

News Stories Posted Tuesday July 2, 2024



Class of 2028: Ellaville native pursues environmental and leadership studies

Orientation : Tuesday July 2, 2024

By: University Communications Intern, Sicilia Reed

Matthew Kuipers from Ellaville, Georgia, is a member of Georgia College & State University's incoming class of 2028.

Kuipers instantly connected to Georgia College when he first toured campus.

"The beautiful southern architecture and green space out front remind me of my grandparent's home, which made me feel right at home and instantly relaxed," he said.

His love of nature continues into his intended major, [environmental science](#).

"Growing up around nature gave me a deep appreciation and love for it," Kuipers said. "As I grew, I learned of the various climate challenges our world is beginning to face, and I wish to help save this world I love."

This enthusiasm to help leave a positive impact on the natural world came from many different places, and environmental stewardship will be a part of his future in any industry.

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I learned of the various climate challenges our world is beginning to face, and I wish to help save this world I love.

- Matthew Kuipers

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Beyond the classroom, Kuipers is excited for many organizations, clubs and opportunities on campus.

“[Powerlifting club](#), [ambassadors' organization](#) and [rugby](#),” he said. “During my orientation, [the cheerleaders](#) convinced me to sign an interest form and I am intrigued to see where that goes.”

“I spent my last few years of high school involved in football and weightlifting and enjoyed it thoroughly,” Kuipers said. “I want to continue my involvement in those kind of activities, and rugby is the closest thing to it.”

His passion for leadership was sparked by the ambassadors leading his tours, and he looks forward to challenging coursework.

“Puzzles and logic challenges have always been a fun thing for me, so I am excited for the rigor of college,” he said.

Overall, Kuipers is delighted to broaden his horizons at Georgia College, have unique experiences and meet new people.



PILLAR II

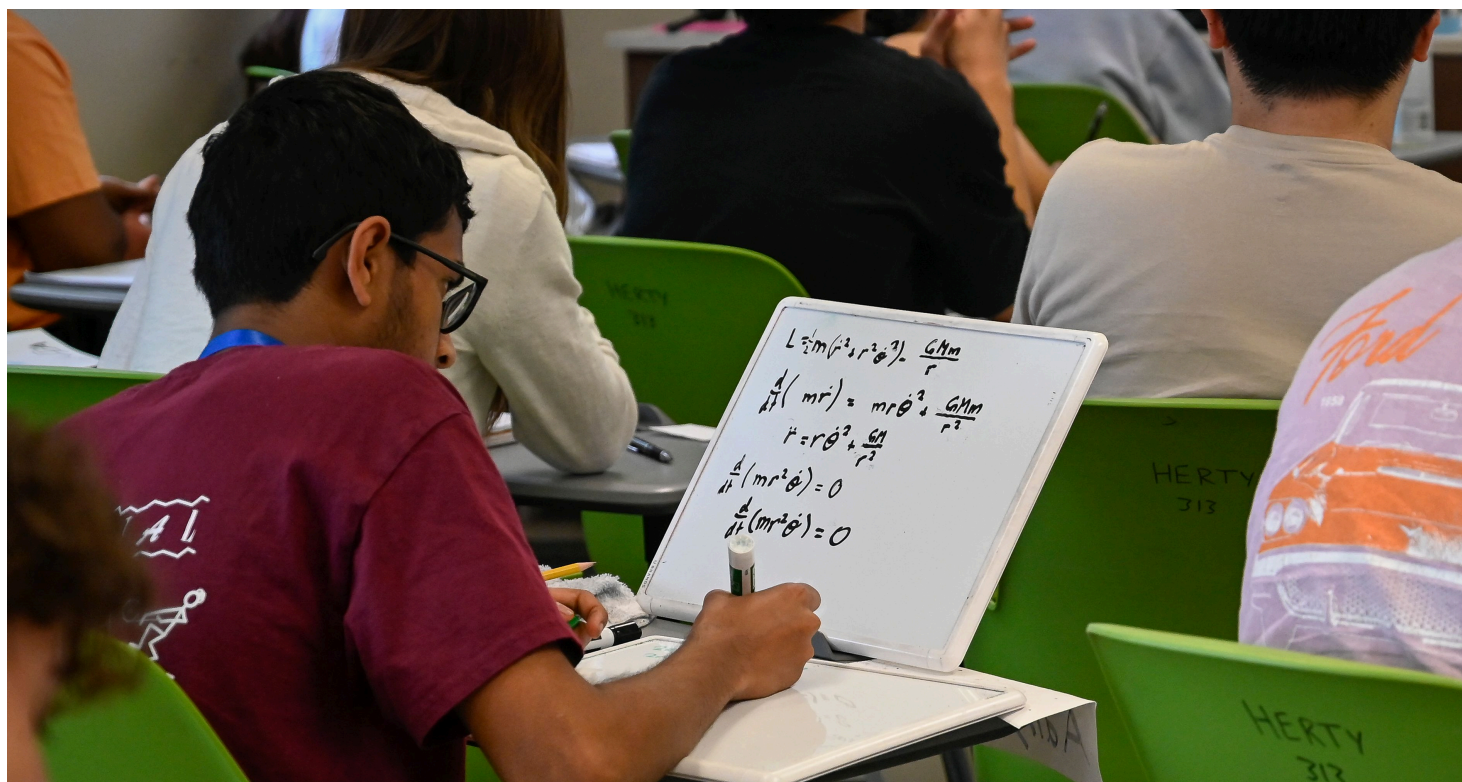
DISTINGUISH

(verb): 1. To make noteworthy or remarkable: to give prominence or distinction, 2. To mark as separate or different

[Learn more about the Distinguish Pillar in our Imagine 2030 Strategic Plan](#)



News Stories Posted Wednesday July 3, 2024



GCSU's summer science transports high schoolers to higher realms of space

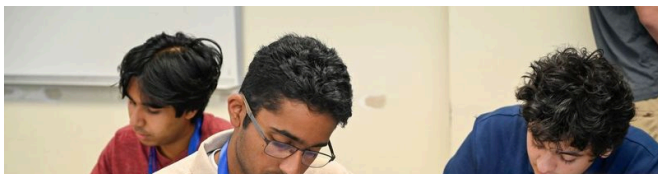
[Chemistry, Physics, & Astronomy, Department of](#) : Wednesday July 3, 2024

It's not a program for loafers or the faint of heart. This one comes with complicated formulas filled with symbols, letters, numbers and shapes. It requires knowledge of Newton's laws, Maxwell's equations and Einstein's relativity.

To the casual person walking by—it may all seem like Greek.

But to 36 high school students participating in [Georgia College & State University's](#) inaugural astrophysics summer program with [SSP International](#)—it's pure celestial heaven.

Pranav Avadhanam, a rising senior at Monta Vista High School in Cupertino, California, is good at math and AP Physics. But he admitted the formulas he's learning at Georgia College are fresh territory.



Recently, Avadhanam found himself at the board drawing equations for Lagrangian mechanics in Newton's law and explaining his solution to the class.

He'd been exposed to the concept only 10



Pranav Avadhanam of Cupertino, California, center, works on an equation.

minutes earlier.

“It was a struggle for me at first,” Avadhanam said, “especially the astronomy and advanced physics. It’s a challenge, and I’m a little foggy on it. But the professors are extremely patient and very supportive and, of course, knowledgeable.”

Avadhanam would like to work in a STEM-related field someday. Being a part of the

[SSP program at Georgia College](#) is a big step in that direction.

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Picking up difficult math concepts on the fly is an important skill.

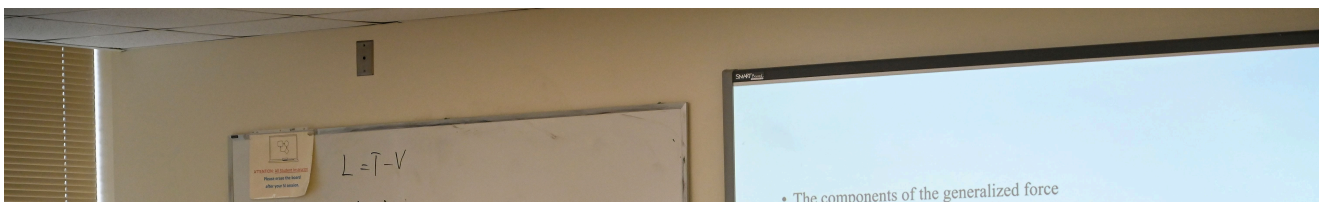
- Pranav Avadhanam

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“For me, the biggest part of SSP is rapidly accumulating new information,” he said. “Learning to learn is the biggest thing. Picking up difficult math concepts on the fly is an important skill.”

Georgia College is one of three new schools in partnership this summer with SSP, which has provided stimulating and extensive science research opportunities for motivated high school students since 1959. Currently, there are 12 [Summer Science Programs](#) at eight U.S. universities focusing on astrophysics, biochemistry, genomic or synthetic chemistry.

The 5 1/2-week residency program at Georgia College began June 16 and runs through July 24. Participants come from 15 states, a U.S. territory and four nations: California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and Washington, as well as the Northern Mariana Islands, Turkey, Brazil, Ukraine and China.





