

News Stories Posted Sunday November 3, 2024



GCSU President to students: 'Your vote matters'

[Student Life, Office of](#) : Sunday November 3, 2024

By Mike Cavaliere

More than 50% of registered voters in Georgia had already cast their ballot before the end of October, shattering early voter records for the state.

As the former secretary of state of Georgia — who proposed the initial legislation that ushered both early voting and electronic

voting into the state — Georgia College & State University (GCSU) President Cathy Cox describes feeling “heartened” by this fact, but she stressed that there is still more work to be done, specifically by young voters.



Georgia College President Cathy Cox spoke with Ethan Mollenauer of WGUR-FM 95.3, about youth engagement in the 2024 presidential election. (Photo: Austin Zschach)

“This is a really monumental election,” she said, in an interview with WGUR-FM 95.3, the student-run radio station in Milledgeville, Georgia. “I’ve never seen such a difference of opinion between the candidates.”

She cited policies regarding family planning, student loan forgiveness and diversity issues as some of the key topics dividing the candidates and piquing the interest of college-aged students.

Preparing to vote is easy! [Visit the GA My Voter Page](#) to check your registration status. [find nearby](#)

status, and nearby
polling locations and
see sample ballots.

“All elections are about the future,” she said, urging young voters to consider the policies that would impact them personally and make their voting decisions accordingly. “Your vote matters, and there are issues that will affect you.”

At Georgia College, young voters are especially engaged politically. In a recent study of the 2022 midterm elections, Bobcats were shown to have [a 5% higher voting percentage](#) than that of their peers at the national level. GCSU students have also been recognized nationally for superior voter registration levels.

That’s a good start, Cox explained, because the more that young people make their voices heard, the more candidates will begin to tailor their platforms around the priorities of those younger voters.

“Be a critical thinker, dig for good information ... and don’t believe everything you read on the internet,” Cox urged students. “And find time to vote!”

Cox’s interview with WGUR-FM 95.3 Milledgeville can be streamed in full below.

[youtube embedcode="8RI-AMe_mao" style="fullwidth"]Cathy Cox sits down with WGUR's News Director Ethan Mollenauar to discuss young voters and the 2024 election[/youtube]



Gone but not forgotten: History students research deaths at Central State Hospital

[History & Geography, Department of](#) : Sunday November 3, 2024

By Cindy O'Donnell

Just in time for 'All Soul's Day' and the Hispanic 'Day of the Dead' — a time of year when the departed are remembered — two Georgia College & State University history students completed research on more than 3,700 patients who died at Central State Hospital.

Junior [history](#) majors Alex Gray and Evelyn Evans of Monroe, Georgia, signed up for the internships at [Georgia's Old Capital Heritage Center](#) in Milledgeville to fulfill [GC Journeys](#) requirements.

But they walked away with a new understanding and appreciation for mental illness.

“

These were sick people with problems that were not very well understood at the time. It broadened my horizons.

- Alex Gray

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“I used to find American history extremely boring,” Gray said. “I’d never heard of medical history. I wanted to get out of my comfort zone and step out of ancient history, like Mesopotamia, and experience something new.”

“It certainly changed a lot of what I think about mental institutions, breaking down the preconceived notions I had from movies that show a bunch of crazy people all being crazy in one place,” he said. “These were sick people with problems that were not very well understood at the time. It broadened my horizons.”

The Heritage Center museum, located at the Depot on hospital property, opened a one-room exhibit in May. “Fast Fading, A History of Central State Hospital” displays maps, historical pictures, lobotomy tools, nursing uniforms, a straitjacket and surgical bed.



Juniors Alex Gray and Evelen Evans at Cedar Lane Cemetery, Milledgeville. (Video and photos by Peyton Miller)

For the past several months, Gray and Evans worked with museum director Jessica Whitehead to add a new display, “Death at the Asylum,” which records and honors the many people who died onsite.

Central State Hospital opened in 1842 and became what’s considered the largest mental asylum in the world. Nearly 200 buildings were added over the years to accommodate a seemingly unending stream of patients.

At its peak, the hospital was home to more than 13,000 people suffering from mental health issues.

“As more people came into the hospital,” Evans said, “they needed more room. One of the problems they always had was overcrowding. That’s something we see in our research. Every

single annual report stated they needed more room. Yet, they continued taking in patients because there weren't a lot of places for them to go."

Whitehead estimates there are 35,000 graves at five cemeteries scattered around Central State Hospital. The first 2,000 bodies were buried at Memory Hill Cemetery in Milledgeville. Gray and Evans toured Cedar Lane Cemetery recently, where as many as 8,500 patients are buried in segregated areas. A bronze 'guardian angel' statue guards the site.

Largely unwanted and abandoned in life, many patients were also unclaimed in death.

Their families either lacked money for funerals or didn't care. Prior to modern transportation and embalming techniques, it was also dangerous to move decomposing bodies.

“

There were more patients than we'd like to think that were left at the hospital to be cared for by hospital staff, never to hear from their families again. Once they passed away, that was also the case. They didn't have anyone to come and retrieve their bodies. So, they'd be taken care of in death as they were in life – by the hospital staff.

