part of the Gardening Club, served as the West Campus Garden manager, crafted and maintained educational outreach and created a garden-bed rental program.



Savannah Taylor



photo of medallions

She also had a hand in Georgia College's compost production program, which will continue and expand after Taylor graduates.

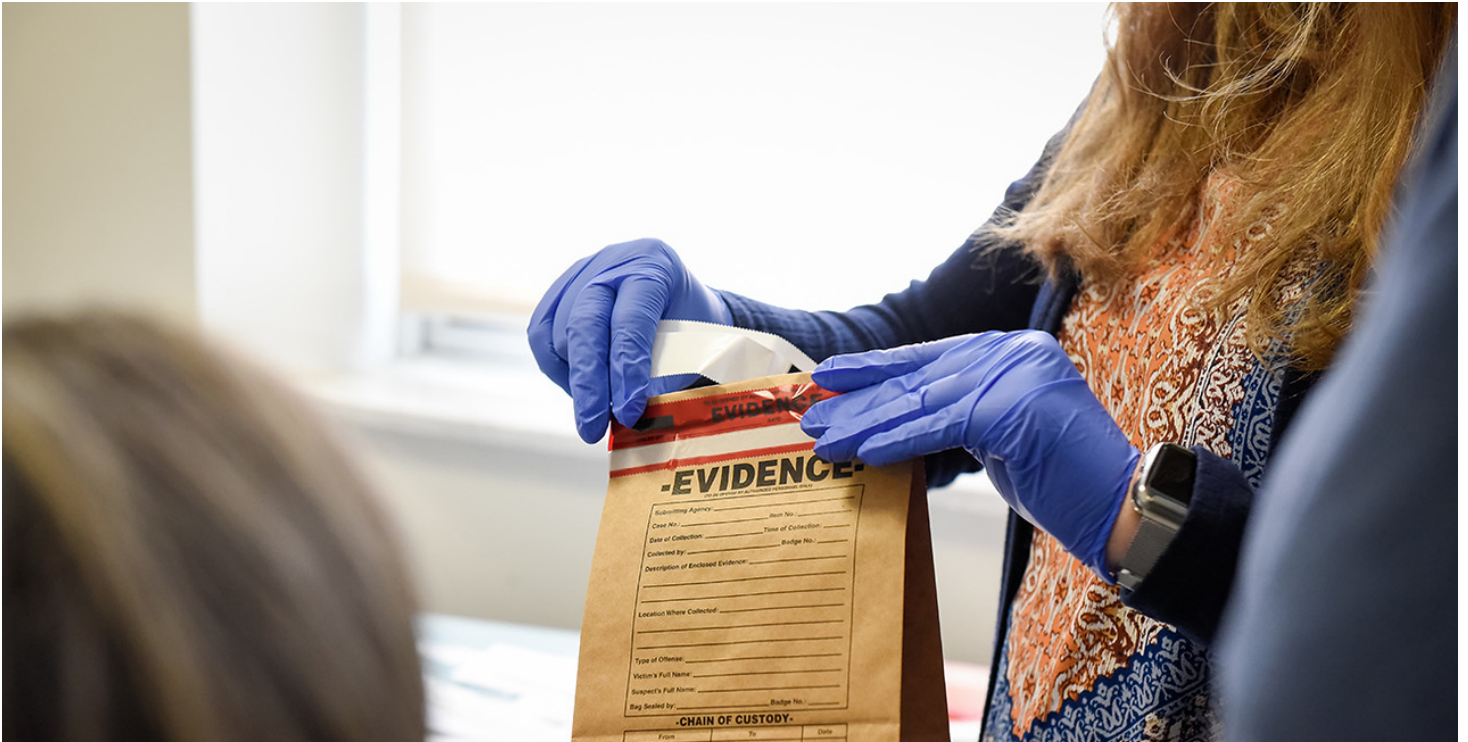
"To be truly sustainable, you are doing what's best for the planet, what's best for people and, ideally, you don't want to go bankrupt doing it," she said. "Economics is a part of sustainability. For me, economics is a lot of critical thinking, problem solving and strategy. It plays into everything—I love it."

