

Front Page News Story Archive

January 2023



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News Stories Posted Thursday January 5, 2023



Patient-inspired doctor expands horizon

[Biology & Environmental Sciences, Department of](#): Thursday January 5, 2023

Story developed by University Communications.

Dr. Amy Amundson Smith, '93, is a board-certified pediatric hematologist-oncologist with neuro-oncology. She serves as the division chief of the Haley Center for Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders at Orlando Health Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children and director of the Pediatric Brain Tumor Program—one of the largest pediatric neuro-oncology services in the southeast.

Smith traces the start of her journey toward becoming a medical doctor to Dr. Kenneth Saladin, distinguished professor emeritus, at Georgia College & State University.

As a first-year student majoring in [biology](#), she took Saladin's advice, shifting her career path from teacher to doctor. The strong belief he had in her was just what she needed to get to medical school and beyond.

"Dr. Saladin was the professor who made the biggest difference for me," said



“My parents were both school teachers, so I thought I’d be a teacher, coach, teach piano lessons or something along those lines,” said Smith. “I never dreamt that medical school would be in my future. So, when he mentioned that to me, it made me feel good. I thought, somebody thinks I’m smart enough to do that.”

"So, I went home and told my parents at Christmas," she said. "I said, 'You know, I think I'm going to go to medical school.'"



“When I returned to Georgia College to give the graduation address several years

ago, I saw Dr. Saladin again, and I told him that story,” Smith said. “He had no recollection of that conversation, which is sweet, because you just never know what you say to people, and how it may impact them. He noticed something in me that made a life-changing impact on me.”

While attending Georgia College, Smith played basketball and piano, practicing a few hours a day with each activity. She had a busy life and still does.

“Georgia College was probably the best preparation for where I am in my life now,” said Smith, who loved the small size of the university.

“It gave me an opportunity to get to know people, professors and administration—people you might not otherwise get a chance to know at a big university,” she said. “It also provided a lot of diversity. You can never discount that wonderful life experience.”

“

I look at these little guys and girls, and they’re just incredible people. They really are amazing. To be able to walk with them and help make a better day for them—that’s really exciting. There’s just nothing better than that.

- Dr. Amy Smith

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In Smith’s first year at the Medical College of Georgia, she found a professor’s lecture on blood disorders and cancer very inspiring. It built upon basic chemistry research she had done at Georgia College with Dr. Doug Pohl, which got her interested in biology and cancer.

During medical school, Smith was placed on the pediatrics rotation in hematology and oncology.

“I just fell in love with that,” she said. “I loved the people. I loved the patients. I just kind of felt at home in that area.”

“During one Thanksgiving, my mom reminded me that during med school, I called her and said, ‘Mom, it’s the weirdest thing. When I’m on the oncology floor, I feel like I belong there—I feel like I’m at home,’” Smith said. “I hadn’t realized I said that to her.”

Smith did her residency at the University of Colorado in pediatrics, followed by fellowships in hematology and oncology and neuro-oncology. When she was a second-year resident on the oncology floor, there was a baby who came in with a

brain tumor with a massive hemorrhage. That's when she met Dr. Nicholas Foreman, a pediatric neuro-oncologist.

"He let me go into the operating room, view the scans and pathology samples," Smith said. "He talked to me about all of it. There was so much not known about brain tumors at that time that it was largely an uncharted territory. I was inspired, because it was like trying to put puzzle pieces together or doing an investigation to try and figure out areas that hadn't really been discovered previously. After 28 years, he's still my mentor and now friend."



Dr. Amy Smith at Orlando Health Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children's area.

Following her residency and fellowships, Smith worked eight years as an assistant professor of Pediatrics and a joint assistant professor in the Department of Neurosurgery for the University of Florida College of Medicine in Gainesville.

Today, Smith leads her team, building programs and implementing quality metrics. She provides clinical and teaching supervision for medical students, residents and fellows, while also overseeing clinical operations, supporting faculty development

and performing research.

Smith was also appointed to the Florida Cancer and Research Advisory Council by the governor in 2014—a position she still holds today.

“What I enjoy most is taking care of patients,” Smith said. “I love them and their families and the opportunity to learn from them, educate and talk to them and teach their families how to take care of them. As the physician, I make the plan, but the parents have to carry it out when they’re at home. So, I really enjoy that education piece with the families.”

Smith has built two large brain tumor programs during her career. She credits her team of several physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses and researchers for the success.

“I have incredible co-workers,” she said. “It has been really inspiring and fun to work with them and grow. We’re all working for the same purpose—to take care of these kids and their families. I think there’s an incredible value there.”

Smith also enjoys the clinical aspect of her profession that takes her from the patient to the lab.

“I enjoy the scientific discovery, the intellectual part of clinical research in trying to find new treatments,” she said. “Now, we have a basic science laboratory, so we go to the operating room, collect the tumor tissue, save and grow it in a lab to study.”

Smith wishes the world for her patients.

“The obvious hope is that we would cure them of their cancer. But maybe the less obvious hope, but important one, is I want the children and their families, as they go through the process, to feel safe, well informed and well cared for,” she said. “I want them to feel like they’ve been given every option. That they’re really making the best choice for and with their child. And, if they survive long-term, I want them to have a great quality of life—to be able to go to school and have friends and do the things that we all want to do.”

