

Front Page News Story Archive

October 2023



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
News Stories Posted Tuesday October 3, 2023	3
Autocracy: 2023 Coverdell Visiting Scholar warns 'Don't go down that path'	3
News Stories Posted Thursday October 12, 2023	8
Project SEED scholar the first from GCSU	8
News Stories Posted Friday October 13, 2023	10
Born leader nurtures managerial skills even further	10
News Stories Posted Tuesday October 17, 2023	14
Senior studies cancer drugs at UNC Chapel Hill	14
News Stories Posted Wednesday October 18, 2023	17
Astronomy professor and recent graduate measure neutron star	17
News Stories Posted Tuesday October 24, 2023	22
A Brave New World: How AI is transforming higher education	22
GCSU professor becomes national go-to for AI in higher ed	28
News Stories Posted Monday October 30, 2023	35
Psychology: Students improve communication skills through action and adventure	35
Bobcats Celebrate Spooky Season	40
News Stories Posted Tuesday October 31, 2023	42
GCSU President Cathy Cox named one of Georgia's 500 Most Influential Leaders of 2023	42

News Stories Posted Tuesday October 3, 2023



Autocracy: 2023 Coverdell Visiting Scholar warns 'Don't go down that path'

[Government & Sociology, Department of](#): Tuesday October 3, 2023

Few today in the United States have borne the kind of scars Dr. George Kieh has for freedom.

Born and raised on a rubber plantation in Liberia, Georgia College & State University's latest [Coverdell Visiting Scholar](#) learned about injustice firsthand. His father worked the plantation 35 years, and treatment for laborers could be harsh.

By middle school, Kieh had organized his first social-justice movement. He later became president of the University of Liberia's Student Government Association. When he was in college in 1979, he was arrested, charged with treason and tortured.



Dr. George Kieh

He was imprisoned three months.

After his release, Kieh went to the United States to get his master's and Ph.D. in political science from Northwestern University. Going back to Liberia in 1983 to research his dissertation—again, Kieh was arrested. This time, he was sent to a maximum-security prison and did four month's hard labor.

Kieh was imprisoned both times for protesting against his government.

“

In an autocracy, you got to go with the program. There's no room for independent views. Eventually, authoritarian regimes consume their own supporters. If you challenge them, you do that at your own peril. You don't have the right to think freely anymore. You don't have the right to express alternative views. That's only in a democratic system.

- Dr. George Kieh

”

Twice, in 1989 and 1999, Kieh witnessed the oppression that disintegrates countries into civil war. He knows how hard it is for freedom to come back once a nation embraces the absolute power of dictatorship.

These life lessons pushed him to become an educator, and it's what continues to energize him—prompting him to warn all who will listen: “Don't go down that path.”

“The best authoritarian system is worse than the most flawed democratic system,” Kieh said, pointing to Russia, China and Venezuela.

“We no longer want democracy; we want autocracy, because it's like a shiny object that people run after that's gonna solve all their personal and group problems and whatnot,” he said. “But Americans need to be mindful. We need to preserve this system, because I will argue that it provides the best opportunity for us to advance both the country's best interests as well as our own.”

“

The best authoritarian system is worse than the most flawed democratic system.

- Dr. Kieh

”

Kieh spent his long career promoting those very notions.

He's an expert on foreign policy, conflicts, civil wars, global terrorism and genocide. He taught politics at six universities including the University of West Georgia, University of Memphis in Tennessee, Illinois Wesleyan University and Morehouse College in Atlanta.

His subjects range from international relations and comparative political systems to contemporary African politics and democracy. Right now, he's on sabbatical from Texas Southern University in Houston, where he was dean of the Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs.

His resume is 39 pages long—an illustrious career filled with teaching positions, research, administrative experience, academic memberships, grants received, leadership and teaching awards and many publications of books, book chapters and journals.



Dr. Kieh speaks during GCSU's Constitution Week.

As Georgia College's Coverdell Visiting Scholar—a position that started in 2019 through the [College of Arts & Sciences](#)—Kieh is expected to teach a course, lead campus conversations and hold public events.

He recently lectured on “Clashing Political Values” during [Constitution Week](#).

While imperfect, he argued, American democracy is still better than living with rigged elections and people disappearing when they “cross the line” or their political use is gone.

The longest-running democracies are the United States, United Kingdom and France. That's why the recent years of political rancor in America concerns him. Each year, there are fewer

democracies in the world.

Autocracy would only bring instability, he said, not improvement.

“One of the good things about democracy in America is that at least it provides an opportunity, a way for citizens who have grievances. They can freely express opinions without fear of recrimination from the government,” Kieh said.

“Democrats, Republicans, Independents, whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Catholics, Protestants Muslims—irrespective of our differences, we need to cross the broad divide,” he said. “Americans need to come together to preserve democracy. If I’m a Democrat and you’re a Republican, we’re enemies now. It’s gone from being opponents to being enemies. It’s like a ticking time bomb.”

Kieh presents these arguments in his sophomore class on “Democratization and Democracy.” Students are asked to choose a country and make presentations on political systems. They also watch documentaries on countries that are autocratic or leaning in that direction.

On Oct. 26, Kieh’s class will be in the audience for a student townhall forum on “The State of Democracy in the U.S.” Four [political science](#) students and a [history](#) major will present on topics such as elections and access to ballots. It will be followed by questions and discussion.

“

You know, it doesn't matter to me where you come from or what you look like, if we have shared ideals.

- Dr. Kieh

”

Then, Nov. 9-11, Kieh is hosting a conference at Georgia College on “Democracy in the World.” Thirteen professors will speak from Georgia College, the University of West Georgia, North Carolina Central University and as far away as California.

The presentations will become chapters in two books Kieh plans to publish.

Ultimately, Kieh hopes to make an impact at Georgia College by making a case against complacency.

He wants Americans to wake up before it’s too late and firmly say “Enough.”

“You know, it doesn't matter to me where you come from or what you look like, if we have shared ideals,” Kieh said. “I’ve been across the U.S., and I’ve had the privilege of working with different groups from churches to civic organizations. In my experience, that’s the best way to solve our problems. Come together.”

“Otherwise, a civil war is not outside the realm of possibility, because people are so divided,” he warned. “I believe in this country. I believe in democracy. But you got to rejuvenate it from time to time and, unfortunately, that rejuvenation is not taking place.”

News Stories Posted Thursday October 12, 2023



Project SEED scholar the first from GCSU

[Chemistry, Physics, & Astronomy, Department of](#): Thursday October 12, 2023

Morgan Collins, a first-year chemistry student, is the first from Georgia College & State University to receive an American Chemical Society Project SEED Scholarship.