GCSU Associate Professor of Physics Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge is an instructor for SSP this summer.

They're receiving challenging instruction in [astrophysics](#), including hands-on training on the university's [Pohl Observatory](#) 24-inch telescope to detect orbits of near-earth asteroids. Their coursework includes calculus, calculus-based physics, astronomy and relativity, which they use to determine things like orbital motion and photometric measurements.

“

This group is very curious and engaged. They arrived with a tremendous amount of talent and knowledge.

- Dr. Donovan Domingue

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It's challenging, but teens who get into SSP's summer programs are bright enough to handle the work. Only about 10% who apply get in.

“This is a competitive program with a small portion of applicants accepted, based on essays and academic prerequisites,” said Dr. Donovan Domingue, astronomy professor and academic director of SSP at Georgia College.

“SSP is an environment where we expect participants will be very collaborative and help each other through difficult material when lecturers and teaching assistants are busy,” he said. “This group is very curious and engaged. They arrived with a tremendous amount of talent and knowledge.”

Participants are so passionate about science, Domingue said, they avoid sleep in their excitement to talk with one another. Some have even suggested ways to improve operation of the university's

telescope.



Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge, associate professor of [physics](#) and one of three SSP



SSP participants use GCSU's 24-inch telescopes in Pohl Observatory.

instructors this summer at Georgia College, said some coursework is senior-level college material. The work is hard, but he said students are motivated to learn and help each other.

That is what SSP looks for in applicants—excitement about science but also intellectual curiosity. The program is an opportunity for high school students to finetune skills in data collecting and interpretation, critical thinking and

teamwork. SSP especially looks for students who have overcome obstacles in life and show perseverance.

“SSP is not only a rigorous academic program,” Mahabaduge said. “Participants learn to collaborate with each other in an environment where there is no competition. I believe they are not only growing academically but socially as well.”

“

When you see bunch of 16 to 18-year olds working on Lagrangian Mechanics on a Friday night, it truly makes me hopeful about the future.

- Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge

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Viktoriia Voitiuk is from Kiev, Ukraine.

Viktoriia Voitiuk from Kiev, Ukraine, felt well-prepared to meet the rigors of Georgia College’s SSP program. She participated in international science programs as a Ukrainian team member. This summer, she applied to SSP on the advice of a friend.

“He said you will never experience something like this, you need to apply to this program,” Voitiuk said. “I applied. I got accepted. I was so excited.”

This experience is important, because Voitiuk wants to be an astrophysicist.

She’s grateful for the stipend SSP provides to support students who would otherwise miss out on the opportunity, because they have to work summer jobs for money.

Voitiuk worked with an observatory telescope at her boarding school in Ukraine. But she’s doing more detailed work at Georgia College. She thinks it’s cool the final project merges linear algebra, variable calculus and physics.

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I didn't expect so much. It's like tension but in a positive way. Like you need to work, work, work and a little bit of time for relaxation. But it's good, because if you work, you're also learning so much new.

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“I didn't expect so much. It's like tension but in a positive way,” Voitiuk said. “Like you need to work, work, work and a little bit of time for relaxation. But it's good, because if you work, you're also learning so much new.”

Andrew Bukowski, a rising senior at Naperville Central High School in Illinois, said he likes the computational nature of astrophysics and how the discipline mixes computer and data science.

He studied hard in school to become good at math and physics, so he felt more prepared than some to handle the SSP workload.

“It's new for a lot of people, but we actually got into multivariable calculus in school,” Bukowski said. “Some people feel lost because they've never been exposed to stuff like that. It can get confusing, but we help each other out. We don't want anyone to be behind.”

Like all participants, Bukowski selected astrophysics as his summer topic. He was happy to see the variety of programs Georgia College offers. The dining hall food is good, and he enjoys free time playing ping-pong and volleyball, swimming and hanging out downtown.

The group also enjoyed a recent guest lecture by Dr. Hodari-Sadiki James, assistant professor of astronomy at Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia. James spoke about binary star planets.

Bukowski's really looking forward to the final project. Participants were put in groups of three, each assigned a particular asteroid. Groups rotate turns at the observatory telescope, searching the night skies and taking pictures of their asteroid.

They'll determine things like coordinates and brightness, logging information into a computer database.

“

It's high-level content. It's tough. But seeing all these academically motivated people together—it's helps you a lot.

- Andrew Bukowski



Andrew Bukowski of Naperville, Illinois.



Guest lecturer Dr. Hodari-Sadiki James from Agnes Scott College.



Darnell Clarke from Lawrenceville, Georgia, left, works with his team to solve an astrophysics problem.

Darnell Clarke is the only participant from Georgia. He's a rising senior at Mountain View High School in Lawrenceville and likes to use math for robotics. Someday, he'd like to be an aerospace engineer.

Clarke looked for a summer program that would help him accomplish more than "sitting around during the summer." He wanted something more engaging with opportunity to grow.

"I really like the SSP program so far," Clarke said. "It's definitely taken me a lot farther than I would've gone without it. I like this form of learning."

He has a small telescope in his room at home to look at stars. Clarke had never used an observatory telescope before. He's excited about the asteroid project and using newfound knowledge to interpret data and determine where his group's asteroid will be 120,000 years from now.

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Sometimes in school you learn all this math and think, 'Oh, I'm never going to use this.' But here, you're learning math that actually applies to the research you're doing. It's really eye-opening.
- Darnell Clarke

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SSP at Georgia College helped him realize astrophysics is the right career choice.

"This is my most immersive experience with astronomy and physics," Clarke said. "So, it's definitely a good thing to be here. I like having to really work my mind to figure out something that actually matters."

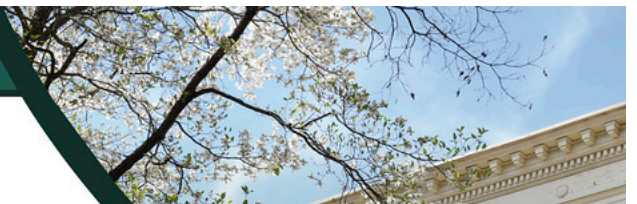
"Sometimes in school you learn all this math and think, 'Oh, I'm never going to use this.' But here," Clarke said, "you're learning math that actually applies to the research you're doing. It's really eye-opening."



A group looks at images of space on computers in the university's observatory.



PILLAR II





DISTINGUISH

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News Stories Posted Friday July 5, 2024



Occupational therapy intern serving Milledgeville this summer

[Health & Human Performance, School of](#) : Friday July 5, 2024

By: University Communications Intern, Sicilia Reed

Bree Straight walked away from graduation this spring confident in her future. She was going to intern with [Twin Lakes Physical Therapy](#), a Milledgeville-based physical therapy office that offers care like massage, pre- and post-operation care, sports rehabilitation and more.

"I get to hear what PTs and OTs are saying, but also get a formal relationship with clients and see their experience and their walk," Straight said. "It's been cool to see just how different of an atmosphere it is being in a building like that compared to when you're in a class."

As Straight took public health classes, she also discovered a love for community outreach and service. She and her intern team went to the home of a local resident, who is an outpatient of the clinic, to build a ramp for accessibility to their home.

"My classes helped me to get a better perspective, like how everyone has different ways of living," Straight said. "It's helped me be able to better relate to them, talk to them and realize that everyone comes from different places."

Straight came to GCSU unsure of what her career path would look



like, but she knew she wanted to help people. She originally chose to major in nursing, but realized that was not the field she wanted to study. From there, Straight tried the [School of Health & Human Performance](#) where she found her passion for public health.

While Straight has a student ministry internship following her time at Twin Lakes, she knows that the valuable lessons of patience, service and connection she has found thought her internship will carry her into any career path she chooses to follow. She attributes her future success to her time at GCSU thanks to her classes, career workshops and support from faculty and staff.



The ramp built for a client thanks to the Twin Lakes team including Bree Straight



Bree Straight

"I feel like it prepared me if I do decide to go to get my master's. I also feel if I decide to go into ministry, my classes helped me prepare for that because there's so many different aspects about caring for people," Straight said.

"Learning about health in general is great for wherever you go, so I think no matter what I do, I will be assisted by my beneficial major," Straight said.

Her advice to students curious about the public health sector?

"Definitely try it out and shadow someone because once you're there and you're in the atmosphere, you will understand a little more of what it actually entails," Straight said. "We see a lot of shows of people with nursing, 'Grey's Anatomy,' things like that, But you don't understand what the atmosphere is like until you go and do it."



PILLAR IV

ENGAGE

(verb): 1. To occupy, attract, or involve (someone's interest or attention), 2. To participate or become involved

[Learn more about the Engage Pillar in our Imagine 2030 Strategic Plan](#)



News Stories Posted Monday July 8, 2024



Mass Communication student interns abroad in Ireland

[Communication, Department of](#) : Monday July 8, 2024

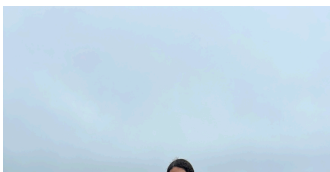
By: University Communications Intern Sicilia Reed

Q: Describe who you are and how you came to be a part of your major at Georgia College & State University.