Taylor grew up in Stone Mountain, Georgia, with family in

Michigan. Her family was always outdoors, and their penchant for kayaking, hiking and enjoying outdoor spaces inspired her interest in conserving natural environments and sustainability.

She was enchanted by campus and remained for the liberal studies. Her professors, supportive staff and personal mentors were instrumental in her success.

"My professors had a lot of comments about why I got the award—some from freshmen year," she said. "I was impressed and touched they remembered those things about me. When I enrolled as undeclared, it was probably the best decision I could have ever made."



Specialized nurses training at Georgia College aids in Georgia's care gap

[Nursing, School of](#) : Tuesday May 10, 2022

In July, Georgia College's School of Nursing will complete a \$803,000 grant awarded in October 2018 to train nurses in forensic medical exams and trauma-informed care.

The nurses who complete this training receive a certificate to practice as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE)—registered nurses that are specially trained in caring for survivors of sexual assault or abuse.

They fulfill an important role in Georgia, where there aren't enough SANEs for the number of survivors in the state. Programs like this, however, are working to change that.

"Georgia College offering clinical training is what really targets the biggest gap we have in Georgia," said Statewide SANE Coordinator Sarah Pederson. "Empowering that patient in that moment of care is critical because their power was just taken from them. It's a population that we need to prepare for providing trauma-informed care, properly collect samples and work within a multidisciplinary criminal justice team."

The course, built from the ground-up by Dr. Shantee Henry, ANE-SANE Grant Coordinator, Dr. Josie Doss, ANE-SANE program director and Denise Atkinson, sexual assault center director for Crisis Line & Safe House (CL-SH), is based on guidelines from the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN).

Over three years, it has trained over 100 nurses in a 12-week, didactic course with a three-day clinical immersion. It is designed to teach nurses from across Georgia on Georgia laws, courtroom testimony, conducting sexual assault exams and forensic nursing skills like forensic photography and documentation.

These skills are applicable to every day nursing, Henry said. In one participating nurses' case, a patient diagnosed with a thyroid issue was later found to have been strangled, leading to different and improved care.

"In forensic nursing, there are a lot of gray areas," Henry said. "Because of that training, they're able to deal with a multitude of scenarios that they wouldn't know how to handle otherwise. Someone who isn't trained could miss many key things that could be instrumental in prosecution."

The grant for this training ends in July, but Henry still sees a future for the program.

"After the grant ends, we'll still have the course available," she said. "Looking forward, we are looking for other funding and developing courses to create a postgraduate forensic certificate at Georgia College."

The confidence that comes with completed training is already impacting the lives of some students, like graduate student of nurse-midwifery, Katey Jones, '18.



From left to right: Denise Atkinson with a forensic camera, Katey Jones and Heather Laflam.