- Jessica Whitehead

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Gray and Evans reviewed and charted hundreds of years of Central State Hospital annual reports, kept in the [Digital Library of Georgia](#). They were tasked with researching cause of death, defining time periods and how records changed over the years.

Reports became more detailed as the years wore on, making

research easier. Names weren't noted on documents, but reports indicate male and female, white and Black.



Alternate Text

Patients died from things like anemia, apoplexy (bleeding in the brain), dropsy (water retention), gastrointestinal illnesses, epilepsy and “maniacal exhaustion.” Too many died of tuberculosis — 50 one year. Another year in the early 1900s, tuberculosis accounted for nearly 23% of 500 deaths.

“What surprised me about the results is just the number of things people died from, and the number of people that died in those years,” Gray said. “It's also surprising to me how many things we've fixed and don't die from anymore.”

After graduation, both students want to work in museums or historical archives. The internship taught them strong research skills.

“

It helped me understand these were not insane people ... It's really sad to examine, but it's also super interesting. It shows how far we've come as a society when it comes to mental health and also how far we have left to go.


- Evelyn Evans

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It was also a way remember and honor those who died at Central State Hospital.

“There were people who lived and died here, and that's super important because asylums have a legacy of being scary places,” Evans said. “People lived here. They went about their normal business here, and they died here. It's important to remember that. This is not just some spooky, scary place, It's a real place, and it was home for some people.”

“Getting to do research on this was very intriguing,” she added. “It helped me understand these were not insane people. They had mental health problems that were not understood at the time. It's really sad to examine, but it's also super interesting. It shows how far we've come as a society when it comes to mental health and also how far we have left to go.”

 Front Campus graphic for Imagine 2030. Text reads: Engage: to occupy, attract, or involve (someone's interest or attention.)
[Learn more about the Engage Pillar in our Imagine 2030 Strategic Plan](#)

News Stories Posted Friday November 8, 2024



Georgia College & State University celebrates its 135th birthday

[University Communications](#) : Friday November 8, 2024

By Amanda Respass

Georgia College & State University celebrates its 135th birthday today. Nov. 8 is the university's Charter Day — the anniversary of the date in 1889 when [Gov. John B. Gordon signed a bill into law](#) establishing Georgia Normal & Industrial College.

According to the 1891 GN&IC prospectus, "The original bill for the

establishment of this institution was first introduced in the House of Representatives of the Georgia Legislature early in the July session of 1889, by Hon. Wm. Y. Atkinson, a member from Coweta County...the Bill for the establishment of this Girls' Industrial School was received with great favor by the body from the beginning...It passed both houses of the Legislature and received the Governor's signature, and on November 8th, 1889, became a law."



1915 archival photo of the female students of Georgia Normal and Industrial College on historic Front Campus, courtesy of Georgia College Special Collections.

The state allocated land known as Penitentiary Square in the center of Milledgeville as the location of the GN&IC campus, along with the former [Executive Mansion](#) that became the college's first dormitory.

The 1891 Prospectus also claimed, "Perhaps

more universal interest was never felt in any educational institution ever organized in the State, certainly none ever had the more hearty approval of the entire people of Georgia."

The original mission of GN&IC was to provide young women in Georgia instruction and training that would prepare them to earn their own living "by the vocation of teaching or by those industrial arts that are suitable for women to pursue." The first class of GN&IC included 88 women who hailed from 52 different Georgia counties.

"Georgia College has come a long way since 1889 when we had fewer than 100 students enrolled," said President Cathy Cox. "Our 135th year has seen the largest total enrollment in the history of the institution at 7,100 students from across the state, country and the world."

Cox continued, “Some things remain similar over the past century-plus. GCSU has focused on the [highest caliber liberal arts experience](#) in Georgia for most of its existence. And the Georgia College campus – which still features its key historical [Front Campus](#) – is just as ‘magnificent and beautiful’ as it was first described in 1891.”

“

Our 135th year has seen the largest total enrollment in the history of the institution at 7,100 students from across the state, country and the world.

- President Cathy Cox

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From its start, GN&IC comprised four departments: the Normal Department, the Industrial Department, the Collegiate Department and the Domestic Department. The Normal Department trained teachers, while the Industrial Department taught secretarial skills such as stenography and bookkeeping.

The Collegiate Department provided a traditional four-year academic curriculum which the GN&IC prospectus deemed “equal, if not superior, to that of any female institution of learning in the South.” Courses included Latin, algebra, analytical geometry, rhetoric, natural science, astronomy and Shakespeare.

Finally, the Domestic Department included a Cooking School, a School of Dressmaking and a Home Department in charge of the upkeep of the school’s dormitory.

The college continued to enroll only women until it became coed in 1967. Today, like most universities in Georgia and the U.S., women outnumber male students enrolled in fulltime study at GCSU.

News Stories Posted Monday November 11, 2024



Alumna and Retired Air Force Nurse Continues her Support for Today's GCSU Students

[Alumni](#) : Monday November 11, 2024

By Kristen Simpson

She's a nurse, an educator and a retired United States Air Force Reserve colonel. She's a philanthropist, a patron of music and a constant volunteer. She supports her extended family and is a shepherd to others. She's intense, passionate and curious.

