

Front Page News Story Archive

March 2023



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News Stories Posted Thursday March 2, 2023



U.S. Secret Service Agent and GCSU grad student is a model for giving

[College of Arts & Sciences](#) : Thursday March 2, 2023

B. "Alan" Reeves has lived a life of service to others. As a Secret Service agent, he protected former Presidents Bush, Obama and Trump. Today, he provides protection for former President Carter. But he believes his greatest act of service was his decision to donate a kidney to an area educator in need of a transplant, so that person can live a long, healthy life.

During a visit to Georgia College & State University to share his law enforcement career with students, Reeves praised the many ways GCSU faculty, staff and his fellow students enable him to strive for his goal of earning a master's degree while continuing his career as a Secret Service agent. From his application to the ease of his online course work, Reeves said GCSU is helping him reach his educational goals.

News Stories Posted Monday March 6, 2023



Local high schoolers join GCSU's first Women in Technology Day

[Information Systems & Computer Science, Department of](#): Monday March 6, 2023

According to the National Girls Collaborative Project, women make up half of the United States' population but hold only 21% of computer science bachelor's degrees and 34% of computer science jobs.

To address that disparity, Georgia College & State University's J. Whitney Bunting College of Business hosted its first Women in Technology Day Friday, Feb. 24.

The goal is to help young women envision a career in a technologically-oriented field. Led by Georgia College's Women in Technology Club—and faculty advisor Caroline Collier, Women in Technology Day is designed to excite female high school students about technology and introduce educational pathways that could lead to careers in the tech sector.

"We're very proud of our GC WIT girls and participating high school students," Joy Godin, associate professor of management information systems said. "It was inspiring to see so many women excited about technology. Hopefully, the event

and future ones will help young women envision themselves in technical careers.”

Visiting students enjoyed a line-up of conference events geared toward women in technology. They explored virtual reality technology and learned about the GCSU Women in Technology experience firsthand from college peers.

Dr. Paige Rutner, assistant professor of management information systems, helped attendees create a robotic process automation for mimicking human interaction on a web browser.



GC WIT women shared their experience in technological majors.

The aspirant young students also heard from guest speakers Angie Gheesling, '90, executive director of the Development Authority of Houston County and Meghan Aguilera, '08, client integration manager for IBM.

Both women are GCSU graduates and spoke about their experience as business women and professional leaders. In addition to encouraging young women to pursue careers in male-dominated fields, they shared what it's like to forge a path for other women to follow.



Students competed in the ERPsim in school groups.

At the end of their trip, attendees from five schools competed in an enterprise resource planning simulation (ERPsim) to make the most valuable maple syrup company. With the help of GC WIT club members, teams managed their virtual companies over 60 days using real ERP systems.

The Georgia College Early College team of Kayla Harris,

Erica Cabiness, Taiylor King, Tamia Miller and Ariel Reeves came out on top—with their company valued at \$977,880.

After winning the competition, they shared their thoughts about how the day allowed them a glimpse of what to expect within the field, and how communication

and teamwork are at the heart of any career.



Group photo of all high schoolers and their GC WIT mentors and organizers.



Newell Scholar explores impact of women in early Christianity

[Newell Visting Scholar Program](#) : Monday March 6, 2023

Story and photos developed by University Communications.

A renowned scholar on Christianity is visiting Georgia College & State University to help further his research about the impact of women on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Dr. James McGrath, an expert on Christianity and this spring's Martha Daniel Newell Visiting Scholar, is teaching a course this semester based on his recent book, "What Jesus Learned From Women."

McGrath is developing the new course and plans to take it back to Butler University in Indiana, where he is a professor of religious studies and the Clarence L. Goodwin Chair of New Testament Language and Literature.

"Dr. McGrath was chosen as the Spring 2023 Newell Scholar because of his vast scholarship and disciplinary reputation on the subject of early Christianity, a topic that we believe would be of great interest to our students," said Eric Tenbus, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences.

“He has a tremendous teaching and publication record and joins us after having spent a semester on sabbatical at Oxford University,” Tenbus said. “We’re very excited to have someone of his academic record bring his expertise on this important and exciting topic.”

Scholars have visited and shared their unique expertise since 2011, when the Newell Scholar program was established with an endowment from alumna Martha Daniel Newell, ‘42. The program provides opportunities for students to engage, learn from and work alongside recognized scholars from other distinguished higher education institutions.



Dr. James McGrath giving a recent presentation on the flow of information.

“

We’re very excited to have someone of his academic record bring his expertise on this important and exciting topic.

- A&S Dean Eric Tenbus

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McGrath is the 11th Newell Scholar to visit. His course, “Women in Early Christianity,” has been well received by students.

“I’ve gotten a good reception here,” McGrath said. “There’s been a lot of academic curiosity and faith-related interest in this subject.”