At the end of the day, it’s the patients and their families, who inspire Smith.

“I look at these little guys and girls, and they’re just incredible people,” she said. “They really are amazing. To be able to walk with them and help make a better day for them—that’s really exciting. There’s just nothing better than that.”

Remembering Helen Matthews Lewis

[University Communications](#) : Friday January 6, 2023

Helen Lewis (1924-2022) was a towering figure in the fields of sociology and history who advanced an understanding of women's roles in working-class communities and developed an interpretation of Appalachia as an internal colony of the United States.

Her focus on the role Appalachia and its coal-mining communities played in the development of modern America and 20th Century labor relations distinguished her work, but it was the way she challenged fellow academics to reconsider the human element of the people and issues they study that defined her contribution as a radical educator and activist.

"One of the things that Helen used to say about herself is that she didn't necessarily put out new ideas," said Sandra Godwin, professor of Sociology at Georgia College & State University (GCSU). "She just took bits and pieces of other people's ideas and brought them together and broadcast them."

Lewis was born on October 2, 1924 in Nicholson, Georgia. She was deeply affected by the people she met through her father's work as a rural mail carrier. Lewis credited her father for providing a foundation of fairness and caring that inspired her work on issues of social equity and justice.

But it was biblical scholar Clarence Jordan's cotton-patch adaptation of the Good Samaritan parable that Lewis cited as the spark igniting a flame for social justice that burned brightly throughout her life and career. As a student at Georgia State College for Women (GSCW), now Georgia College & State University, Lewis became active in gender, labor and racial equity issues through the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).

In an interview published in the Appalachian Journal, Lewis praised the women she encountered through the YWCA "who had either been in the labor movement or were real activists," for helping her cultivate her reaction to the social climate that gave rise to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and '60s.

As a student activist at GSCW in the 1940s, Lewis participated in integrated, racial justice action conferences and planning meetings. She engaged in summer programs on labor issues that gave her first-hand experiences in manufacturing operations at non-union facilities.

Returning to campus decades later as a visiting scholar, Lewis would share these experiences to challenge current students about how they will meld their convictions with the education they're pursuing at Georgia College.

"She asked students what would you go to jail for? What are you committed to so much that you would go to jail? And that really got their attention," Godwin said.

But it was not getting into good trouble for its own sake or developing a set of bonafides best communicated on a rap sheet. It was about meeting people affected by an issue where they are and leveraging the knowledge of academia to create meaningful impact in the communities that bear the brunt of an issue.

Veronica Womack is director of GCSU's Rural Studies Institute, an initiative focused on developing the knowledge base necessary to inform sustainable economic development in rural communities in the Black Belt Region of the Southeastern United States. Lewis was an inspiration to Womack for the ways her research centered on people whose lived-experience gave them invaluable insight into and context about a subject, like mining or a place like Appalachia.

"Helen was always good about not allowing people to just use census data to explain Appalachia," Womack said. "That's what made it so powerful. Anybody can pull the data and analyze the data without context, but when you actually add context—the people, the history, the social stratification and geography—it makes it so much more powerful. She was very interdisciplinary in her approach; I learned a lot from that."

But Lewis's relationships with people who lived in the communities she studied broke the mold of researcher and subject. Womack says Lewis exemplified the role of a public scholar for the way she empowered people to address issues in their community.

"A public scholar—this is my own definition—is someone who sees the interaction and the connection, the cooperation, the collaboration with community and uses their expertise to help community and partner with community on specific issues that the community would like to address," Womack said. "It's not just about publishing in the top journal of your discipline, it's about taking that knowledge, that time, that energy and using your knowledge of the system and how it works to benefit the public."

Godwin agrees that Lewis's practice of empowering communities by helping them to realize their own voice is perhaps the greatest legacy Lewis leaves the activism-minded academics who succeed her. Godwin quotes Lewis to illustrate the potential when researchers challenge academia's rigid ideals about objectivity.

"When people begin to research their own problems, they begin to feel that they

have some control over the information, some beginnings of a feeling of power vis-à-vis the experts. That feeling is strengthened when they confront the experts, such as the health department or other government officials, and they discovered that they knew what the scientists did not, and that they had a right to speak out on what they knew.”

In 2021, Georgia College’s Rural Studies Institute celebrated Lewis as a foundational example of the potential that can be unlocked through a liberal arts education. Womack invited scholars and activists from across the country and globe to reflect on Lewis’s impact on Appalachia, rural development, academic engagement and community empowerment. The result was “the Dr. Helen Lewis Symposium: What’s Your Place in the Space?”

The symposium was the institute’s first public outreach event. Womack said it was important for her, as director, to use that opportunity to highlight a Georgia College alumna who embodies the institute’s mission of developing sustainable rural communities.

“Helen [Lewis] was a scholar who embodied rural studies in a way that I hope Georgia College will be able to do,” Womack said. “So, I thought it was very important for our campus to know her better. She impacted so many people in a positive way. She’s a gem that we had here for a short time at Georgia College, but she’s made us very, very proud.”

You can learn more about Helen Matthews Lewis in the book “Helen Matthews Lewis: Living Social Justice in Appalachia.”

