

Front Page News Story Archive

May 2023



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
News Stories Posted Monday May 1, 2023	3
Class of 2023: Student aims to be a life-long learner	3
News Stories Posted Tuesday May 2, 2023	5
Class of 2023: Special education major directed Miss Amazing's Georgia chapter	5
News Stories Posted Wednesday May 3, 2023	10
Class of 2023: Bridge program created foundation of success for environmental science major	10
News Stories Posted Thursday May 4, 2023	14
Compassion influences valedictorian's research focus	14
News Stories Posted Friday May 5, 2023	17
Economics and philosophy work together for Nudge Unit VP	17
Class of 2023: Nursing valedictorian had an early role model in compassion and dedication	20
News Stories Posted Tuesday May 9, 2023	25
Leaving a legacy for fellow nursing students	25
News Stories Posted Wednesday May 10, 2023	28
Students in World Languages & Cultures use Spanish to promote GCSU	28
Class of 2023: Graduate uses opportunity of a lifetime to preach the power of math	33
News Stories Posted Thursday May 11, 2023	37
Biology students monitor bird nesting for evidence of population decline	37
News Stories Posted Monday May 15, 2023	43
Alumna to explore roots of communication and democracy as Fulbright Finalist in Greece	43
News Stories Posted Thursday May 18, 2023	47
Social service motivates future pediatrician	47
News Stories Posted Monday May 22, 2023	51
Economics and finance graduate carries strong mentorship skills with him	51
News Stories Posted Wednesday May 31, 2023	54
GCSU student awarded national honors grant to study leadership abroad	54

News Stories Posted Monday May 1, 2023



Class of 2023: Student aims to be a life-long learner

Commencement : Monday May 1, 2023

Grant Van Den Berg

What city are you from? I am from Pretoria, which is in the northeastern region of South Africa.

What is your major? I'm getting my B.A. in [history](#).

How many years did you study at Georgia College & State University? I have studied here for four years.

How does Milledgeville's weather compare to South Africa? It gets much hotter and colder in Georgia than Pretoria. Pretoria also does not get so humid.

What's your favorite food at The Max? I like the burgers.

Which clubs and organizations did you belong to? I was involved in the International Club and University Housing.

How did they help you grow? The International Club connected me to so many

great people, and University Housing helped me grow as a person and leader.

How helpful was the staff at the International Education Center?

The staff at the International Education Center was super helpful. They were welcoming and kind. They made sure I was doing well and always were there to listen.



Grant Van Den Berg

Who is your favorite professor and why? My favorite professor is Dr. Aran MacKinnon, because he helped me grow as a student. He has also spent time in South Africa and did his dissertation on South African history, so it's cool to talk about South Africa with him.

What did you learn from this professor or GCSU that you can apply in your profession? Dr. MacKinnon and GCSU taught me to be more confident in my abilities, which will help me in my profession.

What are your plans once you graduate? I am going to get my master's in history.

What profession would you like to pursue and why? I'm planning on becoming a historian, so I can pursue my own research.

What inspires you and why? I'm inspired knowing I can constantly grow and gain knowledge so I can achieve anything that I set my mind to.

News Stories Posted Tuesday May 2, 2023



Class of 2023: Special education major directed Miss Amazing's Georgia chapter

Commencement : Tuesday May 2, 2023

Story and top photo developed by University Communications.

Caroline Pedersen



Caroline Pedersen

From: Marietta, Georgia

Major: Special Education

Why this major: In high school, I got involved in a nonprofit organization called Miss Amazing. Even after my first year volunteering, I could see there is a need to build support for those with disabilities in the community. A large group of individuals do not feel that they are loved. After a few more years with the program, I wanted to continue to make individuals feel loved and special throughout my life. That directed my

path towards special education.

Why Georgia College & State University: I loved GCSU's environment when I toured. This little town felt like home. GCSU also offers the best special education program in Georgia.

Activities: State director of Georgia Miss Amazing; sister of Alpha Gamma Delta; vice president of finance at the sorority in 2020; vice president of administration in 2021; member of the Council on Exceptional Children; member of Gamma Beta Phi and played intramural volleyball.

“

We envision a world in which girls and women with disabilities have equal opportunities to reach their fullest potential.

- Caroline Pedersen

”

Community Service: In January 2020, I took over as executive director of the Georgia chapter of Miss Amazing. Miss Amazing is a national 501c-3 nonprofit dedicated to supporting and building confidence and self-esteem in girls and women with disabilities. We envision a world in which girls and women with disabilities have equal opportunities to reach their fullest potential. As executive state director, I organized annual events and fundraisers. Our events provide opportunities for participants to feel empowered, share their voice and build a sisterhood with one another. We also drive change and provide opportunities for the community to shift perceptions.



This year's Georgia Miss Amazing event. Pedersen on right. (Photo courtesy of Georgia Miss Amazing.)

Challenges: Bringing Miss Amazing to Milledgeville was a huge task. I brought the organization to an environment that had never heard of Miss Amazing before. Covid was almost a blessing for us. It gave me time to put an event together and to work out any unforeseen issues. Now, four years later, it feels like a professional program. We have a lot of community relationships. We've more than doubled the number of participants, and we have an average of 70 volunteers per year. This organization has the ability to completely change lives.

What keeps her going: Miss Amazing is a lot of work, and it takes a lot out of me. There are two big factors that keep me going. One, my girls. My heart is so full every time we get together. They shower me with as much love as we try to show them. I love watching the true joy on their faces. Two, the community. Anytime residents and organizations reach out to support in any way, I feel so thankful. I feel good serving my girls, and it continues to make me feel good to know I've encouraged others to serve as well.

Biggest Achievement: Miss Amazing is my biggest accomplishment. I've loved watching the program grow over the years. It's like running a business. This program shaped me into the woman I am today. Volunteering with this organization is what inspired me to go into special education and has built my own self-confidence. Honestly, Miss Amazing has become my entire life.



Pedersen crowns a participant Georgia Miss Amazing. (Photo courtesy of Georgia Miss Amazing.)

Other accomplishments: Being recognized as the 2023 Servant Leader of the Year for GCSU. Plus, I'm one of the class valedictorians for the May commencement 2023.