She's retired Col. Maidana K. Nunn ('57), DNSc, USAF Reserve.

She's traveled to almost every country and operates with four main passions: faith, her country, children, and animals.

"I was just curious," Nunn said. "These opportunities would come about and I'd say, 'Well, let me try and see what I can do.' I was always busy doing something — I think I've had a rich, full life."

Nunn was born in December 1932 in rural Barnesville, Georgia, and moved around Middle Georgia with her mother after her father perished in a 1936 auto accident. She grew up all over the state and eventually graduated from Butler High School in 1949.

This is where her nursing career began. Nunn graduated from the Macon Hospital School of Nursing in August 1952 and became a registered nurse.

Chasing a job, Nunn ended up in Milledgeville at [Central State Hospital](#) — and she didn't intend to stay. But after her uncle, who was contracted with the college to tune pianos, convinced her it was "the best school in the state of Georgia," Nunn began studying social science at what was then [Georgia State College for Women](#).

"I thought they always had very good professors over there," Nunn said. "It was just a fun place to be."

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“I've always wanted to be a nurse ever since I could talk about it.”



Maidana receives an alumni award from GCSU. (Photo courtesy of Col. Maidana Nunn.)

- Col. Maidana Nunn

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With classes only available during the day, she attended morning lectures and walked to work at the hospital for her 3 to 11 p.m. shift.

“I allowed myself the luxury of a baccalaureate education,” she said. “It was sheer frustration, but I finally got a Bachelor of Arts degree.”

Nunn jumped from opportunity to opportunity, chasing her curiosities and furthering her education. She went on to get her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the Medical College of Georgia in 1958, a Master of Science from the University of Maryland in 1963, and a Doctor of Nursing Science from Boston University in 1970.

“I just have so much curiosity, so I wanted to learn as much as I could,” Nunn said. “I think sometimes children can be frightened of trying to get into something, and you have to say, ‘It’s not all that bad, c’mon, let’s see what you can do.’”

When she heard [Robins Air Force Base](#) in Warner Robins, Georgia, was trying to form a reserve unit within their hospital, Nunn jumped at the chance.

The opportunity kickstarted her 21-year career in the military, where she studied flight nursing and rose to captain, major and then colonel. The whole time, she chased training and education opportunities within her field.

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“Education is what you need so you can be independent.”

- Col. Maidana Nunn

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While she’s never been in combat, Nunn participated in downrange missions to Panama, helped transport people from one European country to another on weekends, and ran hospital units.

“We’d go through Germany, Spain and England – that’s a lot for one weekend,” she said, laughing. “You were supposed to take clothes for all seasons, because you never knew where in the world they would take you or what they were going to do with you.”

For about 12 years, she continued working part-time in some outside nursing capacity.

She was stationed in Myrtle Beach, Florida, during Operation Desert Storm for four months and afterward traveled back to a familiar place, Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. She remained there until her retirement in 1992, concluding what she considers her favorite part of her career.



Maidana's faith has been a prominent part of her journey.

(Photo by Anna Gay Leavitt.)

For the last five years, Nunn has lived at The Cottages in Milledgeville, where she often attends musical productions and continues to volunteer in whatever capacity she is able.

She is a benefactor of the Dr. Maidana Nunn '57 Scholarship, a \$25,000 endowed fund for GCSU music students, a

champion of children, the community and a pillar for [The Department of Music](#).

“When I attended GSCW, the cost was \$45 per quarter for 17

quarter hours, with a \$5 student activity fee,” Nunn said. “I was fortunate, so I don’t mind helping anybody who needs help.”

“I like most every kind of music,” she said. “I’m not a scholar or anything like that, but I like seeing other people achieve their dreams.”

Some quotes are courtesy of Robin Grantham, who is involved with the [Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation](#).

Photos courtesy of Col. Maidana Nunn, with story photography by Anna Gay Leavitt.

News Stories Posted Wednesday November 13, 2024



Veterans cope, move forward through GCSU research partnership

[Psychological Science, Department of](#) : Wednesday November 13,
2024

By Cindy O'Donnell

Stacks of pill bottles, a father and daughter, paratroopers jumping from planes – these are some of the pictures on exhibit this week giving campus and community a glimpse into the lives of veterans.

The immersive gallery and live-music performance Nov. 12 at Blackbird Coffee in Milledgeville was the result of more than a year of collaborative research between [Georgia College & State University](#) students and four members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

[“Sights and Sounds of Veteran Identity”](#) gave



Professor Laurie Peebles and Dr. Stephanie Jett, font center, speak to the audience Tuesday night at the "Sights and Sounds" performance. (Photo by Savannah Greene.)

vets an equal stake in academic research.

“Most of these veterans just want to be a part of the community again. They want to feel like we're listening,” said Dr. Stephanie Jett, associate professor of [psychology](#). “For some of them, there's been an uncorking. This research partnership allowed them to

express things in a safe way that they haven't been able to express before.”