News Stories Posted Monday January 9, 2023



GCSU Men's Flag Football brings home National Championship

[Wellness & Recreation](#) : Monday January 9, 2023

Congratulations to the Georgia College & State University Future Daddy's and Beast on their performance at the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association National Flag Football Championship this weekend in Round Rock, Texas.

The Future Daddy's won the National Championship, besting University of Texas San Antonio 41 – 14 in the championship final on Sunday. The men's team went undefeated throughout the three-day tournament.

Beast finished fourth in the women's flag football tournament, winning two of four games over the weekend.

Future Daddy's Marcus Prestwood won tournament Most Valuable Player accolades and is recognized as the top men's flag football player in the country.

NIRSA named GCSU's Maggie Glover, Jonah Paul and Hunter Payne to their respective All American teams.

This is the second time in three flag football seasons that the GCSU men's teams won the national championship. GCSU women's teams have finished in the top four for two consecutive seasons.

Congratulations to all Bobcats who represented GCSU in this 2023 NIRSA National Championship.



GCSU Future Daddy's and Beast at the NIRSA Flag Football National Tournament in Round Rock, Texas.

News Stories Posted Monday January 16, 2023



Students and Community Leaders say education offers a pathway to King's Beloved Community

[Inclusive Excellence, Office of](#) : Monday January 16, 2023

[2023 MLK Jr. Brunch](#) from [Georgia College](#) on [Vimeo](#).

News Stories Posted Thursday January 19, 2023



In High Demand: GCSU education students are top commodity at yearly recruitment fair

[Teacher Education, Department of](#) : Thursday January 19, 2023

Story and photos developed by University Communications.

Alumni of the John H. Lounsbury College of Education are everywhere in Central Georgia.

They are superintendents, principals and teachers. Some come back to [Georgia College & State University](#) (GCSU) after graduation as pre-education instructors to help shape tomorrow's instructors.

Next week, many will return to their alma mater for what they consider their most important task: hiring new teachers.

Many education majors will get on-the-spot offers from one of the 70 area schools that attend Georgia College's annual [Teacher Recruitment Day](#). The rest will be

hired before graduating in May.

"Our graduates are highly desired. We get calls constantly from around the state from employers who want to hire our students," said Dr. Joseph Peters, dean of the [College of Education](#).

"A lot of this success is due to our mentor/cohort program," he said. "Having someone in your corner, who knows you and is there for support creates stronger student teachers."



Dr. Joseph Peters

Georgia College implemented the [mentor-led cohort](#) program nearly 30 years ago to support students as they maneuver studies and in-classroom practicums. Cohort members go to classes together and share a common mentor who acts as a confidante, guiding and counseling students through their junior/senior years.

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Having this adult advocate is tremendously important. They get to know you, and you develop a deep relationship. They help develop leaders. That person is not just your instructor but your teacher, your guide, field supervisor—someone who’s going to lead in a variety of different ways and provide quality feedback.

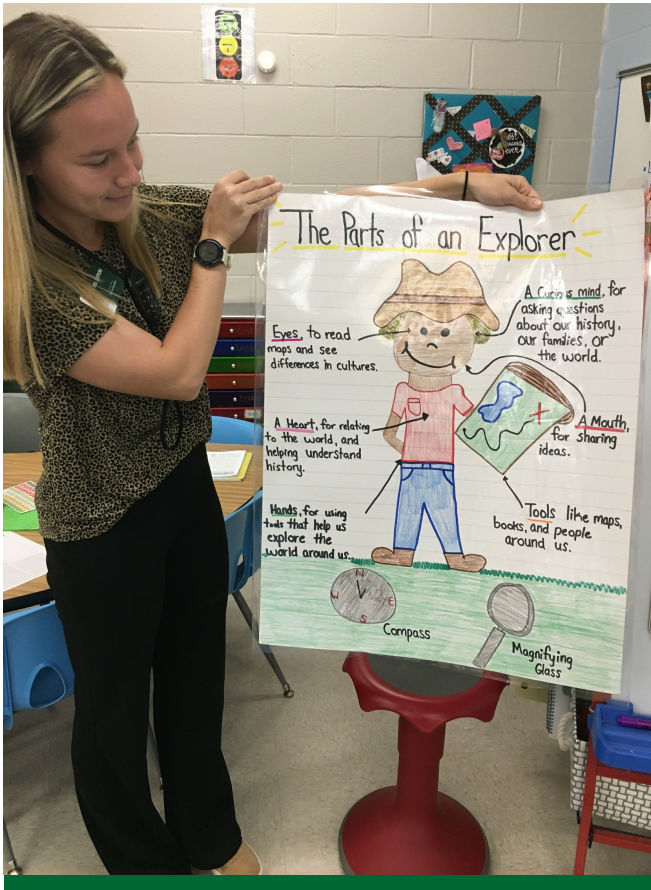
- Dr. Joanne Previts

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In the spring, 80 to 100 senior education majors are assigned classrooms with veteran teachers throughout Central Georgia, said Previts, interim chair of the department of [Teacher Education](#). Students help teachers develop, deliver and access every aspect of curriculum.

Senior [Early Childhood Education](#) major Madelyn Sutton is student teaching this semester. She recently stood before a class of fidgety but attentive first graders at Lakeview Primary School in Milledgeville. They sat on a rug before her with upturned faces, and she told them to turn on their “listening ears.”