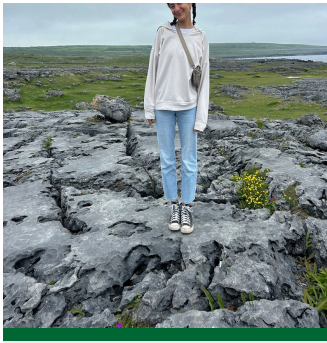
A. My name is Sydney Zeff. I consider myself a pop culture fanatic. I've always been captivated by the media, writing, reading and learning about brands and companies and how they position themselves to the media and an audience.

I wanted to choose a major that aligned with my interests and something that I could see myself enjoying for the rest of my life. [Mass communication](#) was the perfect fit for me. It allows me to not only gain knowledge about my concentration, public relations, but take classes that expand into industries like advertising, marketing, film, TV and radio that allow me to better understand strategic communication and what it means to work as a PR professional.

Q: What stands out to you within your major?



A: I praise the GCSU Mass Communication Department for preparing students with a well-rounded amount of work experience prior to graduation. We are required to complete two practicums. My first practicum was with [Bobcat Multimedia](#) as social media and web manager. This first step into the communication field allowed me to gain knowledge on content creation, graphics design and the



Sydney Zeff

importance of maintaining consistent brand image and messaging. My second practicum was with the [International Education Center](#). As a practicum student for IEC, me and another practicum student, Ansley Hill, created and designed a bi-monthly digital news magazine, "[CrossRoad](#)" that provides information, news and updates on GCSU international education, International Club and study abroad opportunities for students on campus. This practicum was the steppingstone to the opportunity I now have as a student intern for the IEC. Both opportunities have impacted and strengthened my skills as a strategic communication student while allowing me to gain relevant experience for my resume and portfolio.

Q: What has your biggest challenge been in translating your classroom skills to your position now?

A: My biggest challenge from translating classroom skills to position now is overall confidence. As a student, I only have knowledge about the media, PR, etc. from what I've learned in my courses over the years. I came into this internship very scared and apprehensive that I could make a difference in the work that I would be involved in.

Fortunately, I was very wrong about this. I have gotten the opportunity to pitch to numerous journalists from media outlets like BBC, Forbes, The Independent, etc. I've had a hand in brainstorming for PR campaigns, and one of my ideas for the refurbished phone company, Swappie, sparked their interest and will be used in their upcoming campaign.

Q: Why did studying abroad call to you, focusing on Ireland as your final decision where you wanted to go?

A: I love to travel and am continually amazed by the vastness of the world we live in. I have always been drawn to stepping out of my comfort zone and experiencing new places, meeting people from various backgrounds, and getting to learn and immerse myself in an entirely different culture and atmosphere than those I am typically surrounded by. In summer of 2023, I studied abroad in London, England, with ISA (an outside program that partners with GCSU) for three weeks. London is a melting pot of various languages, foods, backgrounds and is so rich in history and culture. Returning to the States after my study abroad program, I was eager for any chance to travel abroad again. I was needed to complete my internship requirement for my degree, so I thought, 'Why not do an internship abroad?' After many weeks of research into where in the world I wanted to go, I was drawn to Ireland. Its vibrant culture, its beautifully green landscapes, and Dublin's evolving status as a business and entertainment capital made me very committed to experience and work in Ireland.

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I love to travel and am continually amazed by the vastness of the world we live in. I have always been drawn to stepping out of my comfort zone and experiencing new places, meeting people from various backgrounds and getting to learn and immerse myself in an entirely different culture.

- Sydney Zeff

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Q: How did you decide on this internship?

A: The program I applied for, ISA, connected me with Hopscotch Europe. I went through a series of interviews with ISA's internship placement team where I informed them on my career goals and what I desire to get out of an international internship. My resume, CV and portfolio was sent to Hopscotch Europe through ISA. Upon the company's interest, I was asked to interview the human capital director of Hopscotch Europe and take a creative writing and skills test for the agency. Shortly after, I was offered the internship position

Q: How did your time abroad influence you and your future career goals?

A: I work as a PR and Social Media Coordinator at Hopscotch Europe, one of the worlds' leading communications agencies. I have worked with clients such as Wilson Sporting Goods, On Location, PixMob and Swappie.

The study abroad has been so eye-opening in helping me determine what I want in a job after completing my degree. I have learned and observed in real-time the concepts I studied over the past three years at GCSU. Working at a large agency like Hopscotch, which has 100+ clients and targets 42 markets, is incredibly fast paced, with many different clients to manage simultaneously. Being immersed in this environment has honed my ability to think on my feet, be proactive and expand my creativity in multiple ways. As a result, I enjoy working in an agency setting and assisting with numerous accounts.

Q: What lessons will you be taking back to Georgia College as you continue your pursuit of your degree?

A: I not only love the agency I get to work in and the impressive client list and projects I am involved with, but the people I'm surrounded by have greatly influenced my overall experience abroad. The office is full of PR professionals from all around Europe, including Ireland, France, Belgium, Italy and Spain. I not only learn how an agency operates but also see it done in an international setting with people from various countries and cultures. When I go back to Georgia College, I'm excited to share the newfound global perspective I have on the PR industry.

I made connections and friendships that I will cherish for the rest of my life, and I am so thankful to have been given the opportunity to intern at Hopscotch Europe for the past two months.



PILLAR I

INNOVATE

(verb): 1. To make changes in something established, especially by introducing new methods, ideas, or products



[Learn more about the Innovate Pillar in our Imagine 2030 Strategic Plan](#)

News Stories Posted Tuesday July 9, 2024



Digital skills advocate Richard Hicks works to change lives through digital literacy

[Information Systems & Computer Science, Department of](#) : Tuesday July 9, 2024

For over a decade, Richard Hicks, '02, provided digital equity to local students in the Atlanta region. Hicks was the executive director of the Atlanta region for PowerMyLearning, but he wanted to concentrate more on the digital literacy of Georgia's minorities and low-income families. In June 2020, he launched the nonprofit [InspiredU](#) to continue serving communities in Georgia.

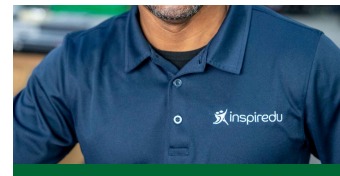
At [InspiredU](#), Hicks, president and CEO of the nonprofit, tackles the digital divide in the community by offering digital literacy courses and working with community-based organizations to provide refurbished home computers for families in marginalized communities. This initiative ensures that individuals are better prepared for their future and the workplace, addressing a crucial need for technological access and digital literacy that was only heightened by the pandemic.

"During the pandemic, the community really needed us," he said. "We had to continue to do this work because a lot of our market focused on the digital divide. We were acknowledged as an essential service by the City of Atlanta, but we continue to work toward digital equity today, because the need has never lessened."

[InspiredU](#) was one of 12 nonprofit organizations from across the U.S. nominated for the Kelly Clarkston Show's Good Neighbor of the Year Award. The winner will be chosen in late 2024.



This year, Hicks' good works in bridging the gaps in digital literacy were also recognized with a Proclamation by the Fulton County Commissioners, Resolution by the Georgia House of Representatives and a nomination by WSB-TV Channel 2 Action News Anchor Lori Wilson to appear on the [Kelly Clarkston Show](#). The segment, featuring Hicks and his team, aired April 12, 2024.



Richard Hicks

[Inspiredu](#) serves around 2,500 families per year, but Hicks is planning for growth.

“

Sometimes you can't change the direction of a person's life—they must do it themselves. But we aspire to be that spark that leads them to work toward bettering their life. You can't rescue them. You don't have that kind of power. But you can ignite hope and encouragement in building their competence by giving them digital training and eliminating the barriers to the online world and all the resources available there.

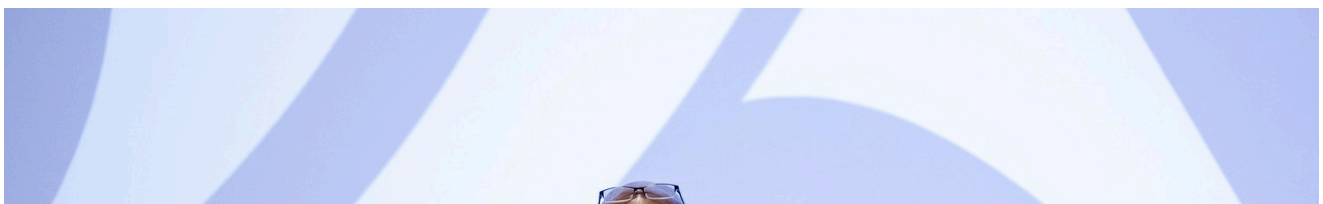
- Richard Hicks

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Today, the building that houses [Inspiredu](#) is undergoing renovations to include classrooms, collaboration and conference rooms, as well as an imaging center for more storage and workshops. The Inspiredu Volunteer & Training Center renovation is expected to be completed in the fall. Hicks looks forward to serving more families.