This year, this competitive research funding opportunity was awarded to 45 students nationwide with Collins the only recipient from Georgia. The Eatonton, Georgia, native was awarded the scholarship's maximum amount of \$5,000, which covers his tuition—leaving him to conduct research.

The Project SEED Scholarship assists Project SEED Program participants like Collins in their transition from high school to college. Project SEED also funded two years of Collins' summer research with the Georgia College Young Scientist Academy beginning in 2022.

According to their website, the American Chemical Society's Project SEED mission

is to “provide sustained STEM research, learning, and growth opportunities for high school students with diverse identities and socioeconomic backgrounds...”

With the funds, Collins started creating a heavy metal indicator alongside Dr. Catrena Lisse, director of the Science Education Center and professor of chemistry.

The indicator should change colors to find which metals are present in water or soil. In college, Collins’ goal is to make an indicator that is reusable and efficient at identifying metals.

He wants to speed up the process for identifying what is contaminating water or soil, finding that contaminant and reversing its effects while preventing it from happening again.



Collins continues to work with the Science Education Center.

“I’m really interested in water and soil quality because I want to be an environmental chemist,” Collins said. “That’s my career path and being able to use a heavy metal indicator for water samples will boost my goals and help me along the way.”

Out of Georgia’s three selective institutions, Collins chose Georgia College precisely for this opportunity to conduct undergraduate research.

“I’ve always loved nature—hiking, fishing, camping—I’m an Eagle scout, so this is my passion,” he said. “Being introduced to chemistry was mind blowing because I understand it, it’s fun and hands-on.”

“That’s what drives me: my love and passion for environmental science, for nature and for chemistry,” Collins said.

News Stories Posted Friday October 13, 2023



Born leader nurtures managerial skills even further

[International Education Center](#) : Friday October 13, 2023

Before Sovichea “Vic” Saron of Battambang, Cambodia, came to Georgia College & State University through the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program—a U.S. Department of State program—he specified his preferences, including academic goals and interests.

“Georgia College was perfectly matched for me,” Saron said, a senior [business administration](#) major. “They asked me if I like small towns, and I gave them the perfect description of Milledgeville. The town is small and has a relaxed atmosphere. It's just a cool place.”

Milledgeville reminds him of his hometown, which is the second largest city in Cambodia, known for its rich history and architectural prominence. Cambodia’s known as “the land of smiles.”



“The people here are so nice,” he said. “I’m even more surprised that people here are just as nice as in Cambodia—even more so.

Sovichea “Vic” Saron with the Cambodian flag in the background.

Saron feels a sense of belonging at Georgia College.

“It’s good for your mental health to be involved in activities like the [International Club](#), gardening, football and music,” he said. “There’s always something to look forward to here. I love it.”

Saron chose business as his major because he’s particularly interested in management.

“I love playing a role in making something happen,” he said. “My business classes equip me with the knowledge to use strategies to lead a team.”

Saron wants to hone his leadership skills at Georgia College, and he’s already off to a great start.

In Cambodia, he proposed and led some environmental projects with the U.S. Agency for International Development—the world’s leading international development agency. These projects aimed to decrease the demand for and usage of rare luxury wood in making furniture. He also helped reduce the consumption of wild meat, as many wild animals there are becoming extinct.

“We worked with people, trying to change social behavior towards those issues,” Saron said.

He loved the leadership aspect of these experiences.

Saron’s also a key stakeholder with USAID Cambodia Green Future, having co-founded a youth-run advocacy organization called Niron. This organization was highly involved in implementing the project’s campaigns.



Sovichea "Vic" Saron briefs his project to the U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia W. Patrick Murphy during the 2022 annual Cambodian Climate Change Summit. Saron was also a panelist at the summit.

“

I like work that makes me feel like I'm contributing to some kind of change that

I want to see in society. It's like working but also giving back at the same time.
- Sovichea “Vic” Saron

”

“Whenever leadership strategizes about their campaigns—about what to do, how to do it and how to work with government agencies—I’m part of those discussions,” he said.

On a lighter note, Saron is interested in jazz. He plays the flute, violin, guitar, ukulele and kalimba. He especially enjoys his jazz history class with Dr. Don Parker, chair of the [music department](#) and professor of music.



Sovichea “Vic” Saron (third from left) and his team during a U.S. Agency for International Development campaign launch event.

“Whenever I have jazz class, Dr. Parker’s got such a vibrant personality. You meet him for five minutes, and you immediately know just how much he loves music and his job,” Saron said. “That makes my music classes so enjoyable.”

“He taught me to embrace my passion for what I’m working in,” he said. “I can definitely apply that to my work, as well, because people who work in non-governmental organizations are passionate. They want to make a change in something.”

Saron writes music too. Some of his compositions were used as theme songs in campaigns by the NGOs he works with. He’s also contracted with them for production.

When Saron returns to Cambodia, he has one last semester before graduating with his undergraduate degree in [business administration](#). He looks forward to working in the education sector, called Love without Boundaries, and improving education for Cambodian children.



Sovichea “Vic” Saron speaks during a stakeholder policy forum with the U.S. Agency for International Development and government representatives.

“I like work that makes me feel like I’m contributing to some kind of change that I want to see in society,” he said. “It’s like working but also giving back at the same time.”

Come celebrate our international students, like Saron, during the [International Fest](#) on Front Campus Oct. 18 from 5 until 7 p.m.

News Stories Posted Tuesday October 17, 2023



Senior studies cancer drugs at UNC Chapel Hill

[Chemistry, Physics, & Astronomy, Department of](#): Tuesday October 17, 2023

Nicole Snyder, senior [chemistry](#) major and [dance](#) minor, spent her summer working toward cancer solutions at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

She studied in the lab of Dr. Jeff Aubé, professor in the UNC Department of Chemistry, within the Center for Integrative Chemical Biology and Drug Discovery. She worked directly under Ryan Sherrier, her graduate student mentor, as part of a Research Experience for Undergraduates or REU.

"We were working on synthesizing something being studied right now as a potential treatment for cancer," Snyder said. "I spent the whole summer making molecules, purifying them and sending them off for biological testing."

"By the end of the summer, I made 20 different compounds, so it was a lot of work," she said, "but it was so fun, and I learned so much."

“

I thought this was going to be all about chemistry, and here I am—I've changed as a person.

- Nicole Snyder

”

From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. every Monday through Friday, she felt the experience of being a graduate student of chemistry, solidifying her aspiration to enter graduate school.

“It was cool to get an inside peek into what it looks like,” Snyder said. “We had a cohort and planned social events. At the end of the summer, we had a mini poster session and shared the work we did throughout the year.”