Favorite Professor: My favorite professor is Dr. Brandon Samples. His class is a lot of work, but I learned the most I ever have in a single class. I've already applied the knowledge he shared in numerous field placements, and math has become my favorite subject to teach.

Advice for incoming students: Take risks. There are so many fruits that come from things that you never expected.

“

Georgia College helped me build my future.

- Pedersen

”

Future plans: I've accepted an inclusion special education position at Dames Ferry Elementary School in Gray. I'll also be pursuing my master's in special education, beginning this summer. I also plan to continue with Miss Amazing a state director.

How Georgia College helped: Georgia College helped me build my future. From the moment I was offered my role at Miss Amazing, various departments at GCSU supported me. The special education professors here are amazing. I feel very prepared for my first year teaching, and I know I'll always have this program in my corner.

News Stories Posted Wednesday May 3, 2023



Class of 2023: Bridge program created foundation of success for environmental science major

Commencement : Wednesday May 3, 2023

Story and photos developed by University Communications.

Environmental science major Michelle Murdock from Winder knew Georgia College & State University was the right choice for her, starting with the Bridge Scholars Program. She began her first year in a residential learning community with an intensive, five-week summer program designed to build a strong academic foundation.

“The **Bridge Scholars Program’s** resources such as mentorship, tutoring and career guidance taught me to be open-minded and embrace new challenges,” Murdock said. “By actively seeking out and taking advantage of these opportunities, I’ve gained valuable skills and knowledge, built professional networks and grew as a student and an individual.”

This desire for capitalizing on opportunities helped her navigate college life and prepared her for success post-graduation.

“This strategy has allowed me to stay open-minded and proactive in my day-to-day life, whether it’s career advancement or social gain,” Murdock said. “It also encourages me to actively learn new skills, gain experiences I may not have considered before and positions me for career success and advancement.”

As a first-year student, many doors opened for Murdock. She was a program facilitator for Academic Outreach for four years, collaborating with community members of all ages and backgrounds, as well as university faculty and students.



Michelle Murdock

“

I want to make a difference within my community, but also globally.

- Michelle Murdock

”

This provided her the opportunity to participate in other organizations like Georgia Adopt-A-Stream, GCSU Kid’s University, Rivers Alive, Georgia College Early College’s Zoo Club and in local community endeavors.

“My work with [Academic Outreach](#) developed my communication and leadership skills, which strengthened my ability to collaborate effectively with others,” she said. “Undergraduate research taught me valuable research skills and techniques. I gained a deeper appreciation for the scientific process using critical thinking and problem-solving skills.”

Murdock credits Ruth Eilers, director of Academic Outreach, for leading by example.

“Her ability to be flexible and achieve is incredible,” Murdock said. “She’s also one of the most open-minded and selfless people I’ve ever met. She collaborates with a diverse group of individuals to put on events with community members. I hope to continue learning from her and applying similar skills to my life.”



Michelle Murdock at the Integrated Science Complex.

In her environmental science classes, Murdock enjoyed the emphasis on experiential learning and the chance to interact with professors. GCSU faculty are approachable, accessible, passionate and knowledgeable about their fields, she said.

“Their passion and willingness to help provide answers to questions and their guidance inspired me to learn more about the environment and our impact on it,” Murdock said. “The numerous opportunities to engage in hands-on activities and research projects were incredibly valuable. They allowed me to apply what I learned in the classroom to real-world situations.”

She wants to pursue a career involving community outreach, where she can get the community involved in researching new ways to deal with current challenges related to water quality and conservation.

“These roles are so important given the current state of our world today,” Murdock said. “The dramatic effects of climate change due to human impact is a great example. I want to make a difference within my community, but also globally.”

Each day, she derives inspiration from others including her family, friends, Georgia College faculty and students and her community.

“Seeing people find their passion or get excited about what they love just makes me want to be a part of it,” Murdock said. “I want others and myself to have that spark in life.”

News Stories Posted Thursday May 4, 2023



Compassion influences valedictorian's research focus

Commencement : Thursday May 4, 2023

Since the pandemic, many students have experienced increasing rates of depression and anxiety. But this can be doubly felt by nursing students, who encounter stressors in both classroom and clinical settings.

Priya Polanco understands these pressures all too well. She's a graduating nursing student, a member of the Honors College, valedictorian and student speaker at her commencement ceremony.

When she thought about her own transition from high school to college and then the nursing program, she wondered if she could help her peers by learning more about what makes them anxious.

"It can be a big academic adjustment to the rigor of nursing school," she said, "and we have educational clinical rotations where—for many of us—it's our first time dealing with sick and dying patients."

Polanco worked with Dr. Talecia Warren, assistant professor of nursing, to create a research plan, create an online screening tool, analyze the data and discuss questions. Through her research, Polanco found that on average, her peers experience normal depression levels, but elevated levels of anxiety.

Polanco has identified solutions too. She cites nursing-focused counseling and positive coping mechanisms as methods nursing students can utilize for help.

And her hard work has paid off in one respect—Polanco accepted a position as a registered nurse in the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit at Emory University Hospital.

Q: Looking back, what are some things you've learned along the way?

A: Each semester seemed to move so slowly during the moment, but when I reflect, it feels like time passed quickly. I have learned a lot academically and clinically. I feel prepared for my next step of becoming a registered nurse. I have also learned a lot about time management and knowing when to ask for help. I'm very excited for graduation and everything that is next. I can't wait to see how much my time at GCSU has helped prepare me academically, professionally and personally.

Q: What led you to nursing?

A: When I was younger, I would help take care of my grandmother and my mom after she suffered an injury that left her temporarily immobilized. As I got older, I realized that I truly enjoyed learning about the human body and pathology, but really wanted the direct patient interaction that's found in nursing. I wanted to be able to help people on their worst days and treat them with the same kindness and empathy that my family was shown. I knew that nursing would allow me the opportunity to do this, from an academic and clinical standpoint.



Priya is now a cardiovascular ICU registered nurse at Emory University Hospital.

Q: Tell me about yourself and your interests outside of nursing.