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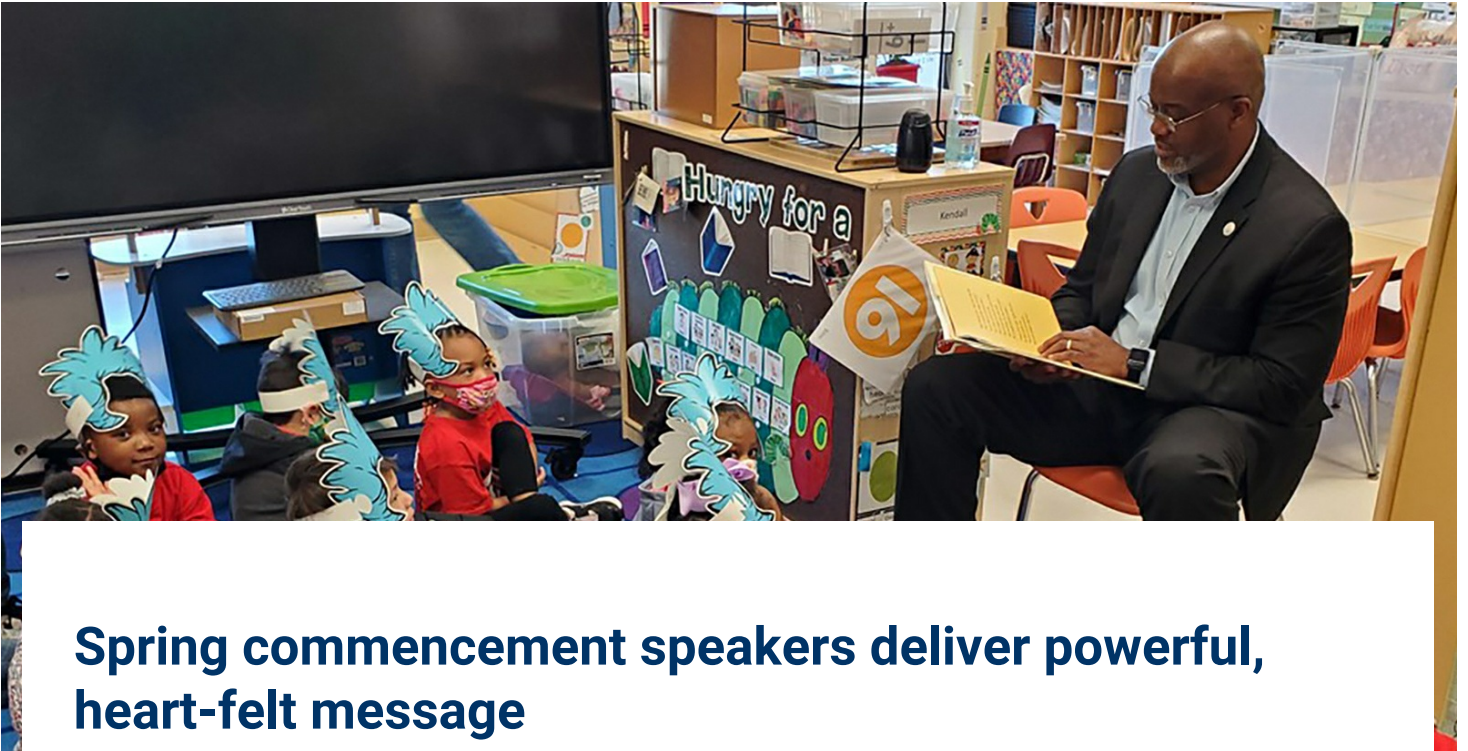
Is the person with them really their boyfriend or spouse? Or, are they being trafficked? We're the last barrier.

- Katey Jones

“Being able to pick up on warning signs from patients is a key takeaway for me,” she said. “You don’t always see clear marks, and there are ways to observe patient demeanor. Is the person with them really their boyfriend or spouse? Or, are they being trafficked? We’re the last barrier.”

For graduate student of nurse-midwifery Heather Laflam, the training has taught her what a SANE can be for a survivor.

“There’s a lot more to it than collecting evidence,” she said, “it’s starting the healing process.”



Spring commencement speakers deliver powerful, heart-felt message

[Alumni](#) : Tuesday May 10, 2022

Meet the 2022 spring commencement speakers: Dr. Lionel Brown, '94, '98, '07, superintendent of Peach County Schools and Chris Clark, '96, president and CEO of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. Both spoke about the importance of serving others.

Brown spoke at the graduate commencement May 6 about how students should give back to the community.



Dr. Lionel Brown speaks at the graduate commencement.

"Their degree should open up more opportunities for them," he said. "Not only for advancing their careers with greater payoff or even upward mobility but for opportunities to serve."

Brown believes the education students receive should enable them to be better servants in the community, and there are a lot of opportunities for them.

"Fulfillment in life comes through service," he said. "It also helps to not focus on self all the time. If we could get everybody on that page, we'd probably have a better society."