For her special project, Sutton created interactive lessons about Sacajawea, the native American guide who helped Lewis and Clark on their expedition of the



Madelyn Sutton teaches a first-grade class at Lakeview Primary School in Milledgeville.

Louisiana Territory. Her pupils made explorer hats, acted as explorers on the playground and sent home postcards about their travels.

Her partner teacher, Rebecca Snow, '17, '18, received her bachelor's and master's in Early Childhood Education at Georgia College. Snow said she's learned as much from Sutton as Sutton has from her.

Georgia College students often update teachers on emerging trends in education. They provide tips on data collection, evidence-based lessons, digital apps and new educational strategies.

"It's a reciprocal relationship," Snow said. "She's teaching me new methods, new skills and new

ideas. Her PowerPoints are amazing, and she's a little more organized. She's teaching me how to engage my students in a different way with more hands-on activities."

By the time students graduate and become actual teachers, they've put in more than 1200 hours of field experience—double what most schools require, said Nicole DeClouette, interim associate dean of Education and associate professor of [Special Education](#).

“

Without question, the most critical component to any child's education is the teacher who teaches the child. GCSU students are far and away the most prepared college students we have for both student teaching and practicum placements. I can proudly say that we very often hire from its pool of student teachers."

- Charles Lundy

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One alumnus, Superintendent of Jones County Schools Charles Lundy, can attest

to the preparedness of Georgia College education students. He got both his undergraduate degree in biology and M.Ed. degree in [Educational Leadership](#) here.

Each year, Jones County hires about 50 new teachers and hosts about 20 student teachers in classrooms.

“Without question, the most critical component to any child's education is the teacher who teaches the child,” Lundy said. “GCSU students are far and away the most prepared college students we have for both student teaching and practicum placements. I can proudly say that we very often hire from its pool of student teachers.”

The data backs his claim.

The [Teacher Preparation Program Effectiveness Measures](#) (PPEM) survey—given at the end of a new teacher's first year—consistently gives Georgia College the highest overall scores for teacher training. This is true for data collected by the Georgia Department of Education, as well, which uses graduates' self-surveys and observations by administrators to evaluate teachers in the classroom.



Charles Lundy

The retention rate for Georgia College teacher graduates is impressive too.

According to the most recent Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) data, the six-year retention rate for Georgia College teacher graduates is 73%—a good notch above the 67% retention average for all Georgia providers.

Putnam County Schools Superintendent Eric Arena earned three degrees from Georgia College: a bachelor's in economics from the [J. Whitney Bunting College of Business and Technology](#), '90; a master's in Administration, '02; and a specialist degree in Supervision, '03.

At any given time, he said, there are about 100 Georgia College students shadowing or helping teachers in his county. In 10 years as superintendent, he's watched nearly 1,000 Georgia College students complete practicums there.

“To learn with and beside mentors is priceless,” Arena said. “The infusion of new ideas and perspective from GCSU students, coupled with the wisdom and maturity from Putnam County School mentors, is a recipe for success.”

Once this recipe is mastered, graduates often share it with tomorrow's teachers.



Brian Bowman teaches a pre-education class at Georgia College.

Brian Bowman received his bachelor's of [Middle Grades](#) education from Georgia College in 2019. After touring campus and learning about its [Call Me MiSTER](#) program—which works to increase the number of black male teachers—Bowman never seriously considered attending any other university.

After earning his master's and a specialist degree and working as a classroom teacher and school psychologist—Bowman now serves as a pre-education instructor at Georgia College.

“Our students deserve to be taught by passionate educators,” Bowman said. “It’s a cherry on the top when they’re taught by someone who just recently went through the very same College of Education experience. I’m showing students I teach that Georgia College produces stellar educators and lasting relationships.”

Charm Pace is a three-time alumna of Georgia College. She earned her bachelor's in Middle Grades Education in 2003, master's in '06 and specialist degree in [Curriculum & Instruction](#) in '10 from Georgia College's Department of [Professional Learning & Innovation](#).

“Georgia College has the reputation of having a challenging and rigorous education preparation program, and I wanted to pursue my degrees from a school that would prepare me to be the best teacher I can be,” Pace said. “Two mindsets that I

learned from my experience at GCSU are to truly embrace being an architect of change and be a lifelong learner.”

The gifted lead teacher for eighth-grade Algebra at Clifton Ridge Middle School in Jones County, Pace has worked with 16 Georgia College student teachers over the years.

“

The seriousness in which we take this work is evident in these carefully-crafted learning experiences.

- Dr. Joanne Previts

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It’s a story that repeats across Central Georgia—as each new wave of education students become teachers who then mentor, nurture and shape the next generation.

“The ways we invest in our teacher candidates takes a lot of work and time,” Previts said. “It’s not just about lesson planning but creating experiences and getting to know students and yourself.”

“The seriousness in which we take this work,” she said, “is evident in these carefully-crafted learning experiences.”

News Stories Posted Friday January 20, 2023



Two-time GCSU graduate gains well-rounded experience

[The Graduate School](#) : Friday January 20, 2023

Story, video and photos developed by University Communications.

Guillermo Ledezma, '16, '22, majored in [management information systems](#). He was so involved on campus during his undergraduate years, that he pursued his master's degree from Georgia College & State University, as well. And, he's glad he did.