He grew up in New York City in a mixed-faith family where one parent was Irish Catholic and the other Jewish. As a teenager, he began to question things and had a personal, religious experience which led to his decision to study more. He got his undergraduate degree at the University of London and Ph.D. from the University of Durham, both in the United Kingdom.

McGrath came to Georgia College because it’s a vibrant, liberal arts school similar to Butler University. Also because it’s a place where his “wide diverse range of academic interests” would have “conversation partners.” There may not be a large number of religious studies majors here, he said, but “they’re enthusiastic and doing interdisciplinary, creative things.”

The course is based on McGrath’s belief that some areas of the bible might’ve been

misinterpreted. Much emphasis has been placed on the divinity of Jesus, he said, while ignoring the humanity. Because Jesus was human, McGrath said, he must also have had to learn. He points to a biblical passage that states Jesus “grew in wisdom” (Luke 2:52).

From there, McGrath makes the case Jesus learned from the women around him—most notably his mother, Mary. Some concepts in the Magnificat, which Mary professes to her cousin Elizabeth before Jesus’ birth, are later repeated by him. For example, Mary states the mighty will be brought low, and Jesus later teaches the first shall be last.

“

These texts have proven to have depths to them that, when you dive in and start swimming, you find there is more.

- Dr. McGrath

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“These texts have proven to have depths to them that, when you dive in and start swimming, you find there is more,” McGrath said. “You can’t be born knowing everything and be fully human. Presumably, the best of humanity has to be open to learning and growing.”

Other women McGrath teaches about this semester are the Samaritan Jesus meets at the well, Mary and Martha, and the woman brought to him by the Pharisees, accused of adultery.

McGrath came to his conclusions by asking questions, then delving into untranslated works in Spanish and Italian—in addition to regularly-read texts in French and German.

“When I started looking in the gospels, I realized it had been there all along, but I had not really seen it,” he said. “One of my biggest takeaways from this book project is if we don’t ask these kinds of questions, then we miss things.”

While teaching his course on women and Christianity, McGrath is also working on two new books about the life of John the Baptist—one for academic consumption and the other for general readers.

One of his duties as the Newell Scholar is to plan programs for campus and the community.

McGrath already hosted a visiting speaker, Professor Susan Hylen from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University. In February, she spoke about her



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new book, “Finding Phoebe.” Phoebe was the New Testament woman who delivered Paul’s letter to the Romans.

On Feb. 28, McGrath gave a talk on the ethics of information flow. He talked about whether the computer on Star Trek is better than Google and the new chatbot, ChatGPT. A Trekkie, McGrath sought to make the talk fun. He examined whether simple

answers given by the Star Trek computer are preferable to millions of results from a Google search.

“I’m not sure it’s utopian to get one short answer,” he said. “But, on other hand, so much information out there today is misinformation and easily spread.”

“My short answer—from someone who thinks way too much about these things—is: If you’re on a starship, and you often encounter crisis situations, then you want to be able to ask the computer and get a quick answer,” McGrath said.

At Butler, McGrath mainly teaches biblical studies. But he’s branched out into other areas too—merging religious themes with modern science fiction and music.

In light of that, he’ll also moderate a panel of campus speakers in April. From religious studies, history, mythology and other disciplines, they’ll talk about the importance of studying popular culture in academia.

“

I consider it a real privilege to be able to spend a semester as the Newell Scholar. Everyone has been incredibly welcoming.

- Dr. McGrath

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News Stories Posted Friday March 10, 2023



Students get hands-on civics lesson during Georgia College & State University Day at the Capitol

[President, Office of the](#) : Friday March 10, 2023

Georgia College & State University students got a hands-on civics lesson in Georgia state government this week.

A delegation of Georgia College students and administrators traveled to Atlanta to meet with legislators and state officials and talk about the virtues of the state's designated Public Liberal Arts University during Georgia College & State University Day at the Capitol.

Georgia College & State University Day at the Capitol is an opportunity to talk about the ways the university prepares our workforce's next generation to meet the state's ambitious economic development goals. Georgia College Day also offered students unique insight into the hustle and bustle of the 40-day legislative session in Atlanta.

[Georgia Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones](#) welcomed President Cathy Cox,

Milledgeville [State Senator Rick Williams](#) and Thunder to the floor of the Senate prior to starting the day's legislative agenda. Jones, who formerly represented Milledgeville, said he makes many recommendations for students to attend the "Jewel of the University System," so they can benefit from Georgia College's beautiful campus, small class sizes and student-friendly atmosphere.



State Senator Rick Williams, center, poses with President Cathy Cox and Thunder in the Georgia State Senate.