"People always look at ways to be more fulfilled in life," he said. "But I've learned that fulfillment in serving others is very gratifying."

Brown and his wife started a faith-based, non-profit organization called The Lotus Center several years ago in central Georgia. They specialize in youth mentorship, counseling, enrichment classes, community projects and fundraisers to help those in need.

“Fulfillment in life comes through service. It also helps to not focus on self all the time. If we could get everybody on that page, we’d probably have a better society.”

- Dr. Lionel Brown

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“People should want to cultivate, nurture and develop the ground in which they live,” Brown said. “That’s the recipe for great communities.”

Brown knew he wanted to be a teacher when he was a sophomore history major at Georgia College. He fondly recalls the classes he took for his master’s degree in social sciences and his specialist in education certification in educational leadership.

“My classes really helped me find out why I was here, what I needed to do and the approach I needed to take,” he said. “I thank Georgia College for shaping me to walk in my purpose.”

Brown looked up to Professor Emeritus Dr. Larry Elowitz, who taught social sciences.

“He was just that guy who not only taught the concept, but lived it,” he said. “Dr. Elowitz showed his passion for each subject. We’d pull our desks together to form a roundtable discussion in every class. It wasn’t a lecture. It was more like conversation.”

Elowitz served as a mentor to Brown, making a lasting impression on him after he graduated.



Dr. Lionel Brown reads a Dr. Seuss book to Peach County students.

"He helped me tremendously in my career when I taught social sciences in high school. And I was able to call on him as a point of reference for a lot of things that were going on at the time. I remember him being very personable, a master of his craft and highly respected."

Like Elowitz, Brown became a personable teacher.

"Potential and growth inspire me," he said. "I like to look at the potential of a person and watch them evolve. I guess that's why I'm an educator. I don't teach children where they are. I teach children where they can be."

Brown wants students with advanced degrees from Georgia College to strive for significance rather than success.

"You become fulfilled in who you are when you serve others," he said. "There has to be a relationship there to make you feel like you're significant. When you serve, you feel like you have a positive role with your family and in our society."

Chris Clark, '96, president and CEO of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce spoke at the undergraduate ceremonies May 7. He advised graduate candidates to have a purpose-driven life.

"When I answered the big, existential quandary that students face, 'What's my purpose in life?' It's an eternal question for all of us. I firmly believe it's to serve others," he said.

Clark has worked with many students enrolled in Georgia College's Georgia Education Mentorship (GEM) Program and those in the workplace.

"They're focused so much on the next job that they're missing the opportunity to serve where they are," he said. "I think that's where their happiness and fulfillment is going to come from."



Chris Clark awaits speaking at the undergraduate commencement.

Clark has been mentoring Georgia College students through GEM for 12 years. The Georgia Chamber of Commerce helped create the program 19 years ago. He feels

he's gained an understanding of the next generation workforce.

"Once you're a CEO, you don't spend a lot of time talking to 20-year-olds, so there's a huge disconnect," Clark said. "Through GEM, Georgia College has really done a good job of helping to bridge that gap."

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"Serving others is in the DNA of Georgia College and its graduates. I hope they continue to serve. If they love Georgia College, they can pour themselves back into it by volunteering or donating. Wherever they are in life, I hope they continue what they've learned at Georgia College and serve for the greater good."

- Chris Clark

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Clark knows listening skills are key to serving others. He learned these from Professor Emeritus Dr. Mike Digby who was Clark's counselor for his master's program.

Clark shopped around for master's programs. At Georgia College, Digby was the first person who asked, "What do you want to do? Let's craft a program that meets your strengths and where you want to go in life."

"That customized, personal development made a huge difference for me, and I didn't see that in other schools," Clark said. "Then, when I was in the program, I honed in on the area I wanted to pursue as a career."

Digby shifted some classes, connected Clark with a network of people and guided him toward his capstone project.



Chris Clark (center) during the GEM Program Closing Reception.