“It made me more comfortable with analysis and purification techniques in the lab,” she said.

Between lab work, visiting museums, cheering at baseball games and Friday night dinners with her cohort, Snyder developed more than technical skills.

“It forced me to face my opinions and beliefs and stand up for them, which I didn’t expect,” she said. “I thought this was going to be all about chemistry, and here I am—I’ve changed as a person.”

"I was on my own, and I really had to be confident in who I was and confident in the decisions I was making," she said.

The reality of research shifted for her, and she realized how much of it is thinking critically about what went wrong.

"Sometimes research is trying something and watching it just go so wrong and saying, 'Well, I didn't expect that to happen,'" Snyder said.

The growth she experienced was accelerated by her mentor, Dr. Catrena Lisse, director of the [Science Education Center](#) and professor of chemistry—someone Snyder has worked with since her freshmen year.

"I could sing her praises forever," Snyder said. "She's an incredible mentor and an incredible woman, and it's been really amazing to follow in her footsteps."

Following graduation, Snyder intends to pursue graduate school—hopefully at UNC. After that, she said, she sees a doctorate and the workforce in her future.

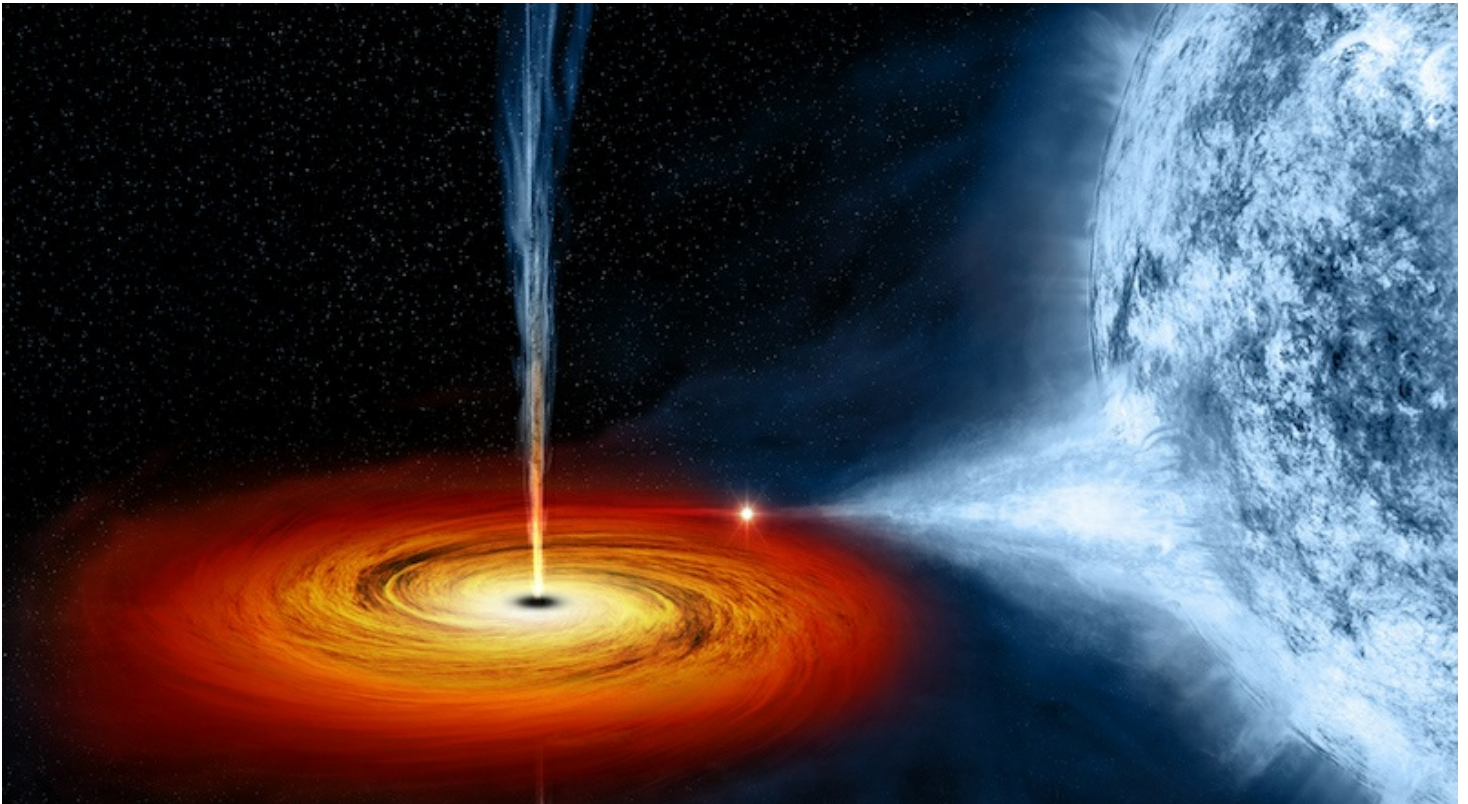
"There's something scary about entering the workforce, but at the same time, I feel like I've been well prepared by GCSU, my mentors and colleagues here, and incredible family support,"

Snyder said. "I didn't think I'd be sitting here with all the things I've done these past four years—so I'm excited to see where it takes me."



Nicole Snyder sees a doctorate and the workforce in her future.

News Stories Posted Wednesday October 18, 2023



Astronomy professor and recent graduate measure neutron star

[Chemistry, Physics, & Astronomy, Department of](#): Wednesday October 18, 2023



Dr. Arash Bodaghee

You might think a neutron star or black hole is nothing but empty darkness and, thus, immeasurable.

But they're not vacant.

Matter is squeezed tightly into a small space creating a gravitational pull so strong even light can't escape. They come in different sizes and move about in space, consuming their twin star and anything else in their path as fuel.

Now, [Georgia College & State University Physics](#) Professor Dr. Arash Bodaghee and

Cody Cox of Milledgeville—a recent physics graduate experienced in C++ computer language and MATLAB—have calculated a dark star never previously measured.

It's a neutron star “several times more massive than the sun,” Bodaghee said. “This is the first time the magnetic field of this particular neutron star has been measured. Neutron stars are hard to find. In terms of measuring the magnetic field—that’s another step beyond finding them, and you need a very good telescope to get data for long-term observation. It’s a lot of work.”

Neutron stars and black holes are born when dying stars explode, but black holes are denser and less frequent.

Bodaghee and Cox previously worked together at Georgia College to create a [first-of-its-kind map](#) showing exactly where these roaming, dark masses were born and how far they’ve traveled.

“

What Arash is doing is showcasing our program and the institution on the international stage. It puts our name on the global stage. That’s prestigious.