Cox thanked legislators for working to ensure Georgia students have access to a world-class higher education system. In recognition of Georgia College's role in "transforming the lives of generations of students," Senator Williams introduced [a resolution declaring March 9, 2023 as Georgia College & State University Day at the state capitol](#) and commending the institution for "its venerable 133 years of excellence in developing a more educated Georgia."

Outside of legislative chambers, Georgia College students met with members of Milledgeville-Baldwin County's legislative delegation and a host of alumni who work at the Capitol, including [State Representative Mack Jackson](#) and [Georgia Department of Natural Resources Commissioner Mark Williams](#).

The conversations offered invaluable networking opportunities and the chance to learn about the inner workings of Georgia's legislative body.

News Stories Posted Monday March 13, 2023



Faculty member triumphs at 2023 International Conductors Workshop and Competition

[Music, Department of](#) : Monday March 13, 2023

Story developed by University Communications.



Bryan Hall. (Photo credit: David)

Bryan Hall, assistant professor of music and director of orchestras at Georgia College & State University (GCSU) attended a well-known and highly-regarded conductor training program in January—and walked away with an award for best conductorship.

“I wasn’t focused on the competition at all, just focused on making myself better,” said Hall, who was hired in 2022 to teach upper strings at Georgia College.

“I approached it through the lens of being a better conductor,” he said. “I don’t care what a person does. If you stop learning, you become irrelevant and should

McAdoo)

probably do something else. Things are always developing, and it's nice to be able to develop with it.”

A violinist, Hall was one of 11 musicians who took part in the 31st International Conductors Workshop and Competition (ICWC) in Atlanta. The other two winners were Tal Benatar, co-artistic director of the SONUS Choir in Nashville, Tennessee, and James Chang, a freelance conductor from Jacksonville, Georgia.

“

I don't care what a person does. If you stop learning, you become irrelevant and should probably do something else. Things are always developing, and it's nice to be able to develop with it.

- Bryan Hall

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Participants came from all over the globe and U.S.—France, the United Kingdom, Illinois, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Texas, as well as Georgia. They received intense instruction on techniques, rehearsal procedures and music preparation for standard orchestral repertoire, according to a statement by the ICWC.



Bryan Hall conducts the 2023 Catawba Valley Honor Orchestra Performance in Hickory, North Carolina. (Photo Credit: Angie Allen)

The four-day workshop required reading five books on conducting, studying 8

hours a day, taking master classes and being individually coached by three regional directors and co-directors of symphonies in Gwinnett and Macon, Georgia, and Kiev, Ukraine.

Training included how to prepare scores and move hands, as well as when to help orchestra members and when to hold back. A conductor is responsible for every section of the orchestra—including woodwinds, brass, strings, percussion and sometimes more.

At the same time, a conductor has to keep up with the music—the spaces between beats and “super technical music stuff, like creating more rhythmic space for syncopation and hemiola,” Hall said.

“

It’s all about rewiring your brain to little things like that. It can be challenging as an attendee, because you’re getting picked apart in front of like 40 people and 10 of your colleagues. It takes a little bit of tough skin, but I thought the faculty at this workshop were really nice and approachable. They gave tough love but in a very instructive, nurturing way.

- Bryan Hall

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After only six rehearsals, conductors led an orchestra in a culminating concert, performing compositions by Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms, Antonín Leopold Dvorak, Felix Mendelssohn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

“

The better I am at what I do, how I communicate and what I do with my hands—my students will be the first recipients of that improvement.

- Hall

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Hall conducted the Tchaikovsky piece. Orchestra members said they felt the strongest connection with him, according to workshop leaders.

Hall’s own style can be quite “gregarious” when conducting. So, he appreciated instruction on “toning down,” extending his hands further out and making smaller movements to communicate nonverbally with musicians.

Developing his conducting skills ultimately helps his students and improves the GCSU Orchestra, which rehearses twice a week. Its next concert, "Classical Masterpieces," will be at 7:30 p.m. March 28 in Russell Auditorium.

"The better I am at what I do, how I communicate and what I do with my hands—my students will be the first recipients of that improvement," Hall said. "In the professional world, sometimes you just have one rehearsal to do a whole symphony, and all the musicians are counting on you."

News Stories Posted Wednesday March 15, 2023



Marketing professor wins 2023 Felton Jenkins Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award

[Management, Marketing, & Logistics, Department of](#): Wednesday March 15, 2023

Story and photos developed by University Communications.

For her devotion to students, selfless commitment and innovative teaching—Marketing Professor Dr. Joanna Schwartz won the University System of Georgia’s 2023 Felton Jenkins Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award.

The University System of Georgia awards this honor each year to recognize faculty with a strong commitment to teaching and student success.

Schwartz is the third J. Whitney Bunting College of Business & Technology (CoBT) faculty member to receive this award in the last five years. Assistant Professor of Economics Dr. Brooke Conaway won last year and Economics Professor Dr. Chris Clark in 2019.