A: I'm from Stone Mountain, Georgia. Outside of nursing, I enjoy playing tennis, watching anime and spending time with my family, friends and cat. My time here has been academically challenging but very rewarding. The community here, especially my friends and professors, has been very supportive. I've been a part of different groups and organizations on campus like the Honors College, Georgia College Association of Nursing Students and the Learning Center. I have been able to meet new people, have intellectual discussions on different topics, help other students and do my best to enjoy my time here.



Priya's campus involvement have left her with copious decorations for her graduation gown.

News Stories Posted Friday May 5, 2023



Economics and philosophy work together for Nudge Unit VP

Commencement : Friday May 5, 2023

Graduating economics student, Brandon Pascali, is excited to step into his next educational opportunity—and for good reason.

The undergraduate student is jumping into a macroeconomics Ph.D. program at Emory University in Atlanta, with a full tuition, \$70,000-a-year scholarship.

Pascali credits the offer to his hard work at Georgia College & State University, where he minored in mathematics, scored very well on the Graduate Record Examinations and served in the GC Nudge Unit—a behavioral economics team.

“It feels good to have a lot of hard work rewarded,” Pascali said. “My goals are education based. I want to teach the future generation nuanced tools for answering tough questions and help them think more critically about the economy.”

That’s what he does for the Nudge Unit, where Pascali and a team of economics students help groups on campus solve problems with psychological insight. Right

now, they're working with the Learning Center to increase attendance. Data proves visiting the center improves GPA.

Q: Who do you want to be: as a professor and as a person?

A: I didn't realize this before—it developed here at Georgia College—but I genuinely love learning. Wherever I end up, I hope I'm able to continue taking classes on the side. My linear algebra professor takes piano lessons, and my philosophy professor is getting a second master's degree.

When I'm a professor, I still want to be developing myself and learning. I don't ever want to be complacent, or get to a point in my life where I say I'm done growing.

Q: Tell me about the faculty who have informed the teacher you want to be.

A: The professors here extremely influenced my goals and where I want to go, because they're so supportive. They all have open-door policies for asking questions, and they're always giving advice to prepare you for grad school, the job market and anything else you need.

Ideally, I would want to do that for somebody else in the future and be that person who helps them stay on track.

Q: How did you end up in economics?

A: I transferred from Mercer University, where I started as a physics major and transferred on kind of a whim. Economics has a human element that physics lacks, and asks normative questions like 'What should we do?' I like thinking about that kind of stuff.



Brandon wants to model his economics professors for the next generation.

I like philosophy, as well, and philosophy asks a lot of broad questions. It gives you tools to think about the world in different ways, and that supplements the ethical side of economics. It helps you decide how you should act in the absence of other guiding principles.



Class of 2023: Nursing valedictorian had an early role model in compassion and dedication

Commencement : Friday May 5, 2023

On college campuses in late spring, life experiences start coming full circle.

Nadira Colbert, a valedictorian in the nursing program, closed one such loop during her pinning ceremony—the symbolic welcoming of soon-to-be-graduated student nurses into the nursing profession.

During the ceremony, Colbert’s grandmother, Ingrid Perez, affixed the Georgia College & State University nursing pin upon her lapel signifying a new chapter to the life calling Perez had modeled for Colbert since her childhood in Duluth.

“Oh gosh, just thinking about it makes me emotional,” Colbert said.

Perez was a registered nurse in Trinidad and Tobago before immigrating to the United States in the 1960s. Determined to continue working toward her life’s calling, Perez went back to school to earn her accreditation in the American healthcare system. At the same time, she was starting her family and adapting to life in a new country.

Colbert admires the compassion her grandmother shared with her patients, family

members and the many people she comes into contact with. This is the quality that led her to want to pursue nursing.

With her grandmother's example, Colbert set her ambitions on becoming a registered trauma nurse. And she promised herself she wouldn't let any of the bumps on life's road push her off track.

"You always think everything's so smooth until obstacles come up," Colbert said. "So, when I'm experiencing little bumps in the road, I tell myself, 'Okay, it's a little bump. I'm going to keep moving to get to my goal, because I want to do this. This is who I am. I want to be a nurse, and this is how I have to get there. And that's okay.'"

For Colbert, things have been better than okay.

Having maintained a 4.0 grade point average through all four years at Georgia College, Colbert prides herself on doing it with style. She balanced the nursing program's rigorous academics with the professional development of career placements and serving her peers through work in the School of Nursing's simulation center, skills lab and the Learning Center at the Library. She's also earned officer roles in cocurricular organizations like Gamma Beta Phi—the national collegiate honor society—and the Black Student Alliance (BSA).

As a student from Gwinnett County, one of Georgia's most diverse counties, studying at a predominantly white university, Colbert said it was gratifying to work with current students, staff at the Cultural Center and members of the African American Alumni Council who care deeply about helping Georgia College work toward the inclusivity that all members of the campus community deserve.



Nadira Colbert

The human body has always interested me, but also being able to talk to people of different backgrounds and actually help them get better—this strikes a chord in me.

- Nadira Colbert

”

“Unfortunately, we have a retention problem with black students, and that's the whole issue that everyone's trying to fix,” she said. “I really hope to see in the near future that we can improve on this big thing we worked on with BSA—trying to recruit Black students and help them stay here—and for all races, Latinos and Asian Americans—trying to figure out what can we do to make this campus more inclusive.”

Looking at the bigger picture of the institution's overall health is part and parcel to what Colbert is embarking upon in her calling to be a trauma nurse. It is a part of what her grandmother taught her: that her compassion, empathy, hard work and dedication can make a difference in the lives of individuals and the communities we live in.

“The human body has always interested me, but also being able to talk to people of different backgrounds and actually help them get better—this strikes a chord in me,” she said. “I enjoy seeing people at their worst, but also seeing them at their best as they improve and get better. I enjoy being able to help people make a difference in their lives.

“No one wants to be in the hospital for any kind of reason,” she said. “So being able to come into work and actually talk to them and comfort them and help them figure out ways to get better is this amazing goal for me.”

After taking a celebratory trip with family to Trinidad and Tobago in June, Colbert will take the Nurse Licensure Exam this summer. Then she'll begin working in the Intensive Care Unit at WellStar North Fulton Medical Center.



Nadira Colbert and her chihuahua/dachshund mix Lucy.