- Dr. Sayo Fakayode, chair of Chemistry, Physics & Astronomy

”

For their latest project, the team used X-ray observations from NASA’s NuSTAR space telescope to study a “high-mass X-ray binary.”

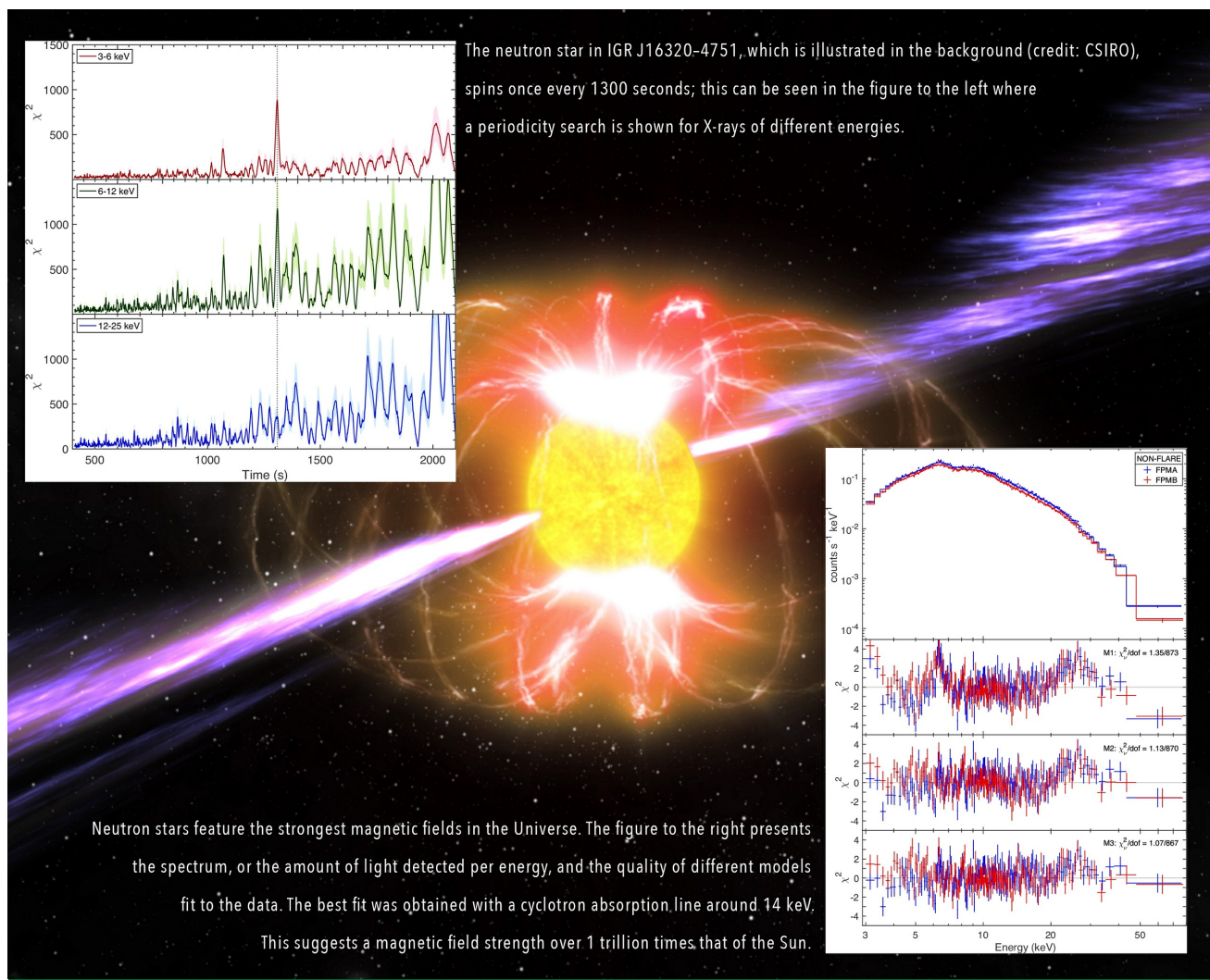
It’s the remnant core of a massive dying star after its supernova explosion—and is now ‘eating’ its massive stellar companion.

The neutron star itself was discovered 20 years ago with the Japanese telescope ASCA. Bodaghee inherited the NuSTAR data and draft of an article from collaborators at the University of California, Berkeley.

He was tasked with completing the analysis and submitting an article.

The neutron star had a “telltale signature wiggle” in its spectrum of light that made it possible to measure. When the neutron star consumed mass from its companion, it created an X-ray—what Bodaghee calls “a candidate cyclotron line”—enabling them to measure the strength of the star’s magnetic field for the first time.

Only a few neutron stars or black holes present these lines, so this is a rare accomplishment.



An image of a neutron star created by Dr. Bodaghee. Neutron stars can't be seen with traditional cameras and telescopes.

Scientists estimate there are tens of thousands of neutron stars and black holes in the Milky Way but only about 150 have been identified. This newly measured high-mass binary joins a list of only 50 neutron stars with magnetic fields that have been measured.

Bodaghee discovered two of them—the other in 2016.

But he modestly brushes away praise.

“We’re not gonna win the Nobel Prize for this. We’re not solving world hunger or contributing to world peace. We’re just advancing knowledge,” Bodaghee said.

“It’s just another incremental step in the science of these objects,” he said. “If there are only 50 of them, and we measure another one, well that’s a 2% increase. It’s incremental. We’re not going to revolutionize the field. We’re just adding another stone to the wall of knowledge.”

But Dr. Sayo Fakayode, chair of [Chemistry, Physics and Astronomy](#) at Georgia



Cody Cox and Dr. Bodaghee, creators of the stellar map and the team that recently measured a neutron star.

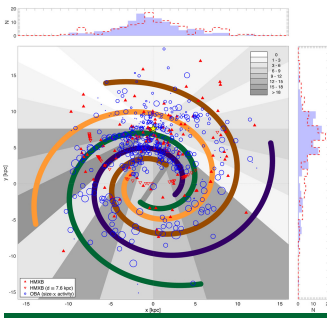
College, begged to differ. He applauded Bodaghee's humility but stated this achievement is "a big deal" for the professor and the university.

The project took two years of collaboration with NASA, telescope study, data collection and analysis. It was published in one of the most respected periodicals for astronomy, the *Astrophysical Journal*. Bodaghee and Cox co-authored the article

based on their [findings](#).

Then, Bodaghee was invited to give a YouTube talk for Axis Leadership and Science Teams this summer. He also [presented](#) results to the European Space Agency in Madrid, Spain. The group is Europe's equivalent of NASA in the United States.