A graduate student mastering in [music therapy](#) and a dozen psychology students used qualitative methods – [Photo Voice](#) and [Lyric Analysis](#) – to help former soldiers open up about their military experiences.

The “community-based participatory-action” veteran project was a first for music therapy research, according to associate professor Dr. Laurie Peebles.

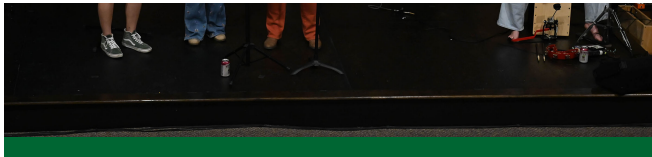
“Music therapy is based on scientific evidence, and while lyric analysis is a typical intervention used in treatment, it’s not generally used in research,” she said. “One of the things I really like about Georgia College is our undergraduate research focus, so I’m excited to continue this partnership between psychology and music therapy. While music can be therapeutic, this was a vital opportunity to collaborate and connect music therapy to this type of research.”

Pictures and song lyrics helped veterans pinpoint feelings, analyze memories and deal with their emotions in a way that was meaningful to them. Students helped create the study’s original framework. They interviewed veterans, evaluated data, wrote story summaries and coordinated music routines.

Songs were performed by Peebles; Sara Carr, '23, of Augusta, Georgia, who is getting her master’s in music therapy; and other music therapists from the local area.



Selections included “[It’s Called: Freefall](#)” by Rainbow Kitten Surprise and “[Get Up](#)” by Shinedown. Another song, “[Dragonfly](#)” by



Students and faculty rehearsed for the "Sights and Sounds" event last week. (Photo by Savannah Greene.)

Shaman's Harvest, is about rebirth and reclaiming joy. The vet who chose it also shared a picture of him and his daughter. She's the reason he keeps going.

This experience showed Carr the importance of participant-based research and moving beyond statistics to include the human element.

Carr sang and played instruments in several performances. Her father, one of the veterans, connected her with his chosen song "[Ashokan Farewell](#)" by Jay Ungar and Molly Mason. Carr used to play this song as a violinist in a youth orchestra. Tuesday night was the first time he'd heard the song performed with lyrics, and his daughter played the electric violin.

Carr also supported a woman veteran onstage who sang "[A Broken Wing](#)" by Martina McBride.

"Our vet chose this song because — despite all of the abuse, trauma and hurt she's experienced throughout her life, in and out of service — she continues to fight back and thrive as she moves forward," Carr said.

"It felt so uplifting to be beside her while she told her story," she added. "Music has the capability to express emotions that can be hard to put into words, and lyrics can poetically embody someone's experiences in a way they can personally relate to."

Original and faculty-mentored research like this is "vital to psychological science" and contributes to the success of Georgia College's highly rated psychology program, said chair Dr. Lee Gillis. In its [2025 rankings](#), U.S. News & World Report named the Georgia College psychology major No. 1 in the regional South for public state universities and No. 293 nationally.

“Dr. Jett’s work highlights how faculty engage students with social issues, connecting classroom concepts to real-world problems,” Gillis said. “Our labs are directly supervised by doctoral-level faculty unlike other institutions, where graduate assistants take the lead. Students in this environment develop valuable skills for the workplace or to further their education.”

Senior psychology major Trenholm Fahy of Marietta, Georgia, learned a great deal from this research. He’s applying for graduate school and wants to continue focusing on programs that prioritize a diverse clientele.

“

One of the things I really like about Georgia College is our undergraduate research focus, so I'm excited to continue this partnership between psychology and music therapy.

- Dr. Laurie Peebles, associate professor

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Although Photo Voice and Lyric Analysis have both been used with marginalized populations, Fahy doesn’t think they’ve ever been used together.

“We have pretty solid foundations for treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder when it comes to modern psychiatry and mental health care,” Fahy said. “Those foundations are enhanced by these alternative treatments we have.”

“A lot of researchers come into these communities, and vets don't ever see any benefit from that,” he said. “For some of these veterans, this is their first time talking with anybody else. That can be a very freeing thing and at the same time, it can also be very emotional.”

The project already changed the worldview of senior psychology major Lauren Ernst-Fortin of Duluth, Georgia. She became more empathetic, an important skill in her chosen profession of counseling.

A simple picture or song can break down stereotypes, she said, underscoring the individuality and distinctness of each story.

“A lot of times, veterans come out of the military and there's no immediate support. They don't transition back into civilian life,” Ernst-Fortin said. “For a long time, to get through, they've been pushing down this concept of emotions. So, when given an easier task like choosing photos or songs, you begin to see patterns, and they're able to talk.”

Students presented their findings at multiple conferences in the spring. These included the [Georgia Academy of Science](#) and [National Council on Undergraduate Research](#). In April, they'll provide results at the [Southeastern Psychological Association](#) conference in Atlanta.

“The end goal is that we're not the experts in the room,” Jett said. “They are. We learn from them, and we are stewards of that knowledge. We share that knowledge with the community to amplify and empower their voices.”

“We want to be a bridge and build back trust,” she added, “because trust in exploited communities — who've been used as research subjects for a long time — needs to be earned. Now, they're participating in the process. They're not a nameless number. Their voices matter.”