News Stories Posted Tuesday May 9, 2023



Leaving a legacy for fellow nursing students

Commencement : Tuesday May 9, 2023

Nursing graduate Clara White of Murrayville is leaving Georgia College & State University having made an impact she never thought she'd achieve.

Under her leadership, the Georgia College Association of Nursing Students (GCANS) has become an award-winning organization with reach throughout the university.

GCANS is an opportunity for nursing students to come together and decompress away from school. Upperclassmen mingle with first-year nursing students and share advice for homework, studying and having fun.

White never thought she'd be president.

"I was scared about public speaking," she said. "But the past president encouraged me to go for it—I've gotten so much better, and now I can be in charge of an organization."

Q: Tell me about the awards you have received, and what went into achieving them.

A: Last week, I was awarded the Unsung Hero Award, and this is for someone who has contributed a lot toward their organization, but haven't been recognized as much. GCANS has never won a Bobcat award, but this year we got Student Organization of the Year. Getting that was definitely big for us, and more people will hopefully look at GCANS on campus and come see us.

We're tabling, doing more fundraisers, sharing new events and letting our community know we're here to help students on campus.

Q: What's it like winning those awards as the person at the helm?

A: Last year, I went with the past president to the Bobcat Award ceremony. Ever since that ceremony, I've wanted to earn that award and change GCANS for the better. I got to do that, and it feels really awesome.

Q: How did you wind up in nursing?

A: My aunt is a midwife at Northeast Georgia Medical Center, and seeing her passion and love for her job has inspired me to do this. She's helping mothers and their children every day, and she still talks to some of them. Having that connection and relationship with your patients is awesome.

Q: Where are you headed next on your journey?

A: I'll do a residency program at Northeast Georgia Medical Center in the ER, and I'm considering a graduate program. The fact that I'll get to help all these people coming in will be crazy. But, I think it'll be really fun helping those patients.



Clara White won the Unsung Hero award for her work as GCANS president.

Q: What advice do you have to the nursing students you're leaving at GCSU?

A: Don't be scared, because everyone hears about the nursing program and how hard it is. It is, but it's very doable. Just do it, because it's a great opportunity.

Our instructors are in the hospital just to help us every step of the way. That's the best thing GCSU has over a lot of other nursing programs—its nursing faculty are the best.

News Stories Posted Wednesday May 10, 2023



Students in World Languages & Cultures use Spanish to promote GCSU

[World Languages & Cultures, Department of](#): Wednesday May 10, 2023

Fifteen World Languages & Cultures students practiced their Spanish-speaking skills recently while also promoting Georgia College & State University to 10th graders at Brentwood School in Sandersville.

The project was funded by the university's Community-based Engaged Learning (CbEL) program. CbEL encourages faculty to involve students in hands-on, active learning and community service.

World Languages & Cultures lecturer Dr. Lee Kirven and associate professor Dr. Aurora Castillo-Scott designed the project.



Sophomore history and English major Catherine Wall on left with first-year psychology major Natalie Capernetti and junior English and Spanish major Charlotte Parker, right.

“Promoting GCSU College Life to the K-12 Community” allowed students to practice their Spanish skills in a practical, real-world setting. At the same time, they promoted the university to prospective students.

“As students,” Castillo-Scott said “they are our best ambassadors and can relate well with high school students. The event was a success, because our students did a great job connecting with Brentwood students.”



Dr. Lee Kirven (left) and Dr. Aurora Castillo-Scott (middle with dark gray jacket) with students from GCSU's Spanish program at Brentwood School in Sandersville.

Prior to the trip, students created posters and planned presentations as part of their Spanish course, "Structure and Composition."

At Brentwood, they worked in groups with 13 high school students. Presentations were entirely in Spanish and showcased different aspects of student life—academic programming, housing, the dining hall, clubs and organizations, sports, the two campuses and transportation.

After the presentations, students worked with high schoolers to complete more activities in Spanish.

The event provided 10th graders an opportunity to converse with new people outside their classrooms.

"Thanks to this event, my students were able to put into practice what they have learned during the year," said Brentwood Spanish teacher Esther Quesada. "It's one thing to study in the classroom and another to converse in a real-world context in Spanish."

Rising sophomore and Spanish major Morgan Gosdin of Canton was happy to present life at Georgia College in a fun and positive light. She also thought the project was a great opportunity to encourage teens to major in Spanish during college.

Rising junior Alejandro Del Rello of Atlanta agreed. As someone who's double majoring in business management and Spanish, he underscored the importance of teaching youth different languages.

"My favorite part was being able to interact with these students in a different language and guide them to a future in Spanish," Del Rello said. "At the same time, we're trying to get them to come to GCSU for college."

Kirven and Castillo-Scott's students also shared their poster presentations with Spanish classes on campus and at Georgia College's Early College. The faculty team plans to continue and expand this project in the fall.

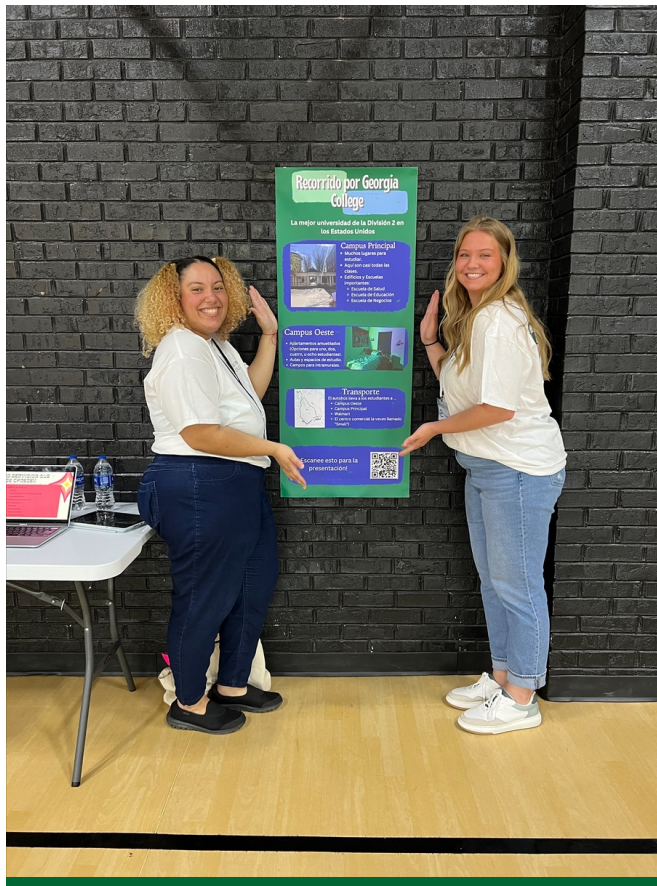
“

My favorite part was being able to interact with these students in a different language and guide them to a future in Spanish.