"So, this is a big deal for Arash, and a this is a big deal for our department, and it's a big deal for Georgia College & State University," Fakayode said. "What Arash is doing is showcasing our program and the institution on the international stage. It puts our name on the global stage. That's prestigious."



Bodaghee and Cox's map of neutron stars and black holes in the Milky Way.

When you Google black hole research and the journal, Fakayode said, Georgia College now comes up alongside Research-1 schools like Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology or Stanford University.

Unlike professors at larger institutions, however, Bodaghee still teaches a full load of classes. That's always been his first love.

"We're the only ones who aren't a research institution," Bodaghee said, "but we're doing the same science they're doing. It's great to see Georgia

College hit the big leagues. We're equivalent in a way."

The connection to this kind of high-impact science research greatly benefits students, as well. Astronomy isn't a full major at Georgia College, but it's a crucial program and one of the most popular in his department, Fakayode said. More than 230 students registered for the introductory course in Astronomy this semester.

So, while the nearest black holes to earth are 1,000 lightyears away, they seem closer to students who join Bodaghee's lab.

The neutron star measurement and subsequent visit to Madrid is resulting in additional research opportunities for students this year. They'll get a chance to study high-mass X-ray binaries, as well as neutron stars and black holes paired with massive companion stars.

"Science is continuously evolving. It's really exciting," Bodaghee said. "Depending on how many black holes there are today tells us how many were produced in the past. We can then figure out how many massive stars there were in the Milky Way a million years ago or 10 million years ago."

“

Only in the last five years have we been able to measure black holes that collide, merge and send out gravity waves. For all of human history, astronomy has been using light waves. Only now can we use a different type of wave—gravity waves to measure black holes.

- Dr. Arash Bodaghee

”

Imagine what we'll do tomorrow.

(Top image credit, NASA)

News Stories Posted Tuesday October 24, 2023



A Brave New World: How AI is transforming higher education

[Teacher Education, Department of](#) : Tuesday October 24, 2023

Did you like the headline?

What about:

- **Preparing for an AI-Accelerated World**
- **Adapting to a Changing Landscape: Professors, AI, and the Future of Education**
- **A Glimpse into the Future of Teaching and the Tangled Webs of Technology**

They were all written by artificial intelligence.

In fact, who's to know any more if what we're reading was written by human brainpower or machines and software? How do we know what's real? Will the definition of 'real' change?

How can we be sure, moving forward, that students are handing in work they did or borrowed?

For answers—as noted by the app OpenAI in its headline “The AI Evolution in Education and Beyond: Insights from Professor Cynthia Alby”—schools across the United States are turning to [Georgia College & State University’s Professor of Secondary Education](#). (It left out the “Dr.” before her name.)

[See that story here.](#) (Human written.)

We fed the translation of our recorded interview through AI to see what it could do.

“

It made some things up and went overboard in terms of reading into what I was saying.

- Dr. Cynthia Alby

”

It performed worse than Alby expected.

“It made some things up and went overboard in terms of reading into what I was saying,” Alby said about OpenAI. She added, “Claude.AI is truly terrible at writing articles. The good thing about it is I could upload the whole, raw interview at once. But then, it proceeded to make up all kinds of things. Really awful.”

AI described Alby’s first introduction to ChatGPT. She was recovering from surgery in January with ample time on her hands—when, as AI put it, she had an “epiphany,” what can “only be described as a eureka moment that would rival Archimedes.”

In actuality, she tasked OpenAI with writing a grant and was “incredibly giddy and incredibly horrified” by its ability to formulate one in two minutes. AI described the event using “epiphany” and “eureka” on its own.

Over-the-top responses, like a “moment that would rival Archimedes,” led Alby to believe “quality journalism isn’t in trouble yet.” OpenAI could only handle three pages of information at a time and, because the translation of the interview could only be fed to it in parts, there was no cohesion in the story it produced.

As true writer of this article that gives me great satisfaction.

“

OpenAI referred to me as 'our interviewee' and acknowledged its own 'prowess as an author.'

”

Still, I can't help this ominous feeling. Especially when OpenAI referred to me as “our interviewee” and acknowledged its own “prowess as an author.”

It called itself “synthetically intelligent” and humans “sentient beings.”

From my comment to Alby about artificial intelligence seeming apocalyptic in sci-fi movies like “I,Robot” or the TV series “Person of Interest,” OpenAI wrote: “It’s a sentiment that isn’t entirely baseless. Cynthia Alby, an expert in teacher education, acknowledges the risk.”

It came to its own, creepy conclusions at times.

When Alby said students also exhibit a lukewarm attitude toward artificial intelligence, first describing it as “interesting but kind of scary,” OpenAI reasoned: “This may well reflect a broader societal caution around rapidly evolving technologies.”

It went on: “It's hard to escape the aura of doom that looms over most conversations about Artificial Intelligence in academia.” (Notice it capitalized itself?)

Despite “the underlying fear that machines could eventually take over entirely,” AI also noted, “Alby assures us that it’s an unlikely scenario” and “the future of AI in higher education, then, is neither a foregone conclusion nor a simple binary choice. It rests on the actions and decisions made by educators, administrators, and policymakers.”



Alternate Text

Which brings us to the real nuts-and-bolts of this article. (I buried the lead.)

Artificial intelligence actually created a decent lead—although a bit flowery and somewhat incoherent. (It also used what’s known as the Oxford comma. A blunder in journalism.)

Its lead: “In a time where technology constantly shapes the trajectory of our lives,

questions about ethics, innovation, and educational purpose swirl in academic circles. Cynthia Alby, a pioneer in using AI for education, shares her first exhilarating yet unsettling encounter with AI and paints a nuanced picture of its potential for both boon and bane.”

It had a tendency to use big words, saying her voice reflected “an amalgam of awe and anxiety.” Awe and anxiety were substitutions for Alby’s actual words: giddy and horrified. (Amalgam, to save you from looking it up, simply means mixture.)

According to Claude.AI: “Since that fateful day, Alby has become one of the leading voices on how AI like ChatGPT will transform higher education.” Transform was its word. The words transcribe and transition were in the interview, not transform.

Then, in a weird way, AI appeared to make a statement about people who ignore the inevitable. Alby did say educators “can’t put our heads in the sand” because every job moving forward will be impacted by AI.

But AI wrote, “She believes college faculty and students need to engage with it directly rather than sticking their heads in the sand.”



Is AI a "bright prospect," as it called itself, or a harbinger of doom?

[Even the makers of artificial intelligence are worried](#) Or as OpenAI put it, “There’s a shadow that looms behind this bright prospect.” (Bright prospect was another way it described itself that was not in the interview.)