“I'm ready to pay it forward by helping others who are looking to get into this space to find out what their next move in life will be,” he said.

Hicks attends numerous meetings and handles many of the operations. He relies on his education, a [BBA in computer-based information systems](#) he received from [Georgia College & State University](#) to forge ahead his quest toward empowering Georgia's underserved families through digital literacy.





Richard Hicks speaks during a Fulton County Library Workshop.

As a Milledgeville native, Hicks cherishes his Georgia College roots. Several of his family members also graduated from the university, including his late father, Samuel Hicks, '73, who received a [B.S. in biology](#). Hicks has fond memories of reminiscing with his father about shared experiences and the strong bond their alma mater created within the family.

"GCSU has always been known to us as a place you could go to get a good, solid education without having to go very far," he said. "I really enjoyed my time there. I have some great memories, and I'm looking forward to walking back on campus again."

Dr. Harry Glover was his advisor and favorite professor. He knew how to connect with students. Hicks recognizes the importance of making connections at [InspiredU](#).

"He made learning fun," Hicks said. "Coding isn't very exciting, but Dr. Glover was very engaged in the way he taught [computer-based information system classes](#). That's what I needed while I was studying for a career in IT."

Hicks applies the leadership skills he learned while working on group projects at Georgia College. Several of the tasks Hicks does at [InspiredU](#) are group projects with his team, committees and boards.

"In my role, I bring a lot of people to the table to educate them on InspiredU's mission," he said. "I want to make sure [InspiredU](#) has the right resources to move forward. Being able to do that is highly important. Having that foundation from

Georgia College, and then moving this experience to the nonprofit world, was just seamless."



Right: Richard Hicks engages with a family during a Brumby Elementary Family Workshop.

Hicks' workday begins by prepping data reports for the nonprofit's stakeholders. Then he discusses with team members the programs the organization is going to implement.

He also regularly attends events with Inspiredu's nonprofit partners, companies and individuals looking to engage with [Inspiredu](#).

"It's a huge honor to serve the community," Hicks said. "The best part of my job is interacting with individuals from different walks of life and feeling humbled."

Some of his clients have difficult lives. Hicks and his team are mindful of the challenges they face.

"Sometimes you can't change the direction of a person's life—they must do it themselves," he said. "But we aspire to be that spark that leads them to work toward bettering their life. You can't rescue them. You don't have that kind of power. But you can ignite hope and encouragement in building their competence by giving them digital training and eliminating the barriers to the online world and all the resources available there."

Although Hicks has plenty of client success stories, one stands out to him.

"A homeless woman came to take our digital literacy class, walking in the rain to get here," he said. "She learned digital skills and worked with her caseworker. Now, she's taking coding classes, has a roof over her head and is looking to start a job soon. Sometimes that little spark is what it takes for people to know that there are people who care on this planet."



PILLAR I

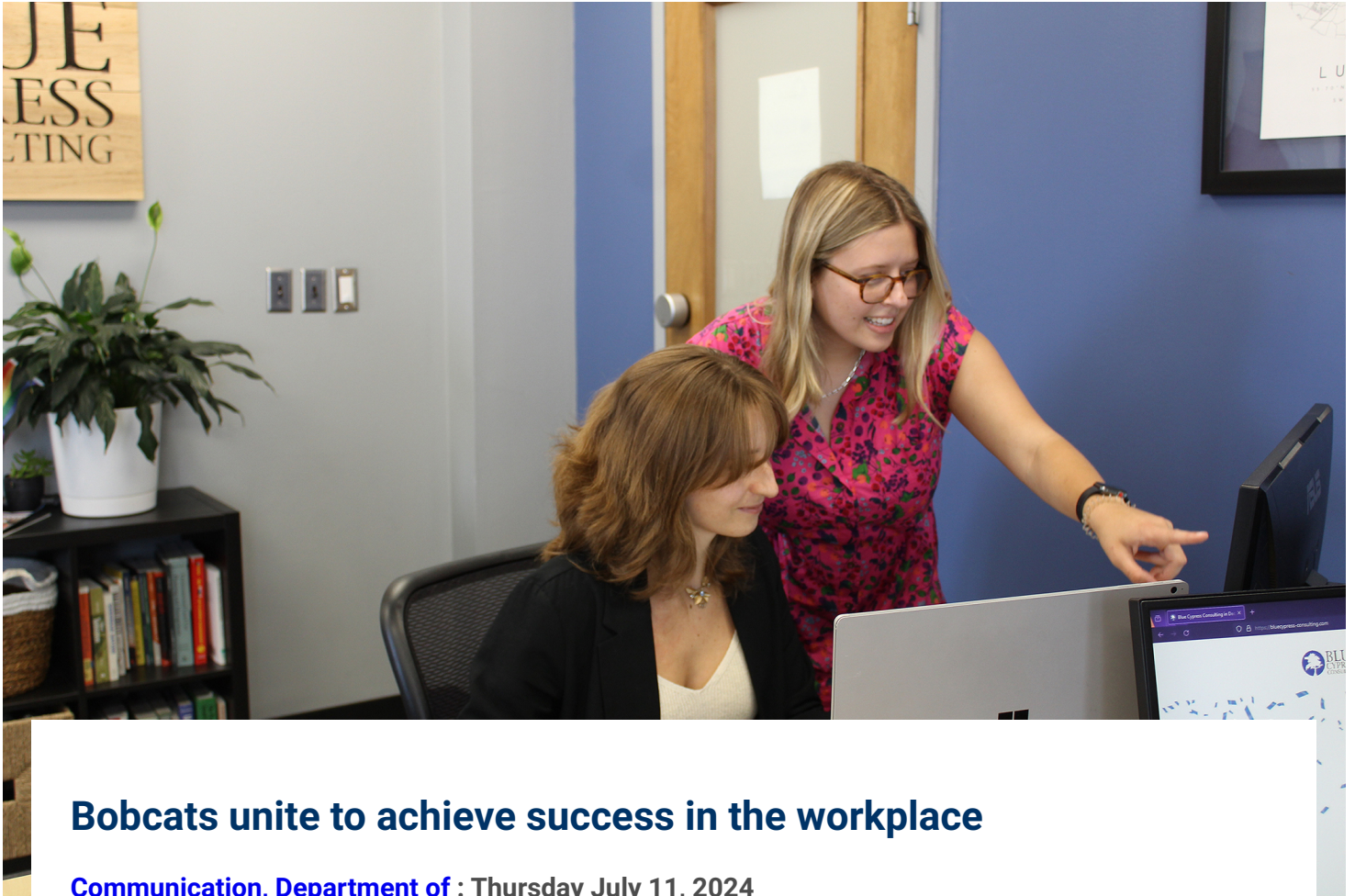
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News Stories Posted Thursday July 11, 2024



Bobcats unite to achieve success in the workplace

[Communication, Department of](#) : Thursday July 11, 2024

[Mass communication](#) major and senior Sophia Clark is putting what she's learned at Georgia College & State University to work as a marketing intern at [Blue Cypress Consulting](#) this summer.

She's doing this with a little help from fellow Bobcat Monica Klinkmueller, '20, senior marketing coordinator for [Blue Cypress Consulting](#).

The company is a women-owned, small business providing community planning and utility management services with headquarters in Decatur, Georgia.





Sophia Clark

"At Georgia College, I constantly juggled a lot of responsibilities, including hosting a morning show on [WGUR 95.3](#)," Clark said. "It's the same thing in my current role. I have multiple tasks each day that need to be done within certain timeframes. Learning to manage my time at the university prepared me to meet these needs."

She's also learning to use new software, databases and other tools useful for working in the marketing industry. Although they're all new to her, Clark's not intimidated by these tasks, as her Georgia College professors continually provided her with new challenges which nurtured her problem-solving skills.

“

When you go out into the working world, it can be intimidating. But having a connection with someone from GCSU makes that world feel a bit smaller and less intimidating.

- Sophia Clark

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Clark's enjoying her work environment, a team of 21 employees where everyone knows each other. Clark and Klinkmueller can especially relate as fellow Bobcats.

"It's awesome," Clark said. "When you go out into the working world, it can be intimidating. But having a connection with someone from GCSU makes that world feel a bit smaller and less intimidating."

Clark's unsure what specific career path she'd like to pursue within the fields of marketing, advertising and public relations. However, since she started the internship in early May, she's applied her skills to her job while remaining adaptable and open to learning new duties, ready to embrace any direction her career might take.

"One of the great things about interning is that I'm learning what I enjoy, which helps me carve out my career path," Clark said.

“
It's important to enjoy the work you do. It's the reason you get out of bed Monday through Friday. Coming to a work environment that's positive with people you enjoy being around where you feel a sense of achievement and celebrated because of the great work you're accomplishing; I hope Sophia has all this and more as she goes forward with her career.

- Monica Klinkmueller

Klinkmueller knows the wealth of experience that comes from interning. Between her junior and senior year at Georgia College, she interned as a graphic designer at Momentum Worldwide then freelanced for the company.