- Alejandro Del Rello



GCSU students do Spanish activities with high schoolers.



Senior Spanish major Zynnette Fernandez on left with junior management and Spanish major Morgan Uessler, right.

”



Class of 2023: Graduate uses opportunity of a lifetime to preach the power of math

Commencement : Wednesday May 10, 2023

Jacob Carter bristles at the idea that there are ‘math people.’

Carter, a graduating math major, aspires to teach Advanced Placement Calculus to high school students. He thinks the whole concept of ‘math people’ creates a false dichotomy: that there are math people and people who are not math people.

“A lot of people, when I say I’m a math major, immediately launch into this series of horror stories about terrible math teachers and of bright red ink marked all over exams,” Carter said. “I think a lot of that deep-seated frustration with learning mathematics actually comes from people’s experiences in school and not necessarily with mathematics.”

Don’t get him wrong. Carter has had his fair share of challenges and setbacks in his pursuit of mathematical excellence.

He recalls the time he scored a 13% on a calculus exam in high school, and how it made him feel. But he also remembers the way his calculus teacher, Mr. Goldgar at Luella High School in McDonough, helped him understand that failing grade was not a reflection of his potential as a math student.

“He saw past that 13% grade to someone who genuinely loved math,” Carter said. “He saw someone that didn't just like math, because they were good at it, but because they were interested in it and had questions. That was exceptionally valuable.”

For Carter, math is a means of exploring the many wonders we encounter in the world every day. Math offers a way to decode the many symmetries and disparities that appear in nature and the built environment. It creates puzzles to be solved and ways to share experiences with others.



Jacob Carter

“

In the process of writing the talk and honing the idea, I was simultaneously honing my philosophy for how I think about things. It made me realize that part of my role on this earth is to help make math fun and help bridge that gap between mathematics and everyday people.

- Jacob” Carter

”

Wanting to share the confidence his teachers helped him develop, Carter has made it his mission to share his appreciation for math. During his time at Georgia College & State University, he is proud of the more than 230 hours he spent tutoring and the over 40 mentor relationships he’s started with honors students.

“I've had amazing professors and teachers, and I feel that if I just hold on to that information and don't pass it on, it kind of dies,” Carter said. “It's completely free for me to share it with others. Why wouldn't I? I think it would be a shame for me to hide all my tips, tricks and strategies for getting good classes on registration day and all the little things and the bigger things. I think the investment that professors make in you is in danger of going to waste unless you give it back.”

During his senior year, he got a unique opportunity to share his love of math.

Carter was one of nine speakers to share “ideas worth spreading” during the inaugural TEDxGeorgiaCollege. The event allowed members of the Georgia College community to talk about subjects they are passionate about in front of a live audience. The talks are video recorded and shared online for audiences around the world.



Jacob Carter uses chalk to work on math equations at a blackboard.

“

I really want you to believe firmly—like I do—that everybody is a math person. You just might not know it yet.

- Jacob” Carter

”

Carter has been an avid audience to TED Talks since he began looking for ways to develop his leadership potential as head drum major for the Luella High School Marching Lions.

“I specifically remember watching Benjamin Zander’s TED talk about “The Transformative Power of Classical Music”—it came across to me very powerfully, and I remember thinking to myself, I want to be so passionate about something that I can speak on that kind of stage,” Carter said. “So, when the opportunity came

up, I was instantly like, 'I'm hopping on this.'”

For his talk, “Everybody’s a Math Person,” Carter combined his formative experiences in high school, the lessons he learned tutoring and his belief that math is a pursuit that has intrinsic value for everyone.

“

I did it because I really believe in this idea—that everybody is a math person. I feel like that is something I can share with the world—that’s something I can genuinely contribute to the public good.

- Jacob” Carter

”

“In the process of writing the talk and honing the idea, I was simultaneously honing my philosophy for how I think about things,” he said. “It made me realize that part of my role on this earth is to help make math fun and help bridge that gap between mathematics and everyday people. I really want you to believe firmly—like I do—that everybody is a math person. You just might not know it yet.”

Developing and sharing his ideas about math’s ability to uncover truths and help us better understand beauty pushed Carter to new realizations about the subject he’s been so passionate about all these years.

In that way, it was a proper culminating experience for this part of his educational journey and an indication of all that’s yet to come.

“I didn't do it because I love public speaking,” he said. “I did it because I really believe in this idea—that everybody is a math person. I feel like that is something I can share with the world—that’s something I can genuinely contribute to the public good.”

After graduating, Carter hopes to begin the Master of Arts in Teaching program for secondary education at Georgia College. Then, he hopes to get certified to teach AP Calculus at a high school in Central Georgia.

News Stories Posted Thursday May 11, 2023



Biology students monitor bird nesting for evidence of population decline

[Biology & Environmental Sciences, Department of](#): Thursday May 11, 2023



Alternate Text

American naturalist Roger Tory Peterson called birds “indicators of the environment,” saying “if they are in trouble, we know we’ll soon be” too.

That’s one reason Dr. Katie Stumpf has her biology students research various aspects of bird life. Studying the health and wellbeing of birds can warn of environmental challenges—some yet unknown—we might face with a changing climate.

“Birds are an excellent indicator of ecosystem health since they’re able to leave quicker due to their ability to fly,” said Mathew Gordon of Thomaston, who just received his degree in biology with a minor in

environmental sciences.

“Having a healthy and diverse bird population in any ecosystem promotes other species,” he said. “By studying birds, we’re able to enhance the overall quality of the ecosystems they call home, which in turn will help other populations of species grow and prosper.”

Gordon plans to pursue a master’s in biology at Georgia College & State University in the fall. He always enjoyed the outdoors and animals. When he met Stumpf and discussed field opportunities in ornithology, he was hooked.