News Stories Posted Sunday November 17, 2024



Celebrating International Student Day

[International Education Center](#) : Sunday November 17, 2024

By Maggie Forrester, University Communications Student Assistant

International Student Day is today, Nov. 17. Georgia College & State University has been hosting [international students](#) for more than 70 years.

70 years.

A 1945 article from “The Colonnade” about Georgia State College for Women’s International Relations Club – whose membership roster included famed alumna Mary Flannery O’Connor – said, “The purpose of the International Relations Club is to foster interest in and knowledge of international affairs among students on this campus.”



A 1945 clipping pictures members of the International Relations Club, including alumna Flannery O'Connor. (Image courtesy of Georgia College Special Collections.)

Farah Dawood, a current GCSU international student hailing from Behera, Egypt, recently [shared her experience](#) saying, “Everyone at GCSU is so welcoming of international students. It was like that from the first minute I got here.”

Currently, there are over 40 students from 23 different countries represented at Georgia College. These countries include Argentina, Congo, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Guatemala, India, Italy, Kenya, Republic of Korea (South), Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, New

Zealand, Pakistan, Peru, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, United Kingdom, Vietnam and Zambia.

Dr. James Callaghan, director of the [International Education Center](#) at Georgia College, spoke about the invaluable contributions of international students.

“Students coming to us from other lands bring us new knowledge, perspectives and experiences,” Callaghan said, “allowing us to better recognize and understand not only the vastness and complexity of our world, but also the beauty, uniqueness and interconnectedness of each element in the world, and of each of us.”

“

Students coming to us from other lands bring us new knowledge, perspectives and experiences, allowing us to better recognize and understand not only the vastness and complexity of our world.

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International Student Day serves as a time for cultural exchange, diversity and solidarity from other students. Dawood added, “It makes me happy to see more and more American students in our meetings, they’re curious to know about students from other countries. It fosters a bond between us.”

The history of [International Student Day](#) can be traced all the way back to 85 years ago when Nazi Germany occupied the country of Czechoslovakia. On Nov. 17, 1939, Nazi soldiers closed the University of Prague (Charles University) in Czechoslovakia, executed several students and professors, and sent hundreds of students to concentration camps.

In 1992, Czechoslovakia came to a peaceful agreement and dissolved into two countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, on Dec. 31. Today these two countries honor Nov. 17 as a public holiday.





Georgia College hosts International Fest every fall on front campus. This photo is from 2022. (Photo by Anna Gay Leavitt.)

News Stories Posted Tuesday November 19, 2024



Alumnus creates fan experience for professional baseball, football and soccer games

[Communication, Department of](#) : Tuesday November 19, 2024

By Margaret Schell

Do you ever wonder how the people behind the scenes at Truist Park and Mercedes-Benz Stadiums in Atlanta amp up fans' excitement?

Andrew Rochefort ('20) knows exactly what it takes. After preparing and briefing his crew, he revs up fans by flipping switches, pressing buttons and so much more.

Rochefort is a freelance event-day production assistant for Truist Park and Mercedes-Benz Stadium games. His schedule stays full

keeping fans excited about the Atlanta Braves, Atlanta Falcons, Atlanta United and other third-party games like college football.

“It’s a lot of fun,” he said. “Depending on what I’m doing with these jobs, my tasks vary slightly.”

At Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Rochefort runs XPression and Dashboard software to display graphics, including game stats and videos that transmit onto the halo board: The 360-degree screen located under the roof.

“The lower-third graphics on the halo board are reserved for people who are involved with the national anthem, including the color guard and celebrities who’re at the game,” Rochefort said. “We make an ID tag for them to pop up on the halo screen.”

Although a producer uses the script to set up images and stats in chronological order before the games, Rochefort must be able to make instant changes during the games.

“We click the buttons that go to the next segment,” Rochefort said. “Once we hit that button to a feature, it automatically fires to the halo board and any supporting boards.”

Throughout the games, the director and producer will choose camera shots that go on the halo board. And Rochefort knows



Andrew Rochefort preps during pregame before an Atlanta United Soccer match at Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

what captures their attention.

“They look for someone who’s dancing or has high energy, because during timeouts or innings you want to keep the same tempo and atmosphere inside the stadium,” he said. “I try to keep the energy up for the teams during those breaks.”

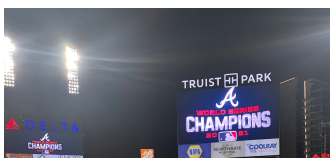
At the Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Rochefort starts his workday at least four hours before the games. He attends a production meeting, then meets with his graphics producer to see if there’s anything special from a normal game day. He checks to ensure set up and scripts match. Then, he runs through the script with the technical director, director and show caller.

“We run through the script because there’s usually different stuff each week,” Rochefort said. “When we get to that point in the break or for the halftime event, like during the past two Falcons games, we brought up honor ceremonies for Arthur Blank and Matt Ryan. Those were two very important segments that needed to run perfectly.”

The gates open to the public two hours before game time. But before that, Rochefort produces content to run including different pregame segments.