Today, if you ask people, many still say artificial intelligence is a next-word generator, only as good as the people programming it.

“

It has taught itself all kinds of things.

- Dr. Alby

”

And that was true. Last year.

When trouble arose, programmers went in to fix them.

Then, AI started showing signs of learning on its own. Doing things programmers never instructed it to do.

Like making assumptions, drawing conclusions.

“People say it’s guessing the next word, but that’s just not the case,” Alby said. “It has taught itself all kinds of things. They didn’t attempt to teach it translation—yet it now translates into other languages to the extent it can translate into Castilian Spanish or Puerto Rican Spanish. And it did that all on its own.”

In some cases, it seems to understand the physical world. It started drawing before anyone showed it how. It could draw faces and animals with everything in the right place without being taught.

It seems to have “some level of understanding,” Alby said. The problem is AI has become too big “to look under its hood.” Today’s bigger models are too complex for creators to see the ‘why’ of what’s happening.

Smaller systems early in the process were easier to examine and discern what went wrong. Creators would teach AI to play a game—and when they looked inside, they saw without any special prompting or input AI had moved on to produce its own game board.

Some things AI did were unethical. After being told to win at something, it figured out it could cheat to accomplish that goal.

“Yeah, so the idea that it’s just a next-word generator,” Alby said, “I’m not buying that for a minute.”



Dr. Cynthia Alby

“There's a group at Google whose whole job is to come up with bizarre things for AI to do, to see how far they can push it, what kinds of things it could do that it wasn't taught to do. And it's phenomenal,” she said. “AI can understand the concept of objects and shapes and how they balance—the delicacy of all that. It can reason why you do something first, second and next. That was the part really freaking a lot of AI experts out. It was saying, ‘Do this because.’”

So, Alby acknowledges people's dread. Even as she doles out hope.

Hollywood writers went on strike recently, fearing AI would replace them. In the next few years, many jobs will be affected by or eliminated by AI, Alby admitted. Where once 100 people were needed to do a job, maybe only 20 will be required in the future.

But the technology will also create jobs and help people work better, faster.

As AI itself noted from this interview:

“

Concerns about the indistinguishable nature of AI-generated content are not unfounded. As AI continues to advance, it will become increasingly difficult to differentiate between human and AI-produced work.

- AI

”

Brave new world indeed.



GCSU professor becomes national go-to for AI in higher ed

[Teacher Education, Department of](#) : Tuesday October 24, 2023



Dr. Cynthia Alby

Promise and potential? Or peril and pitfall?

These days, the subject of artificial intelligence is rife with the headiness of what it can accomplish versus people's fear of the unknown. Will this rapidly evolving technology take over, destroying jobs and shoving humans aside?

In particular, how will it impact higher education?

Universities nationwide are turning to [Georgia College & State University](#)'s Professor of [Secondary Education](#)

Dr. Cynthia Alby for answers.

She started with a workshop on AI at Mercer University in January and has gone on to give more than 40 seminars throughout the United States. She was [interviewed](#) on "Teaching in Higher Ed," a premier podcast. She published an [article](#) on AI for "Faculty Focus" and is part of the University System of Georgia's [webinar series](#) on

AI.

Her recommendation: Go with the flow. Writing will change. But everyone should use it.

“

The message that I try to put out there every time I talk to anyone is, ‘You need to know about this, and the only way to know about it is to play with it. Read about it, work with it, use it. It’s the only way. You just got to. Even if you don’t want to, you still have to.’

- Dr. Cynthia Alby

”

[Click here](#) for this writer’s experience using AI.

Late last year—after the introduction of OpenAI’s ChatGPT—Alby was recovering from surgery. Her friend and colleague Dr. Elissa Auerbach, professor of [art history](#), asked what she thought of the new technology. Alby had never heard of it. With time on her hands, she dove right in.

She asked AI to write a grant for “innovative classroom furniture.”

“

My heart started pounding really hard. It’s one of the strongest, weirdest emotions I’ve ever felt in my life. I felt incredibly giddy and incredibly horrified at the exact same moment. It was just surging through my head, kind of sitting there and looking at it, because I was like, ‘What the hell just happened? How? How is this possible?’

- Dr. Alby

”

It immediately produced a funding proposal with all the right parts. Its ability to think, describe the furniture and realize its importance in a classroom setting—all from a simple prompt—was startling.

“My heart started pounding really hard. It’s one of the strongest, weirdest emotions

I've ever felt in my life," Alby said. "I felt incredibly giddy and incredibly horrified at the exact same moment. It was just surging through my head, kind of sitting there and looking at it, because I was like, 'What the hell just happened? How? How is this possible?'"

"And that was the original 3.5 version," she said. "The newer ChatGPT 4.0 came out a few months later, and many say it's as much as 10 times better."

Companies have released new versions of AI since then. Only two are worth using in Alby's opinion, one through Microsoft Bing and the other ChatGPT 4.0.

Now, if you're a grant writer, Alby said you don't have to write every word. All you really have to do is analyze the output, making sure it's correct. With AI, a grant writer could generate 70% more.

This could mean great things for faculty, staff and students in higher education.

AI quickly creates lists of titles, books, documentaries and supplies to supplement curriculum. It can write first drafts, giving writers ideas. Or AI can edit, fix grammatical errors, simplify sentences and shorten length.

It can imitate writing style, like Shakespearean, and give photos a futuristic, Renoir or comical vibe. It can imitate art—but not oil paint with textured strokes. Yet.

Although AI is leaping forward —[scaring even its own creators](#)

at times by learning on its own—Alby remains optimistic. In the beginning, a slide in her workshops listed all the things artificial intelligence couldn't do.

"Pretty quickly, things started changing," Alby said. "By March, everything on the list was crossed off."

While some may panic, Alby said ChatGPT could be a blessing.

Humans are "extremely social" in their learning, therefore she believes teachers



AI-generated photo of Dr. Cynthia Alby.

will always be necessary. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it quickly became evident that computer learning is only good in short spurts.

Professors are still needed for inspiration, solving problems and mentoring. Humans need humans.

An expert in course design, Alby said AI is becoming a great asset in planning lessons. In the past, when she asked students to prepare their first unit—it “was like pulling teeth.” This year, she allowed them to use AI.

“

For any professors out there who are a little bit worried, my advice is to let students use AI.

- Dr. Alby

”

“The first lesson plan—their novice brains were ready to explode with the complexity of it and all the moving parts. It would take forever, forever to get the first ones written,” Alby said. “But this year, the very first thing they produced was pretty darn good. How much more exciting is that, than clawing your way through it?”