“Dr. Digby helped me be effective in the world, and that just made such a huge impact on me,” Clark said. “Slowing down to listen to others is a skill I tried to take forward.”

Clark is involved in a variety of organizations, but he most enjoys mentoring GC students through GEM and two ministries he works in at Dogwood Church—the food bank and service ministry.

“I think everyone's purpose in life is to serve others, whether it's your family, coworkers or community,” Clark said. “But, if you can't listen, you'll never know what those real needs are.”

It's one of the reasons Clark traveled throughout Georgia on listening tours the last two years during COVID. The Chamber staff surveyed its members to see what was important to them and find out how it could make their businesses grow.

Clark wants new graduates to be joyful wherever they are in life—whether they have a job already lined up or are still hoping to get into their chosen field.

“Serving others is in the DNA of Georgia College and its graduates,” he said. “I hope they continue to serve. If they love Georgia College, they can pour themselves back into it by volunteering or donating. Wherever they are in life, I hope they continue what they've learned at Georgia College and serve for the greater good.”

News Stories Posted Monday May 16, 2022



State's 2023 Teacher of the Year gets master's in music education from Georgia College

[Music, Department of](#) : Monday May 16, 2022



Alternate Text

Michael Kobito, '22, received more than his Master's in Music Education in May. The Georgia College graduate was also named Georgia's 2023 Teacher of the Year.

"Being a student again has helped me be a better teacher, in the sense I'm taking ideas from my professors that I enjoy and sharing them with my students," Kobito said. "I know the other teachers of the year for the state are incredible, so I'm just proud to stand next to them and be in this profession with them."

Currently, the Acworth resident is an AP Music Theory teacher and director of bands at Woodland High School in Cartersville. He manages four concert bands, a jazz band, a 200-member

marching band, pep band and chamber ensembles. He also gives private lessons.



Michael Kobito with the Woodland High School Wind Symphony in Cartersville, Georgia.

Kobito was originally inspired by his music teachers in middle and high school. He wanted to impact the lives of others. Teaching music allowed him to follow this passion and being at Georgia College brought more purpose to his vision.

The University of Georgia graduate decided to get his master's at Georgia College due to the influence of Dr. Tina Holmes-Davis, associate professor and coordinator of music education. Her work and commitment to education made him excited to learn more.

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The program as a whole allowed me to do meaningful research that I was able to apply to my students. Whether it was researching about specific pieces or jazz history, music theory or pedagogy, I learned where, how and what to look for when in pursuit of answers.

- Michael Kobito

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His school's educational philosophy is: "Every student's contribution is important." Kobito tries to fulfill that motto every day, helping timid music learners to overcome their fears of not being good enough and to keep trying.

Kobito was first nominated by his peers for his school's Teacher of the Year award. He went on to win his school district's award before capturing the state title.

As the Georgia Teacher of the Year, Kobito will serve as a statewide advocate for public education—getting a chance to bring his insight and what he learned from Georgia College to greater use.

He's honored to represent the teaching profession.



Kobito and his Georgia 2023 Teacher of the Year award with Richard Woods, superintendent for the state of Georgia.

"Education is so important," Kobito said, "and our students deserve the best chance for success. I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve and lead in such a profound, far-reaching way."

"This opportunity is going to give me the chance to learn and meet so many of the great educators in our state and in our country," he said. "I'm going to come out of this experience wiser, grateful and ready to share what I've learned with my school and my students."

News Stories Posted Tuesday May 17, 2022



New Aquatic Sciences Center will provide water expertise

[Biology & Environmental Sciences, Department of](#): Tuesday May 17, 2022



Alternate Text

Careers in marine sciences are more important than ever—with oceans rising and the proliferation of toxic algae and pollutions. To ensure Georgia College students are prepared, and to take advantage of faculty knowledge and expertise in this field, the university will open a new Aquatic Sciences Center (ASC) by fall 2022.

“We are seeing significant changes in our global climate that’s been rapidly accelerating in the last decade,” said Dr. Indiren Pillay, chair of biological and environmental sciences.