“

Everyone here tries really hard to bring our A-game to the classroom and to impact our students, so to have that recognized not just at the university-level, but also by the USG, was very cool.

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“That’s some serious representation at the state level for our college,” Schwartz said. “It was a real honor to win this. It was also wonderful, along the way, to hear such enthusiastic support from my students and colleagues.”

“Everyone here tries really hard to bring our A-game to the classroom and to impact our students,” she said, “so to have that recognized not just at the university-level, but also by the USG, was very cool.”

At Georgia College & State University, students in the athletics department have frequently proclaimed Schwartz Most Influential Professor. In CoBT, she won the Student’s Choice award three times.

Winner of the 2022 University Excellence in Teaching Award, as well, Schwartz was the automatic nominee for this year’s Felton Jenkins Jr. Hall of Fame Award. Dr. Costas Spirou, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, formally nominated Schwartz. She then competed for the recognition with faculty from other USG state universities.

In the nomination package, Schwartz was praised for her ability to create original coursework, integrate real-world experiences in her classes, offer stellar research opportunities and generate partnerships with off-campus organizations.

But it’s her ability to make students feel valued that stands out.

In his nomination letter, Spirou quoted a former student who said of Schwartz: “Thank you for going out of your way to help me through my undergraduate experience. You were the first professor I had who actually told me that you believed in my ability to succeed.”

“Dr. Schwartz’s visionary and compassionate leadership, innovative teaching and course design and commitment to student success are worthy of the highest praise,” Spirou wrote. “Dr. Schwartz is an excellent teacher with an impressive record of success. Her devotion to teaching is evidenced by her innovative pedagogies, impressive research portfolio and commitment to student learning beyond the classroom. She is a true leader on the Georgia College campus where she exemplifies the college’s commitment to diversity, inclusion and community

engagement.”

Schwartz got her undergraduate degree in psychology at the University of Georgia, then a master’s degree in management and Ph.D. at the Georgia Institute of Technology. At Georgia College, she teaches sports marketing, consumer behavior, marketing research and LGBTQ+ marketing. The LGBTQ+ course is unique, built from scratch and not found at other universities across the nation.

In the nomination, Dr. William Donoher, chair of management, marketing and logistics, noted students often mention Schwartz as one of their favorite professors. CoBT Dean Dr. Micheal Stratton pointed to creative strategies used by Schwartz, like tying color theory to performance arts and names of colors used for sports cars.

“... it’s easy to recognize that for her teaching is a calling rather than just a profession,” Stratton wrote.

Dr. Kerry Neville, MFA coordinator and associate professor of creative writing, wrote about catching up over coffee with Schwartz and how much she’s learned from her about what it means to be “an engaged, committed, rigorous and empathetic teacher.” Neville noted how Schwartz sometimes shakes student expectations, like one semester when she showed up on the first day of class wearing a Darth Vader mask.

In her sports marketing class, Schwartz connects marketing promotions with the university’s baseball and softball games. In marketing research, she uses corporate data to do statistical analysis on actual business problems. In her consumer behavior class, she asks students to understand their own motivations and how they relate or differ from people they want to influence.



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... it's easy to recognize that for her teaching is a calling rather than just a profession.

- Dr. Micheal Stratton

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In the nomination, everyone praised Schwartz's readiness last year to cut short a sabbatical and take over courses without an instructor. She'd never taught the courses before and there were no lessons to go by. Schwartz immediately put students at ease, asked about their expectations for the course and designed it to fit their needs.

Donoher commented on Schwartz's "skills, character and enthusiasm" as truly exemplifying excellence in teaching. Schwartz has "a teaching philosophy that is genuinely inclusive and concerned about making sure her students are challenged, but that they are challenged in an environment that is supportive," he wrote.

Schwartz credits this award on the "remarkable support" she received from her CoBT colleagues, the Center for Teaching and Learning and Dr. Cynthia Alby in teacher education. Alby leads Georgia's Governor's Teaching Fellows program for USG that Schwartz attended during the 2021-'22 academic year. She said the program taught her "very real connect-the-dots" practices and ways to engage students.

She is humbled by the award and all the praise.

“

I don't presume to transform students' lives—that seems like a lot to take credit for. I try instead to hopefully tap into their own knowledge and create inspiration within them to find the subjects that I teach as interesting and that learning more about them is truly worth their time. I also hope that my students take from my classes the importance of inclusivity and respect, because I believe that respect is a two-way street. I need to show it to my students, if I expect a classroom environment where every student feels valued and heard and where we can all come together and collectively learn from each other.

- Dr. Joanna Schwartz

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Schwartz will be honored at the annual Regents' Scholarship Gala Sept. 8.