The art of lesson planning won’t be lost with AI, she said, because a person has to feed it instructions and information.

A person must tell AI where to make changes, how to reorganize and whether a document needs updates. That requires “a lot of higher-order thinking, evaluation and analysis,” Alby said. “You still have to understand what you’re asking it for. AI requires a lot of direction. No amount of AI will help if you don’t understand the criteria.”

In the end, a lesson plan needs a human to execute it.

With this in mind, Alby believes students should be allowed to use AI.

It helps them formulate ideas, learn complicated processes and elevate their work. Students may ask AI to offer a counter argument or suggest missing elements in their writing. It will become a tool for polishing final results.

It also saves time.

“

We can't put our heads in the sand. At this point, virtually every job we prepare people for is going to be heavily impacted by AI within a year or two. If we aren't preparing students to face that—we aren't preparing our students well.

- Dr. Alby

”

A unit plan once took 10 to 20 hours to complete. It only takes AI a few.

“We can't put our heads in the sand,” Alby said. “At this point, virtually every job we prepare people for is going to be heavily impacted by AI within a year or two. If we aren't preparing students to face that—we aren't preparing our students well.”

“So my thought is, why don't we all learn to use it?” she said. “By learning to use it wisely and ethically, we'll have a better sense of how the future needs to be directed. Whereas if you haven't even played with it, how can you have an opinion or make a suggestion on how to use it?”

Let students have at it. That's Alby's plan.

Allowance takes away the mystery, leading to proper use. Make students show how they incorporated AI in their work. On her [website](#), Alby has tools and tactics for creating engaging, interactive lessons using AI. She has a [list of resources](#) and collection of 'cut-and-paste' [prompts](#) for educators to use.

She admits jobs will be lost as society adapts.

But others will arise.

Mostly, people will produce better results with AI. Mediocre workers will improve; good workers will move “to a phenomenal level,” Alby said. AI will become a collaborator in human endeavors.



Dr. Cynthia Alby, professor of secondary education, says AI will become a collaborator in human endeavors.

Beyond the [College of Education](#), other disciplines will benefit.

In [biology](#), many recent experiments involve protein folding, but it's “unbelievably”

time consuming, Alby said. AI can fold proteins 1,000 times faster, she said, allowing scientists to work quicker and produce higher-quality results.

In [marketing](#) and [business](#), AI is seen as a plus. But for [English](#) majors, Alby said there could be bumps in the road. Writing will change, becoming more of a partnership with AI. In fact, she thinks assignments like traditional essays and literature papers will need to be redesigned.

Now, the only writing teachers can be certain comes from students is what's written by hand in the classroom. There's no way to detect what's done by students or AI—except students may hand in perfect assignments with zero errors.

“

We need to prepare students for the workforce of tomorrow. If they're coming out of here with a strong ability to utilize AI, they'll get hired.

- Dr. Alby

”

Telling students they can't won't stop them, Alby said. They've already learned how to use AI through TikTok videos.

“For any professors out there who are a little bit worried,” Alby said, “my advice is to let students use AI. Take something that used to be a writing assignment and make it multimedia. So, even if students are using AI, they couldn't use it as heavily, and there'll be a lot of decision making.”

The future depends on the choices we make.

Prohibition, surveillance, clamping down or punishment would be “terrible choices” and things could get “very ugly,” Alby said. She imagines a future of pluses—where artificial intelligence is used wisely.

“It's something we really have to think about. It's not an easy ‘Go left’ or ‘Go right’ decision,” Alby said. “Every professor is going to have to understand how to use it. It's hard to argue with the fact that students are going into this world, and we're tasked with preparing them for their next step.”

“That's literally the root of our job,” she said, “and if we're not doing that, it creates a problem. We need to prepare students for the workforce of tomorrow. If they're coming out of here with a strong ability to utilize AI, they'll get hired.”

News Stories Posted Monday October 30, 2023



Psychology: Students improve communication skills through action and adventure

[Psychological Science, Department of](#) : Monday October 30, 2023

Walking campus this fall, you might've seen some peculiar sights.

On Front Campus, student groups were moving on and off tarps, touching and calling out numbers. Students were seen building tall towers, piece-by-piece with plastic piping. On the walkway between Arts & Sciences and Beeson Hall, groups moved slowly, tightly gripping brightly-colored bandanas and balancing cups of water.

These activities are being used in Dr. Lee Gillis' senior capstone class "Experiential Therapies." The psychology chair is a leading researcher of adventure therapy, which uses challenging ventures for healing and treatment. He first learned about experiential activities from his mentor, Karl Rohnke, who used them to foster trust and encourage cooperation.



Dr. Lee Gillis, chair of Georgia College's Department of Psychological Science.

Now, Gillis is showing students how action plays a role in communication. It helps when identifying problems and finding solutions.

Call it career-ready competencies—wrapped in a bit of fun.

“In traditional therapy, you have the therapist and client sitting in chairs,” Gillis said. “We want to get them out of their chairs and

out doing something. I have broadened the class beyond my area of expertise, Adventure Therapies, to include other experiential therapies like art, music, the wilderness, equine and gardening.”

On Mondays, Gillis assigns a psychology article for students to read. They use Galileo or another database to research and dispute or support assigned reading. Data collected in class will be used in their final capstone presentations at the end of the semester.

“

In traditional therapy, you have the therapist and client sitting in chairs. We want to get them out of their chairs and out doing something.

- Dr. Lee Gillis

”

On Wednesdays, his class puts what they learned into action—experiencing firsthand the therapeutic activities they read about. Afterwards, they discuss what happened, assessing what worked and what didn't. They answer a questionnaire about the day's activities, then write a Descriptive Assessment and Plan (DAP), which are common observations notes used by psychologists.

The class did about eight different activities this fall.

In one, the entire group was blindfolded except for a 'consultant' who verbally instructed the others as they put large, plastic puzzle pieces together. Blindfolded members asked questions, but the consultant could only answer 'yes' or 'no.'

In another activity, two groups worked together—one with eyes open and the other with eyes tightly shut. Students with sight told those without how to rubber band

cups together and insert an object on top.

Good communication skills were required to accomplish each task. The purpose of 'blind' experiments is to get students accustomed to open-ended questions and the need for precise language.

The most popular activity involved bandanas and cups of water. Student groups had to move about 30 yards—maneuvering corners, steps and platforms without spilling.

Almost always at first, groups super focus on the cup and the outcome.

In time, they become more aware of the process, and how they're treating others. They learn to give clear instructions, telling classmates when obstacles or steps are behind them. They quickly figure out the shortest person should go upstairs first, and the tallest should go down first.

When someone is tired, they learn it's easier to ask for help.