Ledezma enjoys helping students everyday as a Banner Senior Architect at the University of Georgia. He feels that his graduate technology classes made him more "well rounded," as they taught him management skills too, which he applies daily on the job.

Once Ledezma earned his master's degree from Georgia College, he also discovered it "opened more doors" for him.

News Stories Posted Monday January 23, 2023



Georgia College & State University online graduate programs rate highly in U.S. News & World Report rankings

[The Graduate School](#) : Monday January 23, 2023

The graduate programs offered by Georgia College & State University (GCSU) to meet critical workforce needs in nursing, logistics and other high-demand fields were recognized this week as “Best Online Programs” in rankings by U.S. News & World Report (USNWR).

GCSU online graduate programs in nursing earned the highest mark among all Georgia universities and ranked 24th nationwide. USNWR recognized the university’s Family Nurse Practitioner program as the #13 program in the country, and the only program in Georgia to appear on the list for that specialty.

“We are delighted at the further validation of our efforts to provide the highest quality graduate education to help prepare our students for careers in high demand fields,” President Cathy Cox said. “Our dedicated faculty continue to find innovative

ways of delivering the quality education we are known for in an online environment.”

Georgia College’s online master’s degree in business programs (non-MBA) are the second most-highly rated online business programs in Georgia and ranked 75th overall. That includes Georgia College’s Master of Logistics and Supply Chain Management and its Master of Management Information Systems (MIS). The Master of Business Administration (MBA) at Georgia College also ranked among the best in the country.



◆◆ A student works on a laptop in a business setting.

Notable online graduate [education](#) programs including Educational Leadership, Teacher Leadership and Master of Arts in Teaching at GCSU made significant strides rising 39 spots over 2022’s ranking.

“

Our dedicated faculty continue to find innovative ways of delivering the quality education we are known for in an online environment.

- President Cathy Cox

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USNWR also recognized Georgia College’s online criminal justice master’s program among the best in the country.

Applications for admission to graduate programs during Summer or Fall Semester 2023 at Georgia College are open now at <https://www.gcsu.edu/graduate/online-graduate-applications>.

[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 Wednesday January 25, 2023



Digital technology transforms and modernizes the humanities

[Digital Humanities Collaborative](#) : Wednesday January 25, 2023

Story and photos developed by University Communications.

You might remember writing a research paper for class. Perhaps you included a chart or timeline, a poster or picture to jazz it up.

Today, digital technology has moved humanities off dusty shelves into a fast-paced, modern world—making [literature](#), [history](#), [language](#), [philosophy and religion](#) courses more interactive, fun and visually appealing.

Words on paper simply don't give justice to advanced technology students now use for reports, presentations and research.

And that's the point.

Digital humanities are meant to be seen and experienced.

“In digital humanities, we’re using digital tools as a way to rethink humanities research and use digital tools to collect and analyze data in ways we can’t do with traditional research,” said Dr. Elissa Auerbach, professor of [art history](#) and faculty coordinator of the [Digital Humanities Collaborative](#).



Dr. Elissa Auerbach discusses a digital humanities project with students.

Digital skills easily transfer to other disciplines and the job market, making students more competitive after graduation.

“

... employers are looking for well-rounded humanists who can think beyond the narrow scope of their discipline and use digital tools to see things in a different way.

- Dr. Elissa Auerbach

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“There’s an increased demand for students going into graduate programs to have technology skills. So, we want to make sure our students are equipped,” Auerbach said. “Most importantly, employers are looking for well-rounded humanists who

can think beyond the narrow scope of their discipline and use digital tools to see things in a different way.”

Auerbach started Georgia College’s Digital Humanities Collaborative by sponsoring visiting scholars and holding digital workshops for faculty in 2019. At that time, Dr. Aran MacKinnon, chair of history and geography, was looking to use more technology in his department, as well.

They banded together to create an ad hoc committee and held several meetings headed by Dr. Eric Tenbus, dean of the [College of Arts and Sciences](#). A graphic design student created the program’s first [website](#). Students can earn grants for presenting digital humanities projects at the university’s annual student research conference. The collaborative also recognizes faculty who give students research opportunities in the digital realm.

Last year, the collaborative supported faculty fellowships for digital humanities projects: A history project on women barbecue pit masters in Georgia and another on contemporary artists in Latin America.

More than 50 faculty now use digital humanities in their coursework.

The collaborative encourages students to use free online tools for data visualization like [Datavrapper](#), which transforms artifacts and text into professional-looking maps, graphs, charts, dashboards and infographics, or [RAWGraphs](#), which turns complex data into cool, colorful visual representations. Students use websites like [ArcGIS Online](#) to connect people, locations and data using interactive maps; [Tiki-Toki](#) to make interactive timelines with 3D capabilities; and [Palladio](#), to visualize complex historical data and explore relationships.

Sophomore art major Ella Leach of Athens is getting a concentration in studio art with a minor in history. Last semester, she used Kumu to develop a virtual timeline that represented deities for Auerbach’s class on prehistoric and medieval art. A digital humanities approach helped Leach transform traditional research into a highly visual learning tool featuring video, imagery and maps.