News Stories Posted Thursday March 16, 2023



GCSU's Math Jeopardy team dominates their way to first place

[Mathematics, Department of](#) : Thursday March 16, 2023

Story and photos developed by University Communications.

Jeopardy usually means a crisis or threat. That's how some people feel about math too.

But a group of Georgia College & State University (GCSU) students turned jeopardy into victory last week—snatching the Math Jeopardy championship title at the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) Southeastern conference at Coastal Carolina University in Conway, South Carolina.

"I am so proud of our team for winning the Math Jeopardy tournament," said Dr.

Rachel Epstein, associate professor of math and Math Club co-advisor. Retired Math Professor Dr. Hong Yue also helped the team prepare.

“

They did an amazing job answering some tough questions. I love how passionate they are about math and how much they enjoy discussing problems and learning new techniques. It has really been a privilege to work with them.

- Dr. Rachel Epstein

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Math Jeopardy is part of the MAA conference each year. The three-day venture includes research presentations, a math scavenger hunt, math recreational games and fun talks about general math subjects like “Pascal’s triangle” or the “Fibonacci Sequence.”

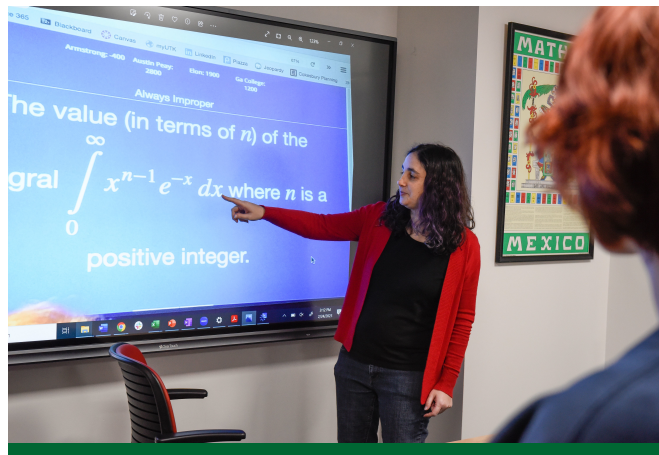
The main show, however, is Math Jeopardy—modeled after the popular TV game show, Jeopardy, complete with buzzers to punch, categories to choose and answering in the form of a question.

A generous donation by alum Harlan Archer, '89, '09, of Sandersville enables Georgia College to send students to Math Jeopardy and other math conferences. Georgia College students have participated for many years—only missing competitions that were canceled during the COVID-19 pandemic.

They won second place in 2022, 2017 and 2011. They took third place in 2019.

This was the first time Georgia College won the top prize—a trophy and medals for each participant. Team members from the GCSU Math Club include: Jacob Carter, senior math major from McDonough; Monica Lichtenwalner, senior math major from Cumming; Caroline Hegwood, junior math major from Marietta; and Anna Marti, first-year math major from Loganville.

They competed against 15 schools from Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina. In the final championship round, Georgia College



During practice, Dr. Rachel Epstein shows students a screen image of an old Math Jeopardy problem.

competed against Georgia State University, Coastal Carolina University and Western Carolina University.

Epstein knew she had a strong team this year. They work together well, explaining mathematical concepts to each other.

“

...I like that everybody on our team contributes.

- Dr. Epstein

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“There are a couple things that are super valuable about the Math Jeopardy experience for students,” Epstein said. “One, students get a lot of practice when working together and talking and learning about math that they might not have gotten otherwise. Two, the experience of going to this conference and meeting other students and going to math talks is super beneficial.”

“There have been times when one person really dominates the game and that can be frustrating,” she said, “But most of the time it’s not like that, and I like that everybody on our team contributes.”

Epstein doesn’t like the idea of math as a competition. She prefers to give students all the time they need to answer a question—not 2 minutes. She doesn’t use buzzers or time constraints at practice. Nor does she require students to practice by answering in question form.

When preparing, the team reviews screenshots of old Math Jeopardy questions, working them out together. They also look up interesting facts about things, like prime factors, and new techniques, like doing square roots by hand.

The method must work.

In the first of two rounds, Georgia College was—mathematically speaking—guaranteed to win the round with a score much higher than other teams. They were the only team to get the Final Jeopardy question before entering the finals, bringing their round-one score to 7,300.



The GCSU Math Jeopardy team after winning 7,300 points in the first round of the competition. (Left to right) Monica Lichtenwalner, Anna Marti, Jacob Carter and Caroline Hegwood.

In that first round, the Georgia College team was up against last year's winner, Berry College.

"Our biggest fear and uncertainty was how the difficulty of this year's questions would compare to previous year's questions," said Anna Marti, who's been called one of the university's strongest first-year math students by Math Chair Robert Blumenthal.