He wants to help protect these feathery friends who seem to be everywhere—in every yard—but whose numbers are in decline.

“

We’re losing huge numbers of birds, and that’s true of the Southeast, as well.

- Dr. Katie Stumpf

”

A recent study estimated a 30% drop in North American birds since the 1970s. That means a loss of one in four birds—about 500 million—in the last 50 years, according to the National Audubon Society.

“We’re losing huge numbers of birds, and that’s true of the Southeast, as well,” Stumpf said. “Most of the declines are due to habitat loss from human activities like agriculture or urbanization.”

“Aside from being the cutest things ever, birds are one of the first animals to respond to environmental changes,” she said. “They’re an indicator species since they’re so visible and ever-present. It’s pretty obvious when they start to disappear.”



Dr. Katie Stumpf and senior Haidee Martinez-Perez check on a birdhouse at Newell Watts House.

Since 2019, Stumpf has led research on one of Georgia’s most popular birds—the eastern bluebird. Her students have published studies on nest site selection and nest avoidance behaviors. Graduate students do research at Panola Mountain State Park in Stockbridge.

This year, she wanted to localize the research.

Dr. Al Mead helped Stumpf build nine birdhouses. Students in her Field Ornithology class picked site locations across Georgia College’s main and West Campuses based on what they learned about bird nesting preferences.

Students did bi-weekly checks on their assigned birdhouses. Two boxes failed to produce nest eggs due to snakes and other predators. In seven, students were able

to watch step-by-step as mother birds—mostly Carolina Wrens and Chickadees—slowly built their nests and laid eggs.

Nestlings began hatching at the end of April.

“First, we started seeing the mother building the nest. Then, she put down feathery stuff and, later, she made a little dome inside the nest to lay her eggs,” said senior Haidee Martinez-Perez of Decatur, who’s majoring in biology with a minor in public health.

“We got to see the whole nesting process—how long the nests are there, how long the mother lays on her eggs before they hatch. It’s cool,” she said.

Another recent biology graduate, Alexcis Critten of Acworth, posted her birdhouse facing northwest in a bushy garden at the Newell-Watts house on South Clarke Street. Studies indicate northwest-facing boxes protect bird eggs from intense morning light and extreme summer heat. The location also has plenty of pine straw, trees and a nearby grassy field.



Alternate Text

Although the wren liked the northwest-facing box—overall results show north- and east-facing birdhouses produce cooler environments, Gordon said. Students also discovered white painted boxes are cooler inside than darker colors or no color at all.

Baby birds were gently taken from nests and tagged for further research. Students also tagged birds at the Oconee River on the Greenway in Milledgeville. They used long ‘mist nets’ to capture birds in flight. Then, students put metal tags on birds’ feet, noted a few measurements and released them.

Tagging helps scientists estimate population sizes, see trends over time and learn about migration or movement patterns.

Their data was submitted to Cornell University for a citizen’s science watch on bird

nesting. Information will be used to mitigate the effects of dangerously high temperatures inside Eastern Bluebird nest boxes. Knowing what type of environments to post boxes and in which direction will help nesting success and reproduction rates in the future.

“I first worked in the lab with blood samples from Swamp Sparrows and then began working in the field with Eastern Bluebirds at Panola Mountain State Park this past summer,” Gordon said. “The research I’ve been involved in has shown me how something like nest temperatures—that may seem insignificant—actually have a large impact on the survival of many species and their habitats.”



Students at the research station on Lake Laurel: Alexcis Critten, Cooper Williams, Grace Cote, Ashley McMahon, Mathew Gordon, Sally Sir and Laura Griffin. (Photo credit: Dr. Katie Stumpf)

“

Since it doesn’t seem like climate change is going to stop anytime soon, we need to figure out ways to provide nesting sites that can be successful.

- Dr. Stumpf

”

Stumpf will use a new grant to purchase WiFi video cameras and temperature loggers to put inside nest boxes next year. This will enable students to see the actual nesting process from an app on their cellphones. They’ll be able to visibly measure changes in bird behavior due to temperature, which Stumpf said is an important indicator of climate change.

Ultimately, she’d like to establish a network of nest boxes on campus for research.

“I’d like to embed research into all my classes so we can understand how large or even small changes in climate alter behaviors,” Stumpf said. “Since it doesn’t seem like climate change is going to stop anytime soon, we need to figure out ways to provide nesting sites that can be successful.”

The importance of undergraduate research like this cannot be overstated, Stumpf stressed. An 8 a.m. lecture does not produce the same excitement as an 8 a.m. field excursion, which is more engaging.

One or two students each semester decide to go into ornithology because of field research like this. They get jobs with the Audubon Society or Department of Natural Resources. They work in zoos, Fish and Wildlife Service, nature conservatories or environmental consulting firms.

After getting his master's, Gordon hopes to continue field research as a wildlife biologist.

“

This experience has been extremely rewarding and gives me the opportunity to make a meaningful impact in the world. Georgia College has certainly broadened my perspectives and horizons, allowing me to discover opportunities I never would've thought were possible.

- Mathew Gordon

”

News Stories Posted Monday May 15, 2023



Alumna to explore roots of communication and democracy as Fulbright Finalist in Greece

[National Scholarships Office at Georgia College](#) : Monday May 15, 2023

Georgia College & State University alumna Anagha Ramakrishnan, '22, is set to engage in a yearlong cultural exchange in Greece as a finalist for the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

As a journalist with bylines in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and who fact-checks stories for CNN, Ramakrishnan will travel to the cradle of Western Civilization to explore the underpinnings of communication, research the roots of democracy and teach local students.

"Greece is the starting point for theatre, comedy, drama, politics, democracy and where communication really sparked up with Aristotle's theories of persuasion," Ramakrishnan said. "To be in an area where those theories and practices were born out of and to experience that firsthand will truly help me become a stronger communicator and a stronger storyteller, which is my ultimate goal."

Ramakrishnan graduated with a bachelor's degree in mass communication.

Immigrating to the United States from India, her higher education experience coincided with her pathway to citizenship, swearing the Oath of Allegiance and becoming a United States citizen in 2021.