Sophomore art major Ella Leach

“Timelines have always been a main aspect of education,” Leach said. “You could do the same research and plaster images on a poster. What I like about digital

tools is you can see how everything flows and weaves together through each period.”

“Going into an art history class, I never would’ve thought I’d learn anything digital,” she added. “It has helped me develop skills—like data and spreadsheets—and shown me how to present information in a visually-appealing way, so anybody can see and learn from it online.”

Leach wants to be an educator. She plans to teach digital skills to her future students.

“

I can take the skills that I’ve learned and use them in another class or when searching for a job. Being able to use digital skills just opens up this whole new realm.

- Ella Leach

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In Auerbach’s upper-level classes on Renaissance art, students were asked to research 15th- and 16th-century artists and their connections. Using [Kumu](#), students translated Excel spreadsheets of facts into a giant online family tree image—with crisscrossing lines mapping out various artist relationships.

Senior Ashlyn Simmons of Columbus said the program gave her research “kinetic energy.”

Simmons is majoring in art with a concentration in studio fine arts. When she heard the class involved a digital project, she was nervous. Opening a spreadsheet on Excel was the extent of her technological knowledge.



Senior art major Ashlyn Simmons

She was impressed by the vast difference in scale between digital and paper.

“I personally found it really uplifting,” Simmons said, “because one of the biggest parts of art is community. Our graphic showed as early as the 15th- and even 14th-century and beyond, there are hundreds of people who made and appreciated art

and worked to make things together. That's awesome to me. I find that really inspiring."

“

This wasn't just a student project. It didn't feel like that at all. It felt like a bunch of artists collaborating together.

- Ashlyn Simmons

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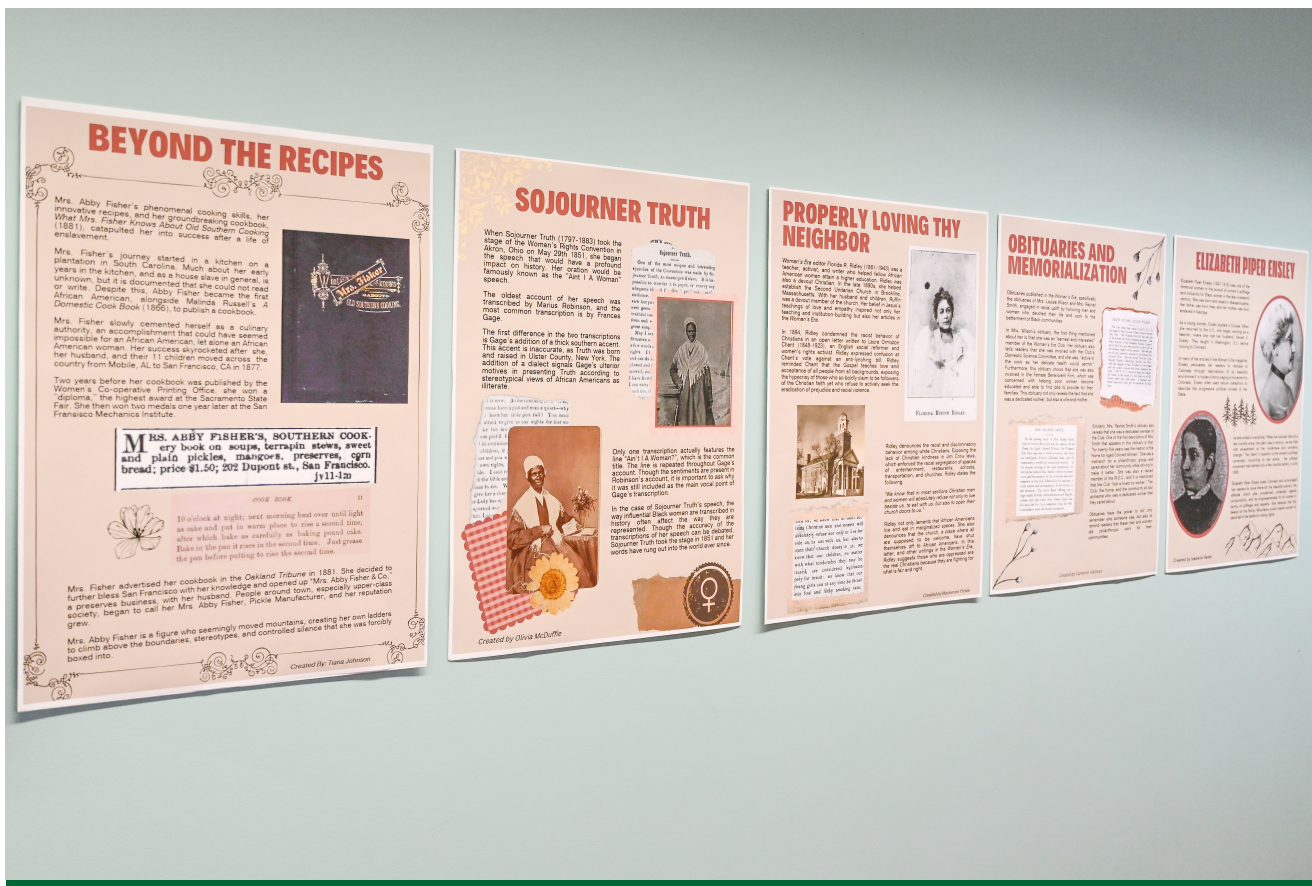
"This wasn't just a student project. It didn't feel like that at all," she said. "It felt like a bunch of artists collaborating together."