“I put up stat slabs for the Atlanta United players once they come on the field,” he said. “The players do ‘pose like the pros,’ where they perform different short dances. And we try to get the fans to match the players by projecting them onto the screen.”

During the game, Rochefort also puts up more stats and sponsorship graphics. And when a player scores a goal, he hits the all-important goal button.



For Atlanta Falcons games, Rochefort has little downtime, as there are many breaks and timeouts to cover.



Andrew Rochefort is with the pennant flag after the Atlanta Braves won the 2021 World Series.

“With the Falcons games there could be 50-plus people in our department, working on the event,” he said.

“Communication through our headsets is key. I listen to my producer about changes and my director to display certain graphics. It’s a lot of moving pieces, but it’s rewarding when I get it all done and put on a great show for everyone.”

Rochefort started working in sports in 2021 with the Gwinnett Stripers before working with the Braves during the 2021 post-season. That’s the year the team won the World Series.

“It was so cool to get that big-league experience on that stage. I was able to even go to some home World Series games,” he said. “I got hired to work all 81 home games the following season, and I’ve been doing that ever since.”

Rochefort was hired at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in March 2023. He credits a big part of his success to his experience at Georgia College & State University, where he earned a mass communication degree.

He recalls being in classes with only five to 15 other students.

“I really appreciated the small class size that allowed me to build relationships with my classmates and professors,” Rochefort said. “I’m especially glad I got to talk with my professors one-on-one in the classroom.”

Rochefort also worked in the Sports Information Department broadcasting all the varsity sporting events at Georgia College. His duties are similar to his role today.

“I appreciate Al Weston and Scott McCloud from GCSU’s Sports Information Department,” he said. “If it wasn’t for working with

them, I probably wouldn't be in the career I'm in now.”

“

When I first started doing this, I didn't realize how many people and much prep went into putting on a show. After a Braves game, sometimes my friends come into the press box. I'll show them what each person does. They say, 'Wow. I can't believe how much effort you put into this.'

- Andrew Rochefort

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Once a week for four years, Rochefort and his roommate hosted a sports talk radio show on WGUR 95.3 FM, the university's student radio station.

“It was fun to have a platform to talk about sports and work these sporting events,” he said.

Regarding his education, Rochefort especially liked Dr. Christina Smith, associate professor of mass communication. She taught a challenging class and had high expectations.

“Ultimately, her class was super rewarding, because she pushed me to produce my best writing,” he said. “I also discovered how enjoyable writing can be when you're passionate about the topic. It's just like being passionate about your job.”

Georgia College provided him with the necessary skills to learn how to work well under pressure.

“When I first started doing this, I didn't realize how many people and much prep went into putting on a show,” Rochefort said. “After a Braves game, sometimes my friends come into the press box. I'll show them what each person does. They say, 'Wow. I can't believe how much effort you put into this.'”

At just 26 years of age, Rochefort is grateful for this experience.

“Every day, I look forward to going to work for a game or event, because I know that a lot of people who are my age don't know what they want to do with their career,” he said. “Being in a job that I truly love is inspiring to me.”

GEORGIA TREND



Three GCSU alumni named to Georgia Trend Magazine's 2024 '40 Under 40'

[Alumni](#) : Tuesday November 19, 2024

By: Margaret Schell

Georgia College & State University congratulates Adam Hammond ('08), Michele Howard ('09), and Dr. Joy King ('09, '15, '17), for earning a spot in [Georgia Trend Magazine's 2024 '40 Under 40'](#).

The three Georgia College alumni were recognized in the magazine's September issue for their achievements and service to others in their workplace and community.

Hammond's extensive experience working in television broadcasting extends to large markets like Denver, Memphis and Nashville.



Adam Hammond

He's the executive director of the Georgia 4-H Foundation, which raises millions of dollars to support 4-H programs for over 173,000 of the state's members. Hammond also mentors fifth through 12th grade 4-H'ers.

His background as a [political science major](#) and mass communication minor cultivated a lasting impact that continues to benefit his personal and professional life.

"Through the liberal arts approach, Georgia College instilled well-rounded educational opportunities that prepared me to be a critical thinker and lifelong learner," Hammond said. "I'm grateful to the university for lifelong friendships and connections that continue to enrich my journey daily."

Howard is vice president of Programs and Leadership Development for the Cobb County Chamber of Commerce. She leads a team of event planners and a few hundred volunteers, creating over 300 events and programs a year.

"My time at Georgia College, as a [history major](#), gave me a well-rounded education and fueled my passion for learning, leadership and community impact," she said. "As an events and leadership development professional, I apply the



critical thinking, communication and problem-solving skills I gained at GCSU every day.”

Howard is a member of the Leadership Cobb Alumni Association and serves as the 2024 Arts Evening co-chair. She’s a board member of the Marietta Arts Council and Earl and Rachel Smith Strand Theatre. She served as the 2023 board chair of LiveSafe Resources, a shelter for domestic abuse victims.



Michele Howard

“Nearly 20 years later, some of my closest friends and business partners are those who I met in college,” she said. “Once a Bobcat always a Bobcat!”