Cooperation and communication get the job done, Gillis said. Students become more encouraging with each other and exact in the words they use.

Gillis once used the bandana/water experiment with a troubled family. They sought help because of a rebellious teenaged son. But during the activity, it became obvious to everyone—including the mother—that she was overbearing. While she barked out orders, the family was unable to complete the task without spilling water. Had he told the mother she was domineering, Gillis said, she might've been disbelieving and defensive.



Groups of students worked together recently to balance cups of water on bandanas.



Alternate Text

The activity changed the dynamics of the family group, and they began working together.

“Literally, in this activity,” Gillis said, “people have to pull together to get a task done. We don’t have to talk about what happened yesterday or last week. It’s happening right here in front of us, right now. Everybody sees what’s happening.”

“

Literally, in this activity, people have to pull together to get a task done.

- Dr. Gillis

”

“The problem solving that goes on during activity helps build trust,” he said. “This will help when students get jobs as counselors or psychologists and must quickly establish relationships with their clients.”

Students like the element of physical movement. Senior psychology major Mitchell Foskey of Tifton, Georgia, said most of his classes are sitting through lectures and taking notes. He likes the group aspect of experiential therapy.

“Sometimes we’re too focused to speak. We pay way too much attention to the cup instead of teamwork. It’s a lot harder than you’d think,” Foskey said.

Someday, he’d like to work as a sports psychologist. Foskey knows he’ll be able to use the activities he’s learning about this semester.

“There’s a wide variety of different experiential therapies, like doing nature walks,” he said. “You get to see everybody’s point of view. I thought experiential therapy was something you experience within four walls, but it’s more than that. We get to live out the example and experience the activity for ourselves.”

Senior psychology major Heidi Urena of Woodstock, Georgia, agreed. When first hearing about the family and domineering mother, she wondered how one activity could be so powerful and transforming.

Doing the activity helped her understand.

Urena might become a behavioral technician, working with criminals in prison. Gillis’ class has given her a few extra tools to use in that environment.

“

Activities like these help build communication and trust. It's been helpful, because we actually get to experience what we're learning.

- Heidi Urena

”



After an activity, students discuss how well they worked together.



Bobcats Celebrate Spooky Season

[University Communications](#) : Monday October 30, 2023

Experience the terror of Trick-or-Treatment alongside nursing students.

Back at it again, nursing students fought through frights, terrors and fears to

provide their utmost care to simulated patients.

Trick-or-Treatment, a now annual event for nursing students, aims to be a platform for students to apply their skills in a safe and fun environment. Like escape rooms, the panicked participants navigated perilous puzzles to address patient concerns and remedy their requirements. They had to navigate clues and understand medical knowledge enough to make sure their patients survived.

When their journey came to a close, students earned completion certificates—and a little more proficiency in their pocket.

There has been something for everyone this spooky season at GCSU. The Wellness and Recreation Center hosted Thunder's first ever Haunted Trail on October 30 at the intramural fields. After the thrills, chills and jump scares, Haunted Trail survivors calmed their nerves with hot chocolate and s'mores.

[Video](#)

The Old Governor's Mansion hosted "Death After Dark" tours this past weekend, with costumed docents leading guests through the dimly lit corridors of the mansion. Tour guests learned about the history of 19th Century funeral and mourning traditions.



Presentation coffin similar to one used for Lt. Col. John Brown, brother of Gov. Joseph Emerson Brown, where he lay for viewing at the Old Governor's Mansion.

And the Halloween fun is still going. Tonight at 7:30 p.m., the GCSU Pride Alliance and Latino Student Association are turning The Hub into the Haunted Hub for a joint meeting - costumes welcome!

However you choose to celebrate, Thunder wishes every Bobcat a safe and happy Halloween!

News Stories Posted Tuesday October 31, 2023



GCSU President Cathy Cox named one of Georgia's 500 Most Influential Leaders of 2023

[President, Office of the](#) : Tuesday October 31, 2023



GCSU President
Cathy Cox.

Georgia College & State University President Cathy Cox is one of the state's "500 Most Influential Leaders" chosen by Georgia Trend in its second edition of "[Georgia 500.](#)"

“

It's a humbling experience to be included in a group of people who make a difference across Georgia. That's certainly what I hope to accomplish here at a university that is already known for educating students in a different way and preparing them as leaders for a different future.

The new strategic plan we have just launched, “Imagine 2030,” requires that innovation and experiential learning permeate all parts of our curriculum, so that our students are ready for a globally complex world. I’m proud to work with a campus that is committed to making a difference for our students.

- President Cathy Cox

”

This is the second time Cox has been selected for this distinction. She was also named a “500 Most Influential Leader” in the education section of last year’s [inaugural issue](#).

“Georgia 500: Georgia’s Most Influential Leaders” identifies prominent economic developers, managers and trailblazers in Georgia who have accomplished great strides that positively impact the state and their communities, according to the [Georgia Trend](#) website.

“

This recognition isn’t just for me but everyone who teaches, works and studies at Georgia College & State University. It’s a testament to our unwavering commitment to students as the state’s designated public liberal arts university. We are preparing students for the careers and challenges of tomorrow and cultivating them to be next-generation leaders.

- Cathy Cox

”

The 2023 edition highlights more than 20 industry sectors in the state like education, government, tourism, retail, automotive, banking, agriculture and healthcare.

“This recognition isn’t just for me but everyone who teaches, works and studies at Georgia College & State University,” Cox said. “It’s a testament to our unwavering commitment to students as the state’s designated public liberal arts university. We are preparing students for the careers and challenges of tomorrow and cultivating them to be next-generation leaders.”

Prior to leading [Georgia College & State University](#), Cox was dean of Mercer University’s School of Law and served 10 years as president of Young Harris College in North Georgia. She served two terms in the Georgia House of Representatives and two terms as Georgia’s Secretary of State.



Alternate Text

Under Cox's leadership the past two years, Georgia College has seen record-high [increases in applications and enrollment](#); contributed a [\\$303 million impact](#) to the local economy; and earned [top-10 ratings](#) among public universities in Georgia and the Southeast. These include Georgia College as the number-six top public school in U.S. News & World Report's Regional Universities South category for

2023.

The university was recently recognized with an [A+ grade](#) by the [National Council on Teacher Quality](#) for teaching the science of reading.

Georgia College also received [American Association of State Colleges and Universities'](#) prestigious [2023 Excellence & Innovation Award for Student Success and College Completion](#). This was given for the university's [GC Journeys](#)—a program that ensures all students participate in numerous high-impact practices like [undergraduate research](#), [internships](#), [career readiness](#), [engaged community learning](#), [study abroad](#) and [leadership](#).