Students from Dr. Sidonia Serafini's African American Literature class also did digital projects last semester. Serafini is a member of Georgia College's Digital Humanities Collaborative and has organized physical and digital exhibits for the Digital Library of Georgia and University of Georgia Special Collections Library.

Digital platforms extend projects to larger audiences, she said. Sometimes, essays and reports don't make it past library shelves to the public.

Serafini's students used [Canva](#), a graphic design platform, to create posters on over-looked writings of African American women from slavery to the Harlem Renaissance. Students searched old newspapers for short stories, poems, letters, articles, speeches and advertisements. Using material from digital databases, like the Library of Congress archives, students wrote analytical essays and condensed information into smaller, easier to read sections for public audiences.

"That's what I really love doing, especially working with untold African American stories, Serafini said. "It's important we tell their stories—not just to each other—but by making them visible in a larger way. Digital tools and public humanities projects allow students to share their research and bring their critical thinking and writing to a broader audience."



Digital projects from Dr. Sidonia Serafini's African American Literature class were displayed at Ina Dillard Russell Library in November.

Senior [English](#) major Olivia McDuffie of Milledgeville said she wasn't tech-savvy before this class.

Her project on Sojourner Truth, a Black women's rights activist from the mid-1800s, was given a vintage, scrapbook feel with Canva. Her poster was part of a class exhibit at Ina Dillard Russell Library in November.

"One thing I really like about digital humanities," McDuffie said, "is it shows history in a new, fun and engaging way for people who are visual learners, like I am."



Alumna gaining experience in every aspect of the entertainment and film industry

[Theatre & Dance, Department of](#): Wednesday January 25, 2023

Harlee Pope, '18, is all wrapped up in the entertainment and film industry. From working on the set of the CBS TV series "MacGyver," interviewing rock legends like "Men at Work," starring in the Pretense music video by Alex Græy, Pope applies the knowledge gained through her Georgia College & State University degree daily.

"Being a part of Georgia College's Georgia Film Academy program allowed me to learn the ins- and-outs of the film industry," she said. "At the end of the course, I got an internship in the Atlanta Film industry, then a full-time job on the MacGyver reboot for CBS."

Pope is a film industry freelancer. She's worked on more than 34 professional film productions in three years. You may have seen some of her credits in films and television series including DC Universe's "Doom Patrol," Lionsgate's "Heels," Netflix's "Insatiable" and "Thunder Force" and Fox's "The Resident."

Pope enjoys watching coworkers collaborate creatively to make a film great.

"To watch patient, hustling, problem-solving, creative, forward-thinking people work every day is so inspiring and challenges me to grow," she said. "You never know who or what is going to come to set each morning. It's exciting to adjust constantly. I am never afraid of change."

In the YouTube concert series "Live at the Print Shop," Pope contributes both on- and off-screen. She operates cameras and conducts interviews with musicians who play a private concert. The crew has presented artists like: Drivin' N Cryin', Kool & the Gang, Men at Work, The Mavericks and Zac Brown Band's John Hopkins.



Harlee Pope on the set of the CBS TV show "MacGyver"—Season 3.

"I just love being on the set and hearing the amazing stories," Pope said.

She recently acted in short films and two music videos, as well. One film, called "Hush," was featured in several film festivals. Pope also acted in the short film "Get out of Harris County," by Producer Eric Burleson. And she has two film and television projects currently in the works.

Pope got her start in [theatre at Georgia College](#), where she played leading roles in "Miss Nelson is Missing!," "Chicago the Musical," "Almost Maine," "Intersexion," "American Idiot," and "Cabaret." Her production credits include: "Anything Goes," "Big Love," "The Cat in the Hat" and multiple solo performances.

In addition to playing leading roles, Pope worked as a choreographer, director, editor, interviewer, on-set film assistant, props master and stage manager.

"Because of this experience, I am a go-getter and not afraid to take 'no' for an answer," she said. "It taught me how to spot talent and help individuals grow to their potential. Mostly, I learned the art of collaboration by understanding how to work with other brilliant minds to utilize their skills and bring a beautiful creation of

art to life.”

Pope credits her career success to Beate Czogalla’s shop and stage management class, which taught her organization and how to properly prepare for a production. Dr. Amy Pinney’s class showed Pope how to refine her acting and solo performance skills. Guest artist Iona Holder taught her how to channel her inner performance through symbolism with her body and be patient with the theatre process.

“

The Theatre program showed me what I was capable of. I still use tools I learned from each production today. Also, by learning to be positive and good spirited, I’ve received calls back from film studios to work with them again, because I have good energy on set.

- Harlee Pope

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Pope also thanks Dr. Karen Berman, former chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance, for securing her a job for three summers where she directed plays in Florida, Georgia South Carolina and Texas.

“It’s an awesome freelance program,” she said. “I was happy to be a part of helping students grow and learn through theatre.”



Harlee Pope works the set of the Fox TV series, "The Resident"—Season 3.



Harlee Pope on the set of the CBS hit TV show MacGyver, Season 4.