After graduating, she interned for [Blue Cypress Consulting](#) doing the same duties Clark performs. After interning, she landed a job there and has been working at the company for four years.

“I learned a lot from my internships and gained many connections and professional experience,” Klinkmueller said. “Although I ended up in a different industry, today, I still apply much of the graphic design and communication skills I learned from my first internship.”



Monica Klinkmueller

Internships are important to provide a sample of what students may like in the workplace, Klinkmueller said. They also allow a smooth transition from college to profession.

“Starting a career right after graduating college can be very daunting,” Klinkmueller said. “An internship lets you dip your toes in the water to see what it's like and if an industry is a good fit for you.”



Sophia Clark works at her desk.

Her professors at Georgia College consistently provided clear communication and expectations. She uses these transferrable skills in the professional world.

“It's important to have clear direction—like standards and guidelines to follow—to execute a task well,” Klinkmueller said. “If you're in charge of managing someone to do a task, it gives that person the opportunity to achieve what you've outlined for them.”

She emulates her Georgia College professors' “open-door” policy. They frequently made time to answer her questions and provide guidance on schoolwork.

“I've modeled that same level of support for Sophia,” Klinkmueller said. “She's managing a lot of her work independently, but I hope she knows she can reach out to me with questions, concerns or guidance, and I will be there to help her.”

She wants this internship to help Clark find a career she'll enjoy.

“I hope she discovers what she likes and doesn't like to get a better understanding of what her career could look like—whether it's in the AEC (architecture, engineering and construction) industry or not,”

Klinkmueller said.

She hopes Clark finds a profession that's fulfilling.

"It's important to enjoy the work you do," Klinkmueller said. "It's the reason you get out of bed Monday through Friday. Coming to a work environment that's positive with people you enjoy being around where you feel a sense of achievement and celebrated because of the great work you're accomplishing; I hope Sophia has all this and more as she goes forward with her career."



PILLAR IV

ENGAGE

(verb): 1. To occupy, attract, or involve (someone's interest or attention), 2. To participate or become involved

[Learn more about the Engage Pillar in our Imagine 2030 Strategic Plan](#)





Q&A with Intercultural Leadership Study Abroad student Emily Wright

[International Education Center](#) : Thursday July 11, 2024

By: University Communications Intern Sicilia Reed

Q: Describe who you are and how you came to be a part of your major at Georgia College.

A: My name is Emily Wright and I am a rising sophomore at GCSU. I run for the [cross country team](#) and am heavily involved in [Student Government Association](#), [Young Democrats](#) and the [Honors College](#).

I am majoring in [political science](#) and [philosophy](#). I always wanted to pursue political science as a major; however, philosophy was much more recent.

I heard wonderful things about the philosophy program at GCSU in accordance with law school success and that is what ultimately sold me. I would like to attend law school and subsequently practice law, so anything that can help with my journey is something I am interested in.

Q: What stands out to you within your major?

A: Something that stands out to me in philosophy is the wonderful community environment. Since it is a smaller major, everyone kind of knows everyone. It's also super interesting because most people pair philosophy with another major, so I get to meet all kinds of people from other departments whom I otherwise wouldn't encounter.

All of the students are so kind and enjoy critically thinking about all kinds of philosophical issues—modern or hundreds of years old. The professors are the same, which makes classes very entertaining. Most philosophy classes I've taken have required students to sit in a big circle and

discuss, rather than listen to a lecture. It's truly a wonderful community of diverse students with diverse backgrounds who are willing to think very critically about issues around them.

Q: Why did you decide to join the Leadership Certificate program?

A: I decided to join the [Leadership Certificate Program](#) because I felt it was a great opportunity to make connections and learn about my role in the world around me. The class itself was wonderful, and we talked about various leaders and their impact on today's world.

What I liked most about it was that I had not heard of many of the leaders we talked about, yet I was either directly involved with or had heard about the things they did. This showed me that leadership is not just being the boss or leading the experiment, but being a social innovator led by ambition alone. I joined this class in hopes of understanding how I can assume leadership roles in my career path, and so far I am more than satisfied with what I've learned.



Emily Wright

Q: Why did [studying abroad](#) call to you, focusing on [Strasbourg](#) as your final decision where you wanted to go?

A: I always knew I wanted to study abroad at some point in my college career; however, I did not expect to do it so early. Multiple trips had been advertised to me in the past two semesters, but I was still quite on the fence as my college adjustment from high school proved a little bit difficult. I believe my involvement in the leadership certificate program is what really sealed the deal.

I saw the study abroad as a way to use what I had learned and gain more knowledge. In addition, Strasbourg stood out to me due to its role as an EU capitol as well as its proximity to Germany. I've always wanted to go into politics and am heavily involved in local government in my hometown, so I saw this as a great opportunity to learn about other governmental organizations. Furthermore, I have always wanted to visit Germany, as its history interests me. It just seemed like the perfect place to go.

Q: How did this study abroad influence you or your future career, or align with what you desire to do professionally?

A: The study abroad put my career goals and desires in a much broader context. I had always thought about practicing law and running for office in the United States more locally or nationally. I had never even considered my role on the global stage. However, this trip makes international law or—generally—living abroad much more appealing. It helped me see my career as an international asset which can be applied anywhere.



Strasbourg, France

Q: What lessons will you take back to Georgia College as you continue your pursuit of your degree?

A: Being that our class was about intercultural communication and focused on group settings with members of different cultures, I will take back a better understanding of cooperation. I have always been a more individual learner and honestly dread group projects. However, I believe this experience has made me more mindful and understanding of those with different ideas and values, which I plan to utilize in inevitable group settings in classes.



PILLAR II

DISTINGUISH

(verb): 1. To make noteworthy or remarkable: to give prominence or distinction, 2. To mark as separate or different

[Learn more about the Distinguish Pillar in our Imagine 2030 Strategic Plan](#)



News Stories Posted Monday July 15, 2024



Rising sophomore has life-changing experience making films in Italy

[Communication, Department of](#) : Monday July 15, 2024

[Mass communication](#) major Avery Jones jumped hurdles and tons of paperwork to make her study abroad dreams come true.

She just returned from a month-long trip to Florence, Italy, where she was immersed in learning filmmaking techniques and directing films with the [New York Film Academy](#).

"I really wanted to go on this trip to learn and get some hands-on set experience, because that's how I learn best," Jones said. "The class got the opportunity to work with camera equipment in ways I wouldn't have been able to otherwise."

"I'm so incredibly grateful for this experience," she added. "It's one I'll never forget."

Since her high school days in Brookhaven, Georgia, it's been Jones's goal to become a filmmaker. She especially wants to work in the movie industry, directing horror films.

Her father searched online and found the NYFA Italy program. Within the first few weeks of freshman classes at [Georgia College & State University](#), Jones visited



the [International Education Center](#) asking what she needed to do to get there.

As a rising sophomore, she was still a few credits shy.

But that didn't stop her.

She wrote an essay and did extra paperwork to prove she was ready.

"With the help of Dr. Callaghan and Ariana Youmans," Jones said, "I was able to make my dream into a reality. I applied through the [International Studies Abroad](#) program for the New York Film Academy in Florence. In the end, I think I was allowed to go because of my ambition—honestly, me pestering the office with a ton of questions."

The Florence film program started about 20 years ago. Courses are taught in English with professors from the U.S. and around the world. Jones's classmates were from Brazil, Italy, Nigeria and Russia. She roomed with students taking classes abroad at Florence University of the Arts. They were from Colorado, Kansas and Kentucky.

Jones was in Italy four weeks, from May 11 to June 8. During that time, she created five short, [silent films](#). The final product was a 3 ½ -minute music video with excerpts from her other films.



Sophomore Avery Jones, third from left in back, with participants of the New York Film Academy in Florence, Italy.



Jones, left, directs the camera operator against the backdrop of Florence.

Through this process, Jones learned about cinematography, directing, acting, editing and production. She grew in confidence and feels ready to begin Georgia College's [film academy certificate](#) program.

“

I learned everything from shot sizes, screenwriting, setting up a camera, lighting a scene and everything in between. I learned I’m pretty steady when it comes to camera work, and I can pick up on languages pretty fast.

- Avery Jones

”

“I learned everything from shot sizes, screenwriting, setting up a camera, lighting a scene and everything in between,” she said. “I learned I’m pretty steady when it comes to camera work, and I can pick up on languages pretty fast.”

Jones enjoyed the Italian food. Her favorite culinary moment was taking a cooking class with her roommates. They made their own pizza and gelato.

She chalked up her only challenge, getting stranded without a taxi, as a “minor inconvenience.”

“We were able to stay calm and find a solution to the problem at hand,” Jones said. “I’m not going to lie—sometimes it was hard being in a country all by myself. There were times when I missed home. But I reminded myself to keep busy and enjoy every single moment, because I knew it would fly by.”

During her one day off, Jones visited a local beach town in Viareggio, Italy. After the program, she was joined by her grandparents. They toured Rome together.