Georgia College also played a pivotal role in shaping King’s career and leadership journey.



Dr. Joy King

She has a [Bachelor of Science in Nursing](#), [Master of Science in Family Practice Nursing](#) and [Doctor of Nursing Practice](#) from Georgia College. She’s pursuing a Ph.D. in nursing and holds a Master of Business Administration in Health Care Administration.

King received support and guidance from nursing faculty members Drs. Judith Malachowski and Carol Sapp. They inspired King to become involved with the Georgia Nurses Association, where she now serves as president-elect, advocating for policies that support nurses and communities, especially in rural areas.

“Through my professors’ mentorship, I developed a passion for advocacy and improving healthcare for all Georgians,” King said. “The rigorous education and emphasis on community engagement

provided me with the skills and confidence needed to lead and make a meaningful impact in the healthcare sector.”

King’s a nurse practitioner and teaches healthcare finance and economics for the DNP program at Georgia College.

“

Once a Bobcat, always a Bobcat!

- Michele Howard

”

“This course allows me to share practical financial strategies with future nurse leaders,” King said, “helping them understand the economic landscape of healthcare and to prepare them for leadership roles in their organizations.”

“Teaching is incredibly rewarding because it lets me give back to a profession that’s given so much to me,” she said. “I hope to be a helpful resource and role model for my students, just as my Georgia College professors have been for me. I deeply admire them, and they continue to inspire me to grow and make a difference in healthcare.”

News Stories Posted Friday November 22, 2024



CURE: Four alumnae work together to take on childhood cancer

[Alumni](#) : Friday November 22, 2024

by Kristen Simpson

Diva Morgan Hicks ('06), Mandy Fingerhut ('07), Meredith Colbert Bach ('07) and Jennifer Gilliam ('12) have more in common than an alma mater.

Each one of them shares a dedication to volunteerism, passion for purpose and, despite their varied backgrounds, an employer.

All four have roles within CURE Childhood Cancer, a nonprofit based in Atlanta that funds targeted research while supporting patients and addressing the most critical needs of their families.



With Hicks, Fingerhut serves as senior development director, Bach as a CURE board member and strategic value partner, and Gilliam as an operations and database manager.

“You can’t help but fall in love with this organization,” Gilliam said. “It really restores your faith in humanity.”

The passion they share is personal for Hicks, whose older sister was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia at 12 years old. Now healthy and in remission, her sister and their family were early beneficiaries of CURE’s support services.

“We’re just super fortunate, but not everybody’s story is like mine,” Hicks said. “So, for me to create beautiful ways to tell the stories of these children and their families so that someone is motivated to get involved is a huge responsibility and honor.”

“Making sure those children, those stories, are not forgotten – that they are kept – is what motivates me,” she said.

Hoping to help fund the cure for childhood cancers within their lifetimes, the four alumni worked together, not knowing they shared Bobcat status.

“Even if our time didn’t cross over at Georgia College, the people did – these impactful teachers, mentors and leaders that the school had,” Hicks said.



Meredith Colbert Bach, left, and her husband Alex at the 2022 Believe Ball. (Photo courtesy of CURE.)



Hicks and Gilliam bonded over a shared love of Kendall Stiles, longtime supporter of student volunteerism



From left: Mandy Flingerhut, Jennifer Gilliam and Diva Hicks at a fundraising event. (Photo courtesy of CURE.)

and founder of the GIVE Center in 1997. In 2022, her contribution to the university was honored with the Giving Tree Award and a tree planted in her name.

“Kendall is really important to me, but it’s

not just me who had that feeling,” Hicks said. “These leaders saw in us something special, or something we loved, and helped nurture it and guide us.”

Slowly, the tapestry of their college experiences became unwoven, and the four bonded over shared experiences with community-based service learning, inspiring faculty and their favorite places to eat in downtown Milledgeville.

“

When I left Georgia College, I knew I was going to work in some helping capacity, and I think my professors did a great job of stewarding me to find that path.

- Jennifer Gilliam

”

“Every professor was so good about encouraging you to find what sets your soul on fire and using your skills to find where you should end up,” Gilliam said. “When I left Georgia College, I knew I was going to work in some helping capacity, and I think my professors did a great job of stewarding me to find that path.”

“Here I am, happy as can be,” she said.

The mentor Gilliam speaks of is Dr. Tsu-Ming Chiang, professor of

psychology and a faculty member at Georgia College for the past 33 years.

“Georgia College, by virtue of the type of institution it is, with an emphasis on the liberal arts – being open-minded to different views of what education can look like – instills values in its students that I feel we are a reflection of,” Hicks said.

“

The volunteer work we did was driven by the university, because they were encouraging that civic participation,” she said. “It’s not something that stopped after a couple years of being a graduate. I still have them as a resource.

- Diva Hicks

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News Stories Posted Tuesday November 26, 2024



GCSU provides for nearly one in four students experiencing food insecurity

[Student Health and Wellbeing, Office of](#) : Tuesday November 26, 2024

by Cindy O'Donnell

It's the time of year for cheer and plenty. But for some, it can be a time of bare shelves and empty plates. College students are not immune to experiencing food insecurity.