In addition, Pope studied abroad in the Czech Republic for one month where she starred in eight theatre performances in five cities about a famous Czech artist.

"I understood how important theatre and the arts are for everyone in the world," Pope said. "It's healing. The way they cherished theatre there was so beautiful, as well as their operas and artist centers."

Her experience, working in every aspect of Georgia College's Theatre program, strengthened Pope's performance repertoire. It taught her adaptability and forward-thinking skills.

"The Theatre program showed me what I was capable of," she said. "I still use tools I learned from each production today. Also, by learning to be positive and good spirited, I've received calls back from film studios to work with them again, because I have good energy on set."

Pope prepared for the GFA program by working with GC360 and mass communications, where she was the entertainment news host for two years. Pope also worked in the editing room, clipping together her interviews and footage to

produce each story.

“That experience made me way more comfortable on-and-off camera,” Pope said. “It also taught me the preparation needed to attend the GFA program.”

Today, she works every day, and the on-set hours can be excessive. But she stays positive.

“We can learn from the dark times and bring those ideas to life through art,” Pope said. “I love knowing our opportunities are truly endless. I am here to help guide anyone and share my talents. Always feel free to reach out. You never know what can happen.”

News Stories Posted Tuesday January 31, 2023



Former GCSU student gives hope to Zimbabwean female students

[International Education Center](#) : Tuesday January 31, 2023

Story developed by University Communications.

Teachers in Zimbabwe's Whitestone School recognized Michael Mbulelo Ncube's passion to help others at an early age. He won the school's Citizenship Award three times for his great humility and resolve to help others. This compassion for others still drives him today.

In 2020, he started the Girl Global Child Foundation. These scholarships pay school fees so seventh-grade female students can continue their education in high school.

"I love what I do with the foundation," Ncube said. "My constant need to assist society and have a larger purpose than my own goals has carried me through the years."

When African students reach the seventh grade, their parents have to pay fees in

order for them to advance to high school. If parents can't afford the school fees, students leave primary school without a certificate to verify they completed it, and their education is over.

“Many times, in the African community, parents will sacrifice for the boy to go to school, and then neglect the girl,” Ncube said. “This creates many social ills later on in life and a lot of possessiveness by males toward females, because females don't have a leg to stand on.”

“

If you look at the demographics of many African countries, you'll find 60% women to 40% men. Imagine if 60% make a meaningful contribution to our economy. It can change a lot of things for us and puts everyone in a better position.

- Michael Ncube

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Seeing these different outcomes made him aware of the challenges women face. These disparities inspire him every day to gather as many donations as possible to give women a better chance at success.

“When I started this scholarship, I hoped to make our society aware that education of young women is very important and shouldn't be sidelined,” Ncube said.



Michael Ncube with Whitestone School's Citizenship Award.



Michael Ncube with seventh-grade learner recipients.

In less than three years, the Girl Global Child Foundation has awarded more than 100 scholarships to help girls attend high school. The people of Zimbabwe see the good he's doing for young female students and contribute.

Ncube writes a letter to each scholarship recipient, encouraging them to continue to work hard to pursue their education and career goals.

"If you look at the demographics of many African countries, you'll find 60% women to 40% men," he said. "Imagine if 60% make a meaningful contribution to our economy. It can change a lot of things for us and puts everyone in a better position."

The semester Ncube spent at Georgia College & State University in 2019, inspired him to develop his foundation.



Michael Ncube and the deputy headmaster with seventh grade scholarship recipients.

"This experience showed me how humble Georgia College professors are and the humility they exert toward students," Ncube said. "They taught me that learning is a process that never ends."

"Georgia College also showed me how efficient America's education system is," he said. "I was exposed to research, résumé writing and the Writing Center—these different entities showed me what's possible for us, as young Africans, if we invest our minds into developing certain areas."

The attention Ncube spent on personal development at Georgia College sparked the idea to start his foundation when he returned to Zimbabwe.

"Opportunities are scarce here; oftentimes hard work is not rewarded," he said. "When a young girl is empowered to say, 'I did this on my own'—that's what we try to instill."

Ncube wants young girls who are doing well in their studies, to ask themselves, "what more can I achieve?"

When he started his foundation, Ncube underestimated the gratification he'd get,

because he felt like “it was just the right thing to do.” Then, he ran across a girl he recognized.

“She told me that I gave her a scholarship, and she’s still in high school now,” Ncube said. “I told her, ‘Wow, that’s incredible.’ It really hit home when somebody I’ve helped tells me such good news. There’s a certain fulfillment I can’t describe. But it’s a big feeling and inspires me to try even harder.”



Michael Ncube meets with the interim headmaster of a high school signing the reception of 30 scholarships for female students.

“My passions largely lie in humanitarian work and community development,” he said. And, I’d like to continue to grow my efforts in these areas.”



GBI's first female division director of investigations draws on GCSU's Master's Program experience

[Psychological Science, Department of](#) : Tuesday January 31, 2023

Story, video and photos developed by University Communications.

Cynthia Wahl Adkins, '97, '98, is the first female to serve as division director of Investigations for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

Hired with the GBI at just 26 years old, see how her career progressed with her goal to help people coupled with her psychology classes at Georgia College & State University's [Graduate School](#).