Back home, Jones knows she made the right choice coming to Georgia College with “all its amazing programs.” Mentors at the International Education Center helped her every step of the way, answered her questions and addressed her concerns.

“I am so grateful for everything they’ve done for me,” Jones said. “I couldn’t have asked for better mentors to lead me through this journey.”



Jones operates the camera during filming in Florence.

“

I can’t fully express in words how much this program has helped me take that first step forward in achieving my dreams. I hope to repay all of this kindness by helping other students find the program that’s right for them, just like I found the program that was right for me.

- Avery Jones

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PILLAR IV

ENGAGE

(verb): 1. To occupy, attract, or involve (someone's interest or attention), 2. To participate or become involved

[Learn more about the Engage Pillar in our Imagine 2030 Strategic Plan](#)



News Stories Posted Monday July 22, 2024



Biology major's summer REU could lead to improved meds for pancreatic cancer

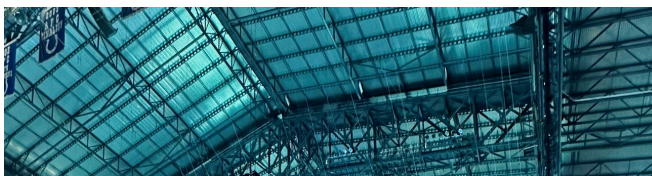
[Biology & Environmental Sciences, Department of](#) : Monday July 22, 2024

Not only did Junior Ivan Yuan Chu get offered an REU this summer—a [Research Experiences for Undergraduates](#) from the National Science Foundation—he got six.

The [biology](#) major from Hazelhurst, Georgia, chose the 10-week, 2024 Bio REU Summer Undergraduate Research Program at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana to work on possible pancreatic cancer treatments.

He chose Notre Dame, because the atmosphere there was much like his experience at [Georgia College & State University](#)—rigorous but friendly, collaborative not competitive.

“Learning I was accepted at over 60% of the REU programs I applied for was exhilarating,” Chu said. “The programs I applied for were all considered highly competitive with anywhere from 700 to 800 students applying from over the



country. Never in a million years did I think I'd ever be applying for a research internship. So, I was extremely surprised, honored and humbled to be selected."

"None of it would've been possible without my amazing mentor, Dr. France," he said. "She's definitely been my 'Lab Mom,' always supporting and helping me improve my skills in and outside the lab. There have definitely been times when the advice she gave was not easy for her to give or for me to hear, but it made me a better person and researcher. I owe a lot to her, and I hope I am making her proud."

Chu never planned on going to Georgia College, like his brother before him ('22). But he was won over by the university's "outstanding academic reputation," small class sizes and "devotion to student success."

This spring was Chu's first time seeking a REU. He applied to nine and was accepted into six: Augusta University's Summer STAR program, Cornell University, Ohio State University, Texas A&M and the University of Florida, as well as Notre Dame.



Junior Ivan Chu at the U.S. Olympic swim trials in Indianapolis.

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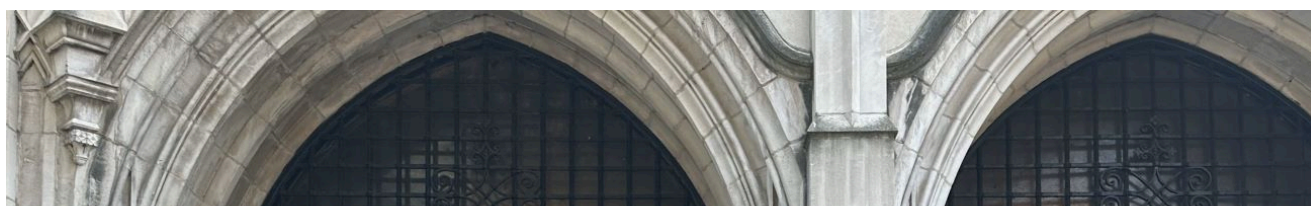
He has the highest number of acceptance out of all the students I've mentored...

- Dr. Ellen France

”

"He has the highest number of acceptance out of all the students I've mentored for the National Science Foundation programs or Research for Undergraduates," said Dr. Ellen France, biology professor at Georgia College.

"The acceptance rate for REU competitions varies greatly depending on the program. However," she said, "it's generally known to be around 10 to 20%."





Chu, front left, with his lab team at the University of Notre Dame.

Chu's been at Notre Dame since May 21 and will return when the program ends July 26. The REU came with a \$10,000 stipend that pays for housing, meals, travel and research supplies.

His research interests include cell signaling and diseases. Chu is working in [Notre Dame's Department of Biological Sciences](#) with Dr. Kevin Vaughan investigating a "cGAS–STING signaling pathway." It's a key inflammatory mediator in infection, cellular stress and tissue damage.

Chu attends weekly seminars to learn about neurodegenerative disease, prostate cancer and hospital catheters that could prevent urinary tract infections.

"I've learned new skills, like flow cytometry and immunofluorescence," Chu said. "It's been fun seeing a lot of stuff I learned in Dr. France's cell signaling class being applied to real-life applications."

"Being at Notre Dame helped me realize how well GCSU set me up for the future," he added. "Many techniques I'm performing here, including tissue and bacterial culture and bacterial transformations, are procedures I performed at Georgia College. I even help other students troubleshoot."

Chu's project focuses on a kinase, an enzyme that attaches a phosphate group to a protein called VRK1.

This specific kinase is a potential novel therapeutic for pancreatic cancer in its most aggressive form. Current medications have low survival rates and are often extremely toxic to patients, creating a low quality of life, Chu said.



The process leads to a signaling pathway called STING which triggers activation of cellular senescence, a state where cells age and permanently stop dividing but don't die.



Chu takes a selfie with a friend in the lab storage room at Notre Dame.

"This is compelling to us," Chu said, "because often when patients are diagnosed, the cancer has already metastasized or spread to other parts of the body. Medications that stimulate cellular senescence have less severe side effects, since the cells are not undergoing cell death."

Outside the lab, Chu enjoys seeing the wildlife around Notre Dame's beautiful campus. He uses the gym and rock-climbing wall and goes on group trips to the Team USA Olympic swimming trials, the city of Chicago, dinner and game nights.

At Georgia College, Chu is an [honor](#) student and member of the Tri-Beta Biological Honors Society. He's involved with the [Science Education Center](#) and tutors peers in biology and chemistry at the [Learning Center](#). He co-founded the university's Asian Student Union and serves as coordinator of Diversity

Initiatives for the [Council of Student Ambassadors](#). He also works in France's lab, researching pathways in a budding yeast.

Chu hopes to pursue a Ph.D. in cellular and molecular biology, then continue his interests in cancer research. The REU has strengthened his understanding of what's necessary for this career.

"I've had the opportunity to immerse myself in cutting-edge research, to collaborate with experienced professionals and develop a range of valuable skills," Chu said. "This internship provided me with elevated hands-on research experience from designing experiments to analyzing data."

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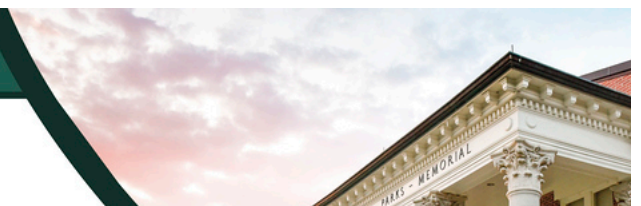
I'm so grateful. This experience has shown me just how well I'm being prepared at GCSU. I never thought I'd be looking at a possible therapeutic for pancreatic cancer—yet here I am. None of this would be possible without the support I've gotten.

- Ivan Chu

”



PILLAR V





ADVANCE

(verb): 1. To move forward in a purposeful way,
2. To make or cause to make progress



[Learn more about the Advance Pillar in our Imagine 2030 Strategic Plan](#)

News Stories Posted Tuesday July 23, 2024



Nearly half a billion dollars in HOPE earned by GCSU students since 1994

Financial Aid : Tuesday July 23, 2024

Students attending Georgia College & State University have received more than \$481 million in scholarships and grants from HOPE since its inception in 1993, according to the Georgia Lottery Corporation.

Over 40,000 [Georgia College & State University](#) students have been the recipients of some 208,000 separate awards from programs such as the HOPE Scholarship, HOPE Grant and Zell Miller Scholarship.

"The HOPE scholarship has transformed higher education in Georgia in every way that the late Gov. Zell Miller envisioned, and beyond," said Georgia College president Cathy Cox. "HOPE is also vital partner in helping Georgia College drive economic impact and workforce development in Milledgeville and beyond."

The HOPE (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) Scholarship Program is funded by the [Georgia Lottery for Education](#) and administered by the [Georgia Student Finance Commission](#).

"I have so many great things to say about the HOPE Scholarship," said Karlie Lucas, a Georgia College alumna who earned her B.A. in Mass Communication in 2021. Lucas said HOPE covered at least half of the tuition for her undergraduate degree.

"HOPE really pushed me to stay on top of my grades. So it helps in



more ways than just financial,” Lucas said. “It really gave me motivation.”