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These changes are making significant differences in our marine environment

from marine microorganisms to marine animals and the introduction of pollution, including temperature pollution where slight warming of the oceans is creating different ecosystems.

- Dr. Indiren Pillay

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“These changes are making significant differences in our marine environment,” he said, “from marine microorganisms to marine animals and the introduction of pollution, including temperature pollution where slight warming of the oceans is creating different ecosystems.”

Ecological changes like increasing incidences of red tides and algal blooms are just some issues that could be studied at the new center. Microbiologists are concerned, Pillay said, because pathogens normally low in numbers are rapidly increasing and, in some cases, causing disease.

Out of 27 faculty in Georgia College’s Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences, about a third are linked in some way to water-related topics—both marine and freshwater. Faculty include Drs. Dave Bachoon, Andrei Barkovskii, Christopher Burt, Melanie DeVore, Greg Glotzbecker, Kalina Manoylov, Matt Milnes, Christine Mutiti, Sam Mutiti, Allison VandeVoort, David Weese and Kris White.

The new Aquatic Sciences Center will harness their knowledge and expertise under one umbrella. Existing strengths will be combined, and faculty will be encouraged to collaborate more fully, sharing equipment and ideas, Pillay said.

“Leveraging all this into a center will give us a unified mission and a unified approach, where we can train students in real-life applications of what we’re teaching in the classrooms and labs,” he said.

A director will soon be selected to oversee the center, along with a research technician. With a centralized administration and structure, Pillay hopes the center will be a platform for more graduate and undergraduate research, additional grant writing, student training and community engagement. The new center will also allow for the creation of summer research programs for students.



Alternate Text

Currently, the center is functional with a nominal physical presence in Herty Hall.

When that building is renovated, Pillay hopes custom changes will be made to accommodate the new Aquatics Sciences Center—alongside the current Observatory, Planetarium and the William P. Wall Museum of Natural History.

Numerous funding initiatives are underway. The university administration has already funded the construction of a water table, which should be completed by the end of the year. In addition, ASC faculty member, Dr. Dave Bachoon, already has two funded ASC-related research projects.

In conjunction with the Aquatic Sciences Center, a new concentration in marine biology has been added to the curriculum, as well.

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Any sort of center of research or excellence, such as the Aquatic Sciences Center, is unusual for a school our size. But the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences has a significant footprint on campus—in terms of the number of faculty and the number of students we cater to. So, the center is a natural conclusion. It'll elevate the visibility of the work we're already doing and provide administrative support that will enable faculty to spend more time training and mentoring students in water-related research.

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Some faculty who will contribute:

- **Dr. Dave Bachoon** has worked more than 20 years on numerous projects related to water quality, both marine and freshwater. He trains his students to determine if a water body is polluted, if it contains harmful bacteria and how to identify the source of pollution. He's published over 25 research papers on fecal pollution and pathogenic bacteria like *Leptospira*, *E. coli*, and *H. pylori* in Georgia and the Caribbean.



Alternate Text

- **Dr. Andrei Barkovskii** works on fish and shellfish bacteria that are harmful to

humans and marine organisms. Previously, his students surveyed sources of bacteria in water, sediment and oysters. They developed a method to remove harmful bacteria from water using kaolin products. Next, Barkovskii and his students will research emerging shellfish and fish pathogens in Georgia waters and how climate change strengthens and spreads pathogens.