Ramakrishnan's American experience is a culmination of her Indian heritage, her embrace of the diversity of American society and her optimism that this tapestry of cultures and ideals will continue to offer hope to anyone around the world who aspires to peace and prosperity. Ramakrishnan hopes to share these experiences with her students in Greece.

"I would say the fundamental fabric of America is bringing all those diverse perspectives together," she said. "I hope to really showcase and exemplify that while I'm in Greece."



Anagha Ramakrishnan

Ramakrishnan intends to share her love of media and popular culture to illustrate this idea in ways that will engage the students she encounters through the Fulbright program. She identifies "The Hill We Climb," which National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman read during President Joe Biden's 2021 Inauguration, as an example of popular creative expression that has the power to shape perceptions of America's present and future.

In return, Ramakrishnan hopes to see the United States through the eyes of the people she meets in Greece to better understand how people around the world view their relationship with the U.S.

“

Greece is the starting point for theatre, comedy, drama, politics, democracy and where communication really sparked up with Aristotle's theories of persuasion. To be in an area where those theories and practices were born out

of and to experience that firsthand will truly help me become a stronger communicator and a stronger storyteller.

- Anagha Ramakrishnan

”

She hopes her experience in the Fulbright Student program will have a direct impact on her ambition to be a successful journalist focusing on international affairs.

“This is a great opportunity to engage with a different culture and learn about international relations firsthand,” Ramakrishnan said.

Ramakrishnan’s inclusion in the Fulbright finalist class of 2023 marks another opportunity for Georgia College to showcase the leadership potential students and alumni are ready to exercise around the world.

“Our institution is strengthened by the passion and creativity our students and alumni bring to their scholarship and outreach,” said Georgia College & State University President Cathy Cox. “To know Anagha is to know how passionate and engaged she is with everything she undertakes. I will be excited to follow her Fulbright experience and learn more about the connections she draws through her research and teaching in Greece.”

Ramakrishnan first heard about Fulbright through Anna Whiteside, assistant director of Georgia College’s National Scholarships Office. Whiteside encouraged Ramakrishnan to apply and guided her throughout the entire process. After receiving the grant, Ramakrishnan felt grateful to her family, friends and the faculty at Georgia College.

"If it weren't for Ms. Whiteside, I don't think I would've applied to Fulbright in the first place. I am also grateful to Dr. Harold Mock, Dr. Kerry Neville and Dr. Kerry Evans who wrote letters of recommendation for me and who have supported me throughout," Ramakrishnan said. "My parents are my greatest cheerleaders and harshest critics. They truly helped me develop my statements and prepared me for my interviews. It is because of all of these people that I achieved this, and I owe this success to them."

Operating in over 160 countries worldwide, the Fulbright Program is the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government and is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.

Visit [Georgia College’s National Scholarships Office website](#) to learn more about

the Fulbright, and other national scholarships.

News Stories Posted Thursday May 18, 2023



Social service motivates future pediatrician

[Science Education Center](#) : Thursday May 18, 2023

Sarah Fix graduated from Konos Academy in Fayetteville with 30 other students. There weren't any clubs or science labs.

Now she's graduating Georgia College & State University with a biology major, chemistry minor and a foundation in pre-med mentoring. Fix hopes to become a pediatrician in a rural area.

"Frequently, I sit back and think about who I was freshman year, and it's kind of crazy how much I've grown and changed," Fix said. "I was very shy, and I think I'd never been given an environment where I could speak up and my opinion was valued."

"I'm fortunate to have mentors, like Dr. Catrena Lisse and Beth Benson in admissions—those people helped guide me and nurture the power in my voice."

Her original mentor was her mother, a social worker named Kelly Fix. Hoping to reciprocate her mentors' values, Fix wanted to make sure she gave as much as she

took from Milledgeville.

It's safe to say she succeeded.

“

I feel more connected to Milledgeville than I do to my own hometown—all the people here have come to mean so much to me.

- Sarah Fix

”

As vice president of community service for Kappa Delta sorority, Fix organized food drives and fundraisers. Through that work, she also supported Prevent Child Abuse America, the Girl Scouts and The Bright House, a local childhood advocacy center.

One of her most impressive acts of service included raising \$21,000 for the Milledgeville community at Georgia College's first ever Fall Festival.

“I was just talking to my mom about how I feel more connected to Milledgeville than I do to my own hometown,” Fix said. “All the people here have come to mean so much to me.”

This spirit of service led Fix to volunteer for the Georgia College & State University Science Education Center. It quickly became one of her favorite places to serve.

Directed by chemistry professor Dr. Catrena Lisse, the center promotes access and participation in science by people of all ages and backgrounds.

"I love our STEM-ming shows with the Science Education Center, because we focus on the most rural and underserved schools in the area," Fix said. "That might mean us loading into a van, driving to perform a science show and seeing kids who never get to engage in this experience."

"There's so much empowerment and opportunity that can come from education," she said.

For the last year, Fix has interned at the center and organized many of these STEM-ming into the Community events with Lisse.

They'll go to any school to show off magic shows, explore stars with telescopes and give students hands-on experience with science.

From projects like mixing soap, shampoo or conditioner with small, random objects to taking the Medical College Admission Test and graduating with high marks.

Scientific curiosity inspired it all.

"When I look at Sarah, I see a role model for K-12 students as a woman in a STEM discipline not often seen in rural Middle Georgia," Lisse said. "Sarah volunteers her time and resources to mentor community youth and expose them to science through our programs—she rocks!"

"Her enthusiasm toward learning and sharing knowledge is addictive," she said, "especially with under-represented youth."



Sarah performs science shows in the center's signature, tie-dyed lab coats.

News Stories Posted Monday May 22, 2023



Economics and finance graduate carries strong mentorship skills with him

[Economics & Finance, Department of](#) : Monday May 22, 2023

Colin Adams, '23, just received his undergraduate degrees in [economics and finance](#) at Georgia College & State University. As he attends Florida State University to pursue his master's and Ph.D. in economics, Adams will not forget the lessons he learned here.

"I was lucky to be a supplemental instruction leader with the Learning Center at Georgia College," he said. "I discovered I liked helping students by facilitating their learning and enjoyed planning for sessions—all aspects of teaching."