On July 16, Gov. [Brian Kemp announced](#) that the HOPE Scholarship Program has awarded a total of over \$15 billion to more than 2.1 million Georgia students since 1993.

“Georgians have more opportunity than ever before,” said Gov. Kemp. “The HOPE Scholarship has been essential to that growth by preparing a generation of students for success. This milestone reminds us of that incredible impact and the lasting legacy of former Governor Zell Miller.”

Class of 2024 Georgia College graduate Sicilia Reed earned the Zell Miller Scholarship.



A decorative plaque at the entrance of Parks Hall honors Georgia Governor Zell Miller.

“

From studying abroad to being able to walk away without debt, I’m very grateful that the scholarship helped me fulfill my academic goals in college.

- Sicilia Reed, '24

”

“Zell helped me financially navigate college,” Reed said. “From studying abroad to being able to walk away without debt, I’m very grateful that the scholarship helped me fulfill my academic goals in college.”

According to a statement from the Georgia Lottery Corporation, the HOPE program has grown from awarding \$21 million in its first year to awarding \$841 million in scholarships and grants to Georgia students this year. HOPE Programs are offered at 79 Georgia public and private colleges and universities.

In Baldwin County specifically, more than 12,700 students received nearly \$86 million in HOPE lottery dollars for higher education tuition since the program began.



PILLAR V





ADVANCE

(verb): 1. To move forward in a purposeful way,
2. To make or cause to make progress



[Learn more about the Advance Pillar in our Imagine 2030 Strategic Plan](#)

News Stories Posted Thursday July 25, 2024



Summer internship takes environmental science major to geothermal wonderland

[Biology & Environmental Sciences, Department of](#) : Thursday July 25, 2024

Most [internships](#) are pretty cool. They give students hands-on experience and a chance to see if a career field really suits them.

But John Hollis' three-part internship was much more than that.

It was an adventure. A real expedition—trekking past hot springs; vast fields of spikey purple flowers, forests of towering pines, barren ravines, rocky-cliff beaches and spectacular waterfalls. He even visited the volcanic eruption site that caused the town of Grindavík to be evacuated in Nov. 2023.



“

I couldn't ask for anything more.

- John Hollis



Senior John Hollis in Iceland.

Grindavík, Iceland, that is.

Hollis is a junior [environmental science major](#) from Flowery Branch, Georgia. He transferred to Georgia College & State University in 2022 because he heard about the university's certificate program in [sustainability](#) and opportunities in recycling.

That led him to search environmental internships. He found [Global Treks & Adventures LLC](#) based in Michigan, which offers travel expeditions to Iceland and Spain for environmental research and anthropology. Each group accepts a dozen students.

"I immediately applied, because visiting Iceland to study ecosystems has been a dream of mine for years," Hollis said. "I was shocked to learn I was accepted, after hearing how competitive the process was. I am extremely grateful and excited to put this experience on my resume."



Alternate Text

The three-month internship is split into three phases: the first month is spent studying prepared topics; the second includes a weeklong tour of the Reykjanes Peninsula in Iceland; and the third is for writing a travel article for publication.

It seems Hollis has plenty to write about.

He just returned from Iceland, an island of dramatic scenery surrounded by 13 peninsulas. The country has some of the biggest glaciers and most active volcanoes in the world.

In his week there, Hollis' group didn't waste any time. The group visited the Reykjadalur Hot Spring Thermal River; Thingvellir National Park, where two tectonic plates are narrowly separated by the Atlantic Ocean; Mt. Helgafel in Heimaey, where the god Thor was once thought to reside; and the geothermal hot springs at Seltún.



Alternate Text

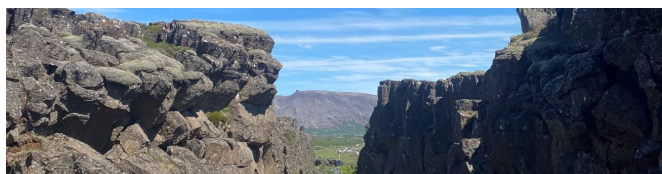
Hollis got to see towering Norway Spruce and Scots Pines in Heidmörk Forest; the stunning mountain range of Esjan; the largest town in Iceland, Reykjavík; and the seaside town of Keflavík. He walked the 7-mile Krisuvik Trail; and visited the Hellisheiði Geothermal Plant, where there is an active volcanic ridge near Hengill.

The group lodged at the [Sudurnes Science and Learning Center](#) in the coastal town of Sandgerði, where fish and chips can always be found on the menu.

For the internship's final project, participants write about sustainable tourism, their guided outdoor experiences and environmental education for a travel publication. Hollis is working on his now.

"It was a quick expedition, but full of learning and research," Hollis said. "I helped collect GPS data so we can publish accurate trail information and create maps. I'm writing about the habitats and ecosystems of the Reykjanes Peninsula."

"This internship directly ties into my major," he said, "although I'm still uncertain exactly which route to take for my future career—maybe general



environmental data collection or sustainability.”

Georgia College helped Hollis “immensely” to prepare for this adventure and receive class credit. He’s especially grateful to Dr. Allison VandeVoort, associate professor of environmental science, and [study abroad](#) advisor Ariana Youmans for their help.

“While I was only in Iceland a week,” Hollis said, “I was on the trails pretty much the whole time, collecting information for my publication. I couldn’t ask for anything more.”



Alternate Text



PILLAR IV

ENGAGE

(verb): 1. To occupy, attract, or involve (someone’s interest or attention), 2. To participate or become involved

[Learn more about the Engage Pillar in our Imagine 2030 Strategic Plan](#)



News Stories Posted Tuesday July 30, 2024



Controlled burns: GCSU students learn best practices for healthy forests

[Biology & Environmental Sciences, Department of](#) : Tuesday July 30, 2024

Since the dawn of time, people have feared, fought and sought to control fire.

According to [USA Today](#), fires are currently burning in Oregon, Washington, [Montana](#), Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico. Just last week, 5,000 people fled the [west Canadian town of Jasper](#). Before summer began—almost 90,000 acres of [Californian grassland burned](#)—15 times more than a year ago.

Even in [Russia's far east](#), a jaw-dropping 12.8 million acres of forest today are being scorched.

Fortunately, no wildfires are currently burning in Georgia.

Students who took Dr. Bruce Snyder's fire-ecology class last semester know why.

The bi-yearly, upper-level [biology and environmental science](#) course teaches the importance of purposeful planning. Prescribed fires actually prevent unnecessary destruction.

“

Without controlled fire, it's going to literally all go up in smoke.

- Dr. Bruce Snyder



Dr. Bruce Snyder

”

“Fire is prevalent on the landscape—every ecosystem pretty much is going to burn at some point,” Snyder said.

“Because we burn intentionally, we haven't had the kind of out-of-control wildfires you see in other parts of the world. Without controlled fire,” he said, “it's going to literally all go up in smoke.”

This spring was Snyder's third time teaching fire ecology. He talks about America's long history of fire

suppression that started in the 1920s. When forests thicken, one spark can cause huge fires, wiping out plant species and changing entire ecosystems.

Snyder trained to become a wildland firefighter. He works with the [Georgia Department of Natural Resources](#) and [U.S. Forest Service](#) to find opportunities for students to study the renewing effects of fire—in a state known for its forest management.

In 2017, according to [Statista](#), Georgia conducted 83,588 planned fires on more than 1.2 million acres—more than any state except Florida.



Dr. Snyder, left, instructs his class before they disperse into Oconee National Forest in Putnam County.

Snyder took students on two long treks through Oconee National Forest in Putnam County to look for evidence of previous fire, see woodland growth before a controlled burn and return to understand the aftereffects.

Students learned how woods grow heavy with inflammable materials. When air is dry instead of humid, it only takes a lightning strike to ignite.

Controlled burnings get rid of these fuels—smaller trees, fallen logs, sticks, piles of pine straw and leaf litter. This allows more sunlight. Remaining ash is rich in nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus. Both are good fertilizers.

“

Fire is nature's way of doing something important. Our plant systems create fuel and, at some point without prescribed burning, it's going to have the right ingredients—oxygen and the right moisture levels—to ignite and become destructive.

”

“Students learn what fire is and how it affects the environment and different species that interact with that environment,” Snyder said.

“Fire is nature’s way of doing something important. Our plant systems create fuel and, at some point without prescribed burning,” he said, “it’s going to have the right ingredients—oxygen and the right moisture levels—to ignite and become destructive.”

On field trips, students took notes, sketched evidence of overgrowth and measured impact on wildlife. They noted weather, considered the role of wind and predicted how fire would move through the area.

Not a bad way to spend a class.

For recent [environmental science](#) graduate Hasari Berumdez Soto of Duluth, Georgia, it was a chance to put what he learned to practice. Originally from Costa Rica, Soto wants to work in sustainability and do field surveys.

On a sunny, blue-sky day, Soto spotted charred tree trunks, brushed aside leaf matter and looked for “fire breaks”—hillsides, streams or ponds that might block prescribed fires.