- For nearly 20 years, **Dr. Melanie DeVore** has taken students to the Bahamas to study its unique ecosystem of beaches, coral reefs, marshes and mangrove swamps. Students participate in an educational outreach sea camp for Bahamian children. DeVore also does extensive outreach in schools and for the public, talking about climate change. Her students are currently working with Stonerose Interpretive Center in California, which has a collection of 48-million-year-old fossils from the Eocene period.
- **Dr. Kalina Manoylov** is an aquatic ecologist studying water quality with algae. She researches diverse, plant-like organisms that are important for the health of all water systems. Her students use algal taxonomy and community traits to determine effects of a wastewater treatment plant near Oconee River Greenway in Milledgeville. Two other sites associated with the Savannah River have been studied long term—the tidal part of the River at Port Wentworth, Georgia, and Three Runs Creek, a blackwater tributary on the border of South Carolina that's a hot spot of biodiversity. These areas are being studied to understand effects of dredging in the Savannah River estuary and changes in biodiversity at different grades.
- **Dr. Samuel Mutiti's** research focuses on hydrology and water quality. His students work to find contaminants that effect water quality and aquatic organisms. They look for ways to remediate and treat contaminated water. They also study saltwater intrusions in coastal areas and the potential threat on macroinvertebrates. Students work with contaminants like microplastics, lead, selenium, bacteria, sediments and salt. Field sites include local water bodies and coastal island areas like Sapelo, St. Simons, Tybee, and Hilton Head. Student research also takes place at Lake Lanier in the Atlanta area and international sites in Zambia and Kenya. His undergraduates are currently working on a water filtration system to remove lead and other heavy metals from drinking water. They're also identifying the prevalence and abundance of microplastics in Georgia aquatic environments.
- **Dr. David Weese's** lab uses molecular tools, like DNA, to answer ecological questions about aquatic organisms. In the past, his students used DNA sequences to identify invasive species of tilapia in Hawaii and screened natural populations of Hawaiian tilapia for bacterial infections. Currently, they're investigating the population genetics of several species of local crayfish in the Oconee River Basin and utilizing environmental DNA to identify rare, endangered and invasive species in Oconee River. Weese is excited the center will be used to "train the next generation of aquatic scientists."
- **Dr. Kris White** identifies and describes marine amphipod crustaceans, a shrimplike organism. By studying their number, interactions and wellbeing, her students can use amphipods to monitor the health of aquatic environments. Students recently described marine amphipod diversity in Panama and are

identifying the diversity of aquatic macroinvertebrates in freshwater lakes around Milledgeville. White's excited the new center will have space for an aquarium and a wet table for live organisms.



Alternate Text

These are examples of the exciting research that will be done at the new Aquatics Sciences Center, along with new initiatives. The center will “provide more student opportunities for high-quality transformative research experiences and foster collaboration with outside organizations,” Dr. Sam Mutiti said.

Ultimately, it all boils down to the students and training them to become “better stewards of our communities,” Pillay said.

“This fits into everything we do at Georgia College,” Pillay said. “Many faculty involved in this project are highly productive with large graduate and undergraduate labs. That’s an indication of the type of productivity we have for water quality and water analysis. Therefore, this center is a natural transition.”

News Stories Posted Thursday May 19, 2022



Georgia College & State University welcomes new vice president for University Advancement

[President, Office of the](#) : Thursday May 19, 2022

Georgia College & State University welcomes Dr. Shelley Strickland, who has been selected to serve as vice president for University Advancement and executive director of the GCSU Foundation.

"The mission of Georgia College as the state's designated public liberal arts university resonates with me deeply," said Strickland. "I am excited to be part of advancing the institution under the strategic and visionary leadership of President Cathy Cox to even greater distinction and impact."

Strickland currently serves as the vice president for Philanthropy at Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation in Michigan. In that capacity, she was instrumental in doubling the assets of the foundation from \$75 million to \$200 million. She also has held concurrent appointments at the University of Michigan, teaching an undergraduate philanthropy course and designing a concentration in fundraising and philanthropy for a master's degree program.

"Georgia College & State University will benefit greatly from her broad experience in both public and private universities as well as from the expertise she gained working in philanthropy beyond higher education," said President Cathy Cox.

"She is joining us at an exciting time and will have the opportunity to enhance our

capable team in fundraising, alumni relations and donor engagement by filling a number of vacancies in the advancement office and putting her own touch on its strategic direction,” Cox added. “I look forward to working with her as we lay the foundation for ambitious philanthropic goals and aspirations.”