Adams also developed a love for research while doing his senior capstone, and he knows from experience the impact a good mentor can have on a student.

Economics professor Dr. Chris Clark helped Adams with the Ph.D. application process, and associate professor of economics Dr. Brent Evans sparked Adams' interest in graduate school. He had both professors for multiple classes and worked with them outside of the classroom, as well.

Clark and Evans were passionate about teaching and mentoring—something Adams plans to emulate in the classroom.

“I enjoy helping students understand economics,” Adams said. “I’m really passionate about economics and teaching students what they need to know for business or their personal lives.”

Evans coached Adams in writing a paper that resulted them receiving the MURACE grant. The associate professor mentored him through his undergraduate research and creative endeavors, which focused on predictors of NFL quarterback performance.

“Both professors bring a lot of enthusiasm into the classroom in their interactions with students,” Adams said. “They support upperclassmen in their research, as well as help them get jobs or go to graduate school.”



Colin Adams

“

Ever since I was a kid, I've been curious about economics, especially the research where I would try to find connections that might not always be visible. This feeds my curiosity.

- Colin Adams

”

Adams also participated in the Georgia College Nudge Unit—a collaboration between economics and psychology students. This also motivated him to apply for grad school.

“We focused on behavioral economics,” he said. “That’s turned out to be something I wanted to do in graduate school. So, that’s the reason I’m going to Florida State University. They have a great behavioral and experimental economics program.”

“Behavioral economics helps guide people to make better decisions that they otherwise wouldn’t because of other factors,” Adams said. “This intrigues me.”

At Florida State University, Adams received the Drs. Charles and Persis Rockwood Graduate Fellowship Endowment. It’s a full-tuition waiver, plus an annual stipend.

In early August, he will take a three-week math camp before starting classes in the five-year program. In the first year he’ll study math economics, microeconomic theory, macroeconomic theory and econometrics. He’ll serve as a teaching assistant, then switch to teaching and conducting research throughout the program.

Ultimately, Adams wants to be a professor.

“Ever since I was a kid,” Adams said. “I’ve been curious about economics, especially the research where I would try to find connections that might not always be visible. This feeds my curiosity.”

News Stories Posted Wednesday May 31, 2023



GCSU student awarded national honors grant to study leadership abroad

[Leadership Programs](#) : Wednesday May 31, 2023

Kathryn Grace Cooper of Watkinsville, Georgia—a rising sophomore majoring in [political science](#) and [philosophy](#) at [Georgia College & State University](#)—received a competitive [national grant](#) from the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi to study abroad this summer in Strasbourg, France.

Cooper is one of only 125 students nationwide to receive the \$1,000 award. It helped fund her enrollment in Georgia College's [Intercultural Leadership Program](#) at the European Parliament.



Alternate Text

“

This prestigious award will allow me to deepen my understanding of different cultures and truly immerse myself in French culture.

- Kathryn Cooper

”

“I am truly honored to receive the Phi Kappa Phi study abroad grant,” said Cooper, who’s also minoring in [English](#) with a [pre-law](#) concentration. “This prestigious award will allow me to deepen my understanding of different cultures and truly immerse myself in French culture.”

The intercultural leadership program started in late May and lasts about five weeks. It brings together students from around the world to interact with world diplomats, military officers, elected officials, policy specialists, business executives and nonprofit leaders. Students will study global leadership issues like stakeholder analysis, managing social capital, strategic thinking and planning, negotiation and dispute resolution, as well as peacebuilding and social responsibility.

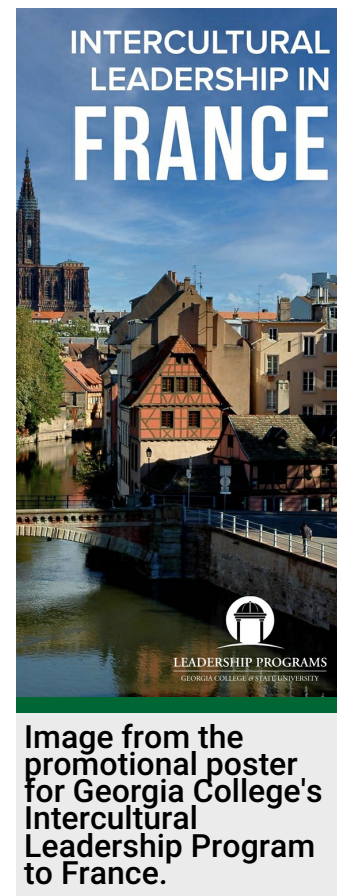
There’ll be opportunities for sightseeing at the medieval Haut-Koenigsbourg Castle in Orschwiller, France; Struthof Concentration Camp in Natzwiller, France; and Heidelberg Castle in Germany. Students are lodged at the manor house, Château de Pourtalès, surrounded by a 75-acre park and nature preserve. Many kings and queens, including Napoléon III and Empress Eugénie, stayed there, according to Dr. Harold Mock, director of [Leadership Programs](#) at Georgia College.

Mock is teaching leadership courses this summer in France.

“

Katie is an extraordinary student and a joy to teach. She represents the best of Georgia College’s commitment to leadership for the public good. I’m grateful that the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi recognizes in Katie the same intellect and potential that her professors and we at Georgia College see.

- Dr. Harold Mock



“Katie is an extraordinary student and a joy to teach,” Mock said. “She represents the best of Georgia College’s commitment to leadership for the public good. I’m grateful that the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi recognizes in Katie the same intellect and potential that her professors and we at Georgia College see.”

[Phi Kappa Phi](#) is the nation’s oldest collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. Its study abroad grant program was established in 2001 as part of \$1.3 million given each year to outstanding students through graduate and dissertation fellowships, funding for post baccalaureate development and grants for local, national and international literacy initiatives.

Selection is based on an applicant’s academic achievement, campus and community service, personal statement, letters of recommendation and whether the student is already accepted into a study abroad program. Phi Kappa Phi also considers if study abroad will enhance a student’s academic work and meet future career goals.

Cooper believes the grant and her studies in France will help her on the path to becoming an attorney.

“Looking ahead,” she said, “this prestigious study abroad grant will make my resume stand out, since employers and graduate schools value the global mindset and intercultural competencies that come from studying abroad.”