“The main reason I wanted to do my capstone on fire was to try something different,” Soto said. “It’s been nice getting out of the classroom, and check vegetation for signs of fuel. This area has a lot of quick fuel, like pine straw.”

The course also made a big impression on alumna Molly Hooks of Augusta, Georgia.



Alumna Molly Hooks at a controlled burn with the U.S. Forest Service last spring.

She took Snyder’s class in 2022 as an environmental science major minoring in [biology](#) and [geology](#). She then chose a career with the U.S. Forest Service.

Hooks loves working outside and participated in a prescribed burn this spring as a forestry technician and lead timber marker in the [Oconee Ranger District](#). She was just promoted to silviculture technician, someone who controls the establishment of growth and maintains a healthy, quality forest.

Her time at Georgia College in Snyder’s class, as well as Dr. Kalina Manoylov’s ecology and Dr. Dominic DeSantis’

herpetology courses, helped prepare her for this.

“I primarily researched plant population ecology, plant systematics, taxonomy and herbarium curation during my time at GCSU,” Hooks said. “These helped me understand the science of forestry. My statistics-focused classes also help.”

“Forestry has always been an interest of mine,” she added. “There were definitely some learning curves I had to navigate when starting this job. However, the background I developed in my time at

GCSU helped me tremendously. Some of the post-burn areas we checked out in his class are the same areas I work in today.”

As a [biology](#) major, recent graduate Amber Stubbs was curious how fire impacts animal habitats. She wants to be a herpetologist. She learned snakes move underground during prescribed fires, while birds fly to safety.

“One of the things that really attracted me to Georgia College,” Stubbs said, “was when I heard professors there were doing research and a lot of it was hands on, out in the field, and students could find pretty interesting things to do original research on, like herpetology.”

“That really gives you a leg up—not only to get the coursework, but to get actual field experience to further your career,” she said. “That’s a big, big plus at Georgia College.”

Like Soto and Stubbs, other seniors last semester created prescribed fire plans as capstone projects.

Maddie Ariail of Dunwoody, Georgia; Megan Martin of Forsyth County; Audrey Bryan of Dublin; and Anna Nguyen of Savannah studied as a group.

They collected evidence of past fires, noting burn scars. They determined how hot flames got and how high trees got scorched. They researched site histories, studied maps, specified borders, verified who gives permission for burns and listed neighbors to notify.

There’s wind direction to consider, smoke management and finding the right personnel.

“It’s a significant amount of work,” Snyder said. “These plans can be anywhere from a page to 50 pages. As capstone students, they draw on everything in this course and everything else they’ve learned in college. There are a lot of decisions to make that I can’t make for them. They did a good job.”

A big surprise for students was how quickly plants rejuvenate. Two weeks after a fire, bright, green-leaved stems sprouted from smoldering, charred remains.

It was a lesson on the resiliency of life.

“

Most people think of fire as destructive when, in reality, the trees all have their leaves after a prescribed burn and the understory is growing back. Things are flowering. It’s really important and much more valuable to see it in person.

It’s good for students to learn how our public lands are managed, We can’t stop fire. But it can be used as a tool. Instead of destruction, we see rebirth.



Recent graduate Amber Stubbs, right front, with the fire ecology class last spring.



PILLAR IV

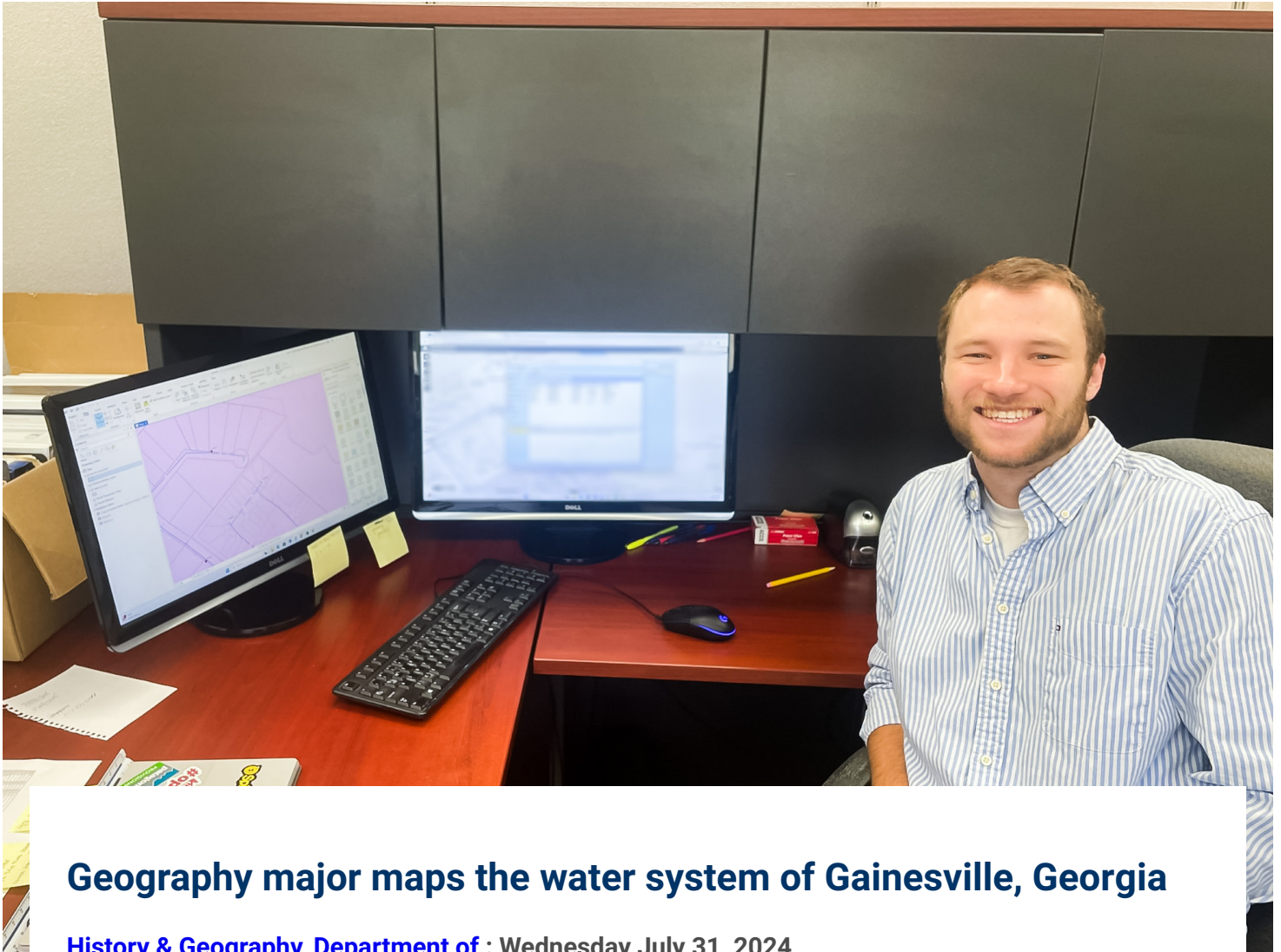
ENGAGE

(verb): 1. To occupy, attract, or involve (someone's interest or attention), 2. To participate or become involved

[Learn more about the Engage Pillar in our Imagine 2030 Strategic Plan](#)



News Stories Posted Wednesday July 31, 2024



Geography major maps the water system of Gainesville, Georgia

[History & Geography, Department of](#) : Wednesday July 31, 2024

Senior [geography major](#) Chris Garrett is getting paid to map fire hydrants and water meters for the [City of Gainesville Department of Water Resources](#) this summer.

He's geotagging water infrastructure, updating maps and helping the department conduct an Environmental Protection Agency study of Gainesville water pipes.

"If there's a leak, something breaks or a sinkhole collapses, it's easier to look on a map that's updated and know everything that's going on," Garrett said. "It makes it easier to solve problems."

Professor Dr. Chuck Fahrer's introductory geography course impressed Garrett and put him on the path to geographic information systems. He's using skills Fahrer and geography [Professor Dr. Doug Oetter](#) taught him to work with water department engineers and updating old water maps.



"Knowing how the water department works has been a real eye-opener," Garrett said. "Seeing how big the system is and how complex it is has been really cool. The people in my internship have been great; they're all very friendly, they work hard and they care about what they do."



Garrett helped the water department map the water infrastructure of Gainesville.

Set to graduate this August, Garrett intends to move to Satellite Beach, Florida, to join the Fellows Program out of Trinity Wellsprings Church and move into full-time ministry.

"Shout out to the geography department, because they did a great job of making my credits work and helping me graduate on time, even when I took a semester off," Garrett said. "They all taught me really well and cared about my learning."

"Georgia College as a whole was the best decision I could have made," he said. "I don't think any other university would have been as good for my development as a

person—Georgia College, the people there especially and the culture of the university."



Garrett at the Gainesville Department of Water Resources.



PILLAR IV

ENGAGE

(verb): 1. To occupy, attract, or involve (someone's interest or attention), 2. To participate or become involved

[Learn more about the Engage Pillar in our Imagine 2030 Strategic Plan](#)