"We were also watching out for Berry College's team since they beat us last year, and they were in our preliminary round. Even though we were anxious competing against Berry, we managed to rack up enough points that we secured the win before Final Jeopardy, which was really exciting for us."

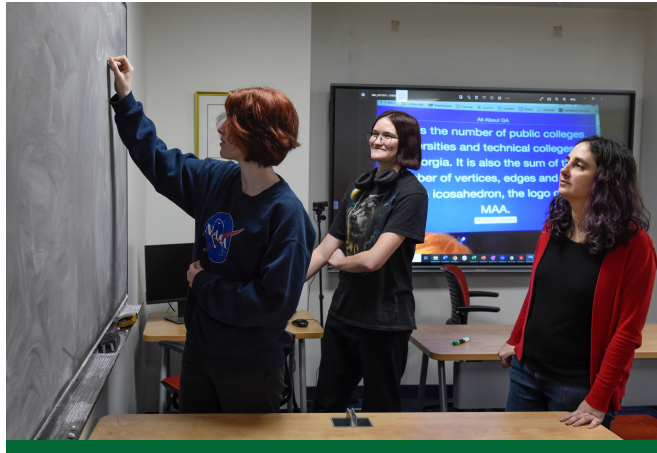
Her teammate Monica Lichtenwalner would like to teach college math someday. Like most contestants, she considers math to be fun. Yet, even she was a little nervous going into the competition.

Her biggest fear was time constraints.

“At school, math is interesting and there there’s no time pressure or stuff like that. It’s a little different, when there’s a time constraint. I’m not good at being rushed,” Lichtenwalner said.

This was Caroline Hegwood’s second Math Jeopardy competition. Math just “clicks” for her; it’s always been something she enjoys. After graduation, she’d like to teach high school math or work as an actuary.

Even for smart math whizzes, however, Math Jeopardy can be a “bit stressful.” But Hegwood said she kept cool by reminding herself she could do it.



Monica Lichtenwalner and Dr. Rachel Epstein watch as Caroline Hegwood works out a problem during Math Jeopardy practice.

“We have a lot of really smart people on our team,” Hegwood said. “The hardest part would have to be the time constraints.”

“

If we had more time and were graded on whether the answer is right or wrong—anybody could do that. The time constraint is what makes Math Jeopardy a little bit spicy.

- Caroline Hegwood

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New questions are created for each Math Jeopardy. Categories, like sports math, add to the excitement. Some ask about basketball statistics, world records or finding “the curl of something,” which is a topic from Calculus III, Epstein said. Questions might require proof-based mathematical theorems, like “L'Hôpital's rule,” or working an answer out with a complex equation.

One year, there was a category on Middle Earth with questions based on J.R.R. Tolkien’s popular “Lord of the Rings” series.

In the end, the winning stroke is teamwork.

“We had each other's backs,” Marti said. “We learned each other's strengths and weaknesses in different subject areas and put our trust in each other. We agreed to

not get frustrated at a fellow teammate, if they answered incorrectly, and to keep the experience fun no matter what.”

“

Our teamwork speaks to how well Georgia College students collaborate with each other and how we can remain focused and cool-headed even while competing. The Georgia College Math Club and Math Department encourage excellence in a broad range of mathematical and teamwork skills, and we are happy to make them proud.

- Anna Marti

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News Stories Posted Wednesday March 22, 2023



Rich compost from student-led GCSU program will be sold to public

[Sustainability, Office of](#) : Wednesday March 22, 2023

You can't get there by GPS. There are no signs to direct you. But just yards from Hwy 49 in Milledgeville, a little hillside with a great view is abuzz with the sounds and smells of rotating and baking leftover food.

An all-female team works this spot and plans to sell their compost, starting this fall.

Not many universities have a student-led compost program. The site diverts about 1,000 pounds of food waste from the Georgia College & State University dining hall every week.

That's roughly 25,000 pounds per year or 1,000 cubic feet of food waste that doesn't end up in landfills. Currently, about one-fourth of all landfill garbage is food, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

“

Compost is incredible for soil health. It increases the water-holding capacity of soil. It introduces new nutrients into the soil, allowing for microbial growth which is super important to suppress disease.

- Molly Robbins



Senior environmental sciences majors Molly Robbins and Anna Lippy work at the GCSU composting site off Hwy 49.

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“About 40% of food consumed in the United States ends up in landfills,” said compost manager Molly Robbins, a senior environmental sciences major from Duluth. “Around the country, we’re outgrowing our landfills. Compost is incredible for soil health. It increases the water-holding capacity of soil. It introduces new nutrients into the soil, allowing for microbial growth which is super important to suppress disease.”