Strickland has worked for Emory University, where she trained development and alumni staff. She also has University System of Georgia experience from her employment at Kennesaw State

University as director of foundation relations. Strickland began her career in fundraising working for Western Michigan University as their annual giving director, following years in marketing communications.

Strickland also has deep expertise across philanthropy, alumni relations, donor stewardship and board of trustee relations. She also has significant experience building and managing effective teams, as well as planning for ambitious campaigns.

She also has an impressive academic record, including numerous publications and presentations. She earned her undergraduate degree in English from Western Michigan University and her master’s degree in English from the University of Virginia. In 2013, she was awarded a Ph.D. in Higher Education from the University of Michigan.

Strickland will start her position at Georgia College & State University on July 1, 2022.



Dr. Shelley Strickland

News Stories Posted Thursday May 26, 2022



New college of business name emphasizes role of technology and career readiness

[College of Business & Technology](#): Thursday May 26, 2022

As technology changes, so does business education—and Georgia College’s J. Whitney Bunting College of Business is changing with it.

The school is becoming the J. Whitney Bunting College of Business and Technology.

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Technology drives so many changes we witness around us—in business, society and in our personal lives. Georgia College understands the immense importance of these changes and is committed to offering a curriculum that completely embraces technology.

- President Cathy Cox

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The new name acknowledges the rapidly advancing role of technology in the business environment. In the future, nine out of 10 jobs will require digital skills, according to the World Economic Forum.

"I am excited to announce the renaming of our business college," Georgia College President Cathy Cox said. "The J. Whitney Bunting College of Business and Technology more aptly describes our approach in fusing state-of-the art technology with the foundational business education it has always provided."



A student points to an image on a computer monitor, while another student, left, looks on.

"Technology drives so many changes we witness around us—in business, society and in our personal lives," she said. "Georgia College understands the immense importance of these changes and is committed to offering a curriculum that completely embraces technology."

Cox pointed to the university's public liberal arts mission as a dynamic and career-focused approach to provide students

with cutting-edge skills and adaptability.

"A liberal arts education equips students with the critical thinking necessary to navigate the complexities of life and become 21st-century leaders," she said.

Other changes in the business college include:

- A new name for Georgia College's Accounting Department, now called the department of accounting and business law. The department already housed faculty who teach business law and ethics, a core requirement for a business degree. The new name reflects that.
- The introduction of a new Bachelor of Science degree in data science. Employers say they want workers who can interpret and understand data, do quantitative analysis and use predictive modeling.
- A new Bachelor of Science degree in finance that provides an optional concentration in financial technology. This will include courses in financial management and programming, financial forecasting and payment processing.
- The launching of a Center for Innovation in the fall. This initiative will provide students, faculty and community members with opportunities to collaborate and advance regional economic development.

“The labor market is always fluctuating. Advances in technology are accelerating at a speed that require our students to be competent in digital and quantitative methods but to also become critical thinkers who can adapt to evolving conditions and lead creatively,” said Dr. Costas Spirou, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs.

“These traits are essential for individual success,” he said, “but also for Georgia College to continue meeting workforce needs and address the state of labor shortages in Georgia.”

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Technology is embedded into the fabric of all our teaching and learning experiences. These experiences will differentiate our students in the marketplace and help them stand out to employers.

- Dr. Micheal Stratton, dean of the J. Whitney Bunting College of Business and Technology

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The college’s new name ensures that students will be provided with relevant skills in technology along with a strong foundation in business education.

“In today’s rapidly changing society, it is more important than ever to ensure that the liberal arts curriculum at Georgia College will continue to evolve in order to meet employer needs,” said Dr. Micheal Stratton, dean of the J. Whitney Bunting College of Business and Technology.



A student engages in a learning exercise while wearing a white, Virtual Reality headset.

“Technology is embedded into the fabric of all our teaching and learning experiences,” he said. “These experiences will differentiate our students in the marketplace and help them stand out to employers.”