Georgia College’s Office of Sustainability operates the compost site. Since it opened in 2017, more than 70,000 pounds of food waste have been diverted from area landfills and turned into amended soil—superior to store-bought compost.

Now umbrellaed under the GCSU Department of Biology and Environmental Sciences, the Office of Sustainability hopes to connect more faculty and students with activities and expand programming.

In the fall, the office provided 20 students—the largest group ever—with leadership opportunities, volunteer and service learning hours, and course credit in various sustainability tasks. Paid and unpaid internships are given to students of all majors in areas like glass recycling; composting; maintaining the West Campus Garden; communication and outreach; and data analysis.

Students can also earn a Certificate in Sustainability, managed by Geography Professor Dr. Doug Oetter. Senior environmental sciences major and compost assistant Anna Lippy of Stone Mountain joined Sustainability on Oetter’s recommendation.

Now, she’s thinking of working in compost as a career. She hopes the provost’s new spotlight on sustainability helps educate more students and campus staff.

“I’m hoping that the provost, since he’s showing such interest in sustainability, will help continue to make sustainability and composting a long-term thing,” Lippy said. “We want to reach anyone and everyone on campus and let them know

sustainability's so entangled in everything."

For her senior capstone project, Lippy's creating a business plan to sell 5-gallon plastic buckets of compost to local homeowners for a nominal fee. It might be called "PawPost" or "Georgia College Compost."



Anna Lippy pulls non-food items from leftover food collected at the dining hall.

“

We want to reach anyone and everyone on campus and let them know sustainability's so entangled in everything.

- Anna Lippy

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This compost “is far superior” to anything found in hardware and garden stores, Robbins said. Last year, an environmental sciences study “proved our compost to be incredible and helped grow some really hearty tomatoes.”

The team sent data and compost samples to the University of Georgia for further analysis to identify a larger variety of nutrients.

“A lot of stuff you get in stores is a different kind of compost, made from green waste,” Robbins said. “It’s really carbon heavy. Green waste uses yard trimmings and wood chips. So, when it breaks down you get less nitrogen, phosphorus and fewer overall nutrients that plants love.”

Robbins, Lippy and newly-recruited compost assistant Ama Kpoyizoun of Togo, Africa, work the site daily. Bins of leftover food are collected from the dining hall, and waste put through a mixer with a spinning rake-like tool. Students pull out non-degradable items like wax liners, plastic cups or aluminum foil. They mix in a carbon source, like sawdust and wood chips. The material moves up into an ‘in-vessel,’ where it heats, slowly rotating for about three weeks.



Freshman nursing major and compost assistant Ama Kpoyizoun of Togo, Africa, uses a thermometer to gauge the temperature of compost.

The material is then moved to nearby tarps and turned by shovel every week—allowing piles to aerate and “cook.” Once it heats to about 150 degrees Fahrenheit, the team knows bacterial microbes are working to break down waste.

“

We like our material hot. That means bacteria is doing its job. They’re eating up all the food and turning it into useable nutrients for plants. You’ll come out here on a winter day, and it’ll be about 32 degrees out. You break open one of these piles, and it’ll be steaming like crazy inside.

- Compost Manager Molly Robbins

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The entire process takes about three months. The final product is sifted through wire screens, then loaded into large bins and taken to the West Campus Garden for use.

Although composting has become fashionable, Robbins said most universities either don’t separate and collect food waste or they send it to private waste

management facilities. Lippy agreed.

“We’re one of the few universities in the state of Georgia with students running their operation,” Lippy said. “It’s been an awesome experience learning about the whole process from start to finish. I didn’t even know we composted at Georgia College, and now I’m super interested in organic waste diversion.”

Once compost is for sale, the university will use proceeds to improve and expand its project. In the future, leftovers from area schools and restaurants could be included. Students said they’d love to get coffee grinds from Blackbird Coffee in Milledgeville.



Ama Kpoyizoun shovels a pile of compost.

To make their work easier, the team dreams of buying tractors that turn entire rows of dirt in 30 seconds. Right now, it takes about 15 minutes to turn a single pile by shovel.

Aerated static piles don’t have to be turned at all, however. For her senior capstone research, Robbins ordered pipes with drilled holes to run underneath rows of compost. Pipes will be attached to a blower to pump air

into baking piles, allowing bacteria to breath.

The group plans to build this system soon, dividing piles into 4x4-foot bins.

This kind of outside work excites Robbins. She’s loved composting since she was a girl on her Godmother’s farm. After graduation, she plans to work with international Christian missions, bringing sustainable agriculture to remote areas of the globe.

Managing a university compost program will put her ahead when applying for jobs.

“

Coming to Georgia College, I didn’t know we had a compost operation. It would’ve made me all the more excited if I had. It’s one of my major passions to be able to interact with our food system in a unique way and educate people on why it’s important to know where your food goes and to care about it.

- Molly Robbins



Inaugural TEDxGeorgiaCollege event to explore the “Power of the Public Square”

[Leadership Programs](#) : Wednesday March 22, 2023

Georgia College & State University will share its expertise, creativity and thought-leadership with the world in its first TEDxGeorgiaCollege.

TEDxGeorgiaCollege promises to unlock the “Power of the Public Square” by presenting an evening of speakers who hope to inspire our limitless potential to benefit the public good. The evening will follow the TED model of gathering the most interesting people together to explore a theme from a variety of angles and starting points.

Harold Mock, director of Leadership Programs at Georgia College, says the TEDx format provides the opportunity to demonstrate what universities do best.

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At Georgia College, we believe in the power of the public square. Our goal with TEDxGeorgiaCollege is to showcase for the international TED community the unique voices, stories and ideas that make Georgia College special.

- Harold Mock

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“TEDx events are organized by passionate individuals who seek to uncover new ideas and share research that

spark conversations,” Mock said. “We know that sharing ideas with our neighbors awakens our curiosity and opens our eyes to the transformative power of new ideas.”

The inaugural TEDxGeorgiaCollege will feature nine speakers, including alumni, professors, students and friends, who will share original, transformative ideas.

Georgia College Biology Professor Dr. Melanie DeVore will speak to the power of music to cut through the noise and inject serendipitous joy into life. Georgia College senior and aspiring educator Jacob Carter hopes to motivate the mathematician inside all of us.

Alumna Lisa Calvert will use her time to amplify “the Silent Voices in the Public Square.” Georgia Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Chris Clark, '96, will reflect on thoughtful leadership in a talk entitled “The CEO Imperative.”

And Georgia College Business Law and Ethics Professor Jehan El-Jourbagy will share her belief that corporations can rise to the occasion and present innovative solutions to the world's most pressing problems.

“At Georgia College, we believe in the power of the public square,” Mock said. “Our goal with TEDxGeorgiaCollege is to showcase for the international TED community the unique voices, stories and ideas that make Georgia College special.”

TEDxGeorgiaCollege will take place in front of a live audience Friday, March 24, in the historic Campus Theatre in downtown Milledgeville. Following the live event, TED will publish each TEDxGeorgiaCollege talk to its 37 million subscribers.

TEDxGeorgiaCollege is an independent event organized in the spirit of TED's mission to research, discover and share “ideas worth spreading.” TEDx events are operated under a license from the TED Foundation.

You can learn more about TEDxGeorgiaCollege, see a list of speakers and purchase tickets for the live event at tedxgeorgiacollege.com.

News Stories Posted Thursday March 23, 2023



Andalusia Interpretive Center ribbon cutting kicks off O'Connor birthday celebration

[Andalusia](#) : Thursday March 23, 2023

Georgia College & State University opened a gift to fans of Flannery O'Connor on the eve of the renowned author's 98th birthday.

Georgia College, O'Connor's alma mater, unveiled its new Andalusia Interpretive Center during a ribbon cutting ceremony Friday, March 24.

The opening kicked off two days of birthday celebrations, including author talks, book signings and free tours of Andalusia—O'Connor's home from 1951 until her death in 1964. On Saturday, March 25, there will be a party featuring cake and singing.

The Andalusia Interpretive Center is a \$3.5 million investment in the preservation and interpretation of O'Connor's life, literary legacy and the history of the Central Georgia region that inspired her writing.

The center encompasses 5,300 square feet of exhibition, artifact storage, retail and conference space. The Center is designed around an open-concept storage facility allowing visitors greater access to the many personal affects collected at Andalusia. Visitors also will be able to view the work of curatorial staff to catalogue and preserve O'Connor's material legacy.



The National Park Service designated Andalusia a National Historic Landmark in 2022.

Georgia College Director of Historic Museums Matt Davis says the Interpretive Center is a giant step in restoring the farm where O'Connor completed the majority of her published output and that appeared in stories including "Good Country People," "A Circle in the Fire" and "The Displaced Person."

"For fans, the improvement is two-fold," Davis said. "It will improve and continue to enhance what you can experience about the life of Flannery O'Connor at Andalusia, and it also helps us to take all the non-original functions out of the house museum and recreate the environment Flannery knew when she lived there."

At Saturday's birthday celebration, author Amy Alznauer will discuss and sign copies of her book "The Strange Birds of Flannery O'Connor" at 1 p.m. Museum staff and guests are invited to sing "Happy Birthday" and enjoy cake at 2 p.m. Dr. Monica Miller will close the event at 6 p.m. with a lecture about her book "Dear Regina: Flannery O'Connor's Letters from Iowa."

For more information, visit [the Andalusia web page](#) or call Andalusia 478-445-8722