According to the Healthy Minds survey conducted last spring, 22% of Georgia College & State University students experienced some

degree of food insecurity in the past 12 months, said Amy Whatley, director of [Student Care and Outreach](#). That's reflective of the national average reported in a [2024 study](#) by the U.S. Government Accountability Office that found 23% of college students nationwide — an estimated 3.8 million — have food insecurities. More than half skipped meals because they couldn't afford meal cards or groceries.

Hunger — and not knowing where the next meal is coming from — can affect student concentration, class performance and grades.

“From a health and wellness standpoint, we want to see them succeed academically,” Whatley said, “But all these other dimensions of wellness have to be met to achieve that level of success.”

Last fall, Whatley took over operation of [Campus Corner](#), a small room in the basement of the Student Activities Center where students can drop in and take food and hygiene items they need. Free. No questions asked.

Campus Corner food pantry is part of Georgia College's [Quality Enhancement Plan](#), a five-year strategy to improve student health and wellbeing. Campus Corner is especially vital with rising food prices and cost of living.

Whatley and her graduate assistant Alana Kelly ('23) of Savannah, Georgia, attended the inaugural [Georgia Campus Food and Nutrition Security Summit](#) at Georgia State University in October. There, they learned colleagues



The shelves of Campus Corner are stocked with nonperishable, easy-to-prepare foods. (Photo by Anna Gay Leavitt.)

and universities statewide are seeing more students use food pantries.

Some students pay their own way in college, independent of parents, Whatley said. Others rely heavily on friends, moving couch-to-couch.

These uncertainties can be particularly hard during the holidays. That's why this year Whatley and Kelly are making meal bags for disadvantaged students who remain on campus during Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year.

“

Maybe by giving a little bit of food, we can alleviate some of that and bring a smile to their faces. Show them someone cares.

- Amy Whatley

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“For a lot of people, Thanksgiving can be very sad,” Whatley said. “Not everybody is fortunate to have a good family dynamic or somewhere to go. Maybe by giving a little bit of food, we can alleviate some of that and bring a smile to their faces. Show them someone cares.”

About three students a day access Campus Corner.

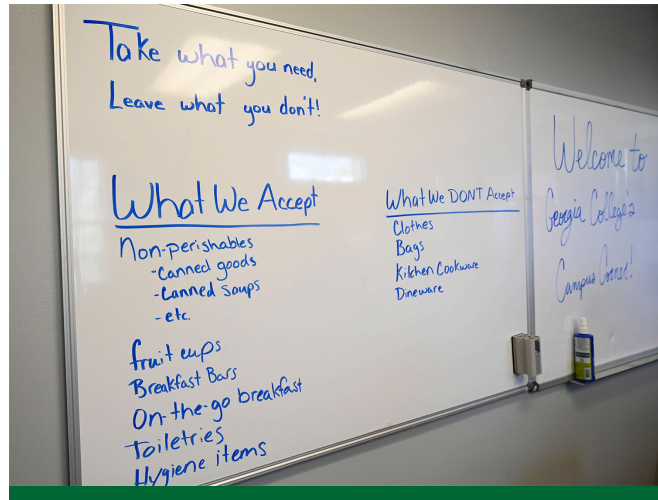
A few regulars come in, but Kelly sees different faces each week. The English literature graduate restocks shelves, checks expiration dates and refers students to other helpful services, like Financial Aid.

“I've always been interested in community service and helping

those around me,” Kelly said. “It’s something I’m passionate about, and I’ve definitely grown to love doing what I do even more.”

“Food insecurities in college are common,” she added. “It’s not a weird, obscure thing to be ashamed of.”

At Campus Corner, students find individually wrapped and easy-to-prepare foods like soup, crackers, nuts, granola bars, instant oatmeal, noodles, canned vegetables, fruit cups, popcorn, bottled water, juice and more. Non-food items are available too, like shampoo, shaving kits, first aid, toothbrushes and toothpaste, menstrual care products and deodorant.



Campus Corner accepts donations of nonperishable foods and basic personal hygiene items, but does not accept donations of clothing. (Photo by Anna Gay Leavitt.)

In the future, Whatley would also like to partner with local grocers and hold fresh-produce giveaways.

The pantry is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, accessible through a side door at the Student Activities Center.

Campus Corner runs on donations. To contribute, contact the Office of Student Care and Outreach or drop food and hygiene products off at the center’s donation box.

People can also select items off an [Amazon Wishlist](#), delivered to the [Office of Student Health and Wellbeing](#).

“It's rewarding to know we're helping students in need,” Whatley said. “It's important to support our students who are in the greatest need at Thanksgiving and throughout the year.”

“

Food insecurities in college are common. It's not a weird, obscure thing to be ashamed of.

- Alana Kelly

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News Stories Posted Saturday November 30, 2024



Creator of beloved alma mater melody emphasizes the Power of Music

[Music, Department of](#) : Saturday November 30, 2024

by Margaret Schell

Georgia College & State University had a few alma maters over the years; however, Ruth Sandiford Garrard ('65) brought the most recent one to life with music.

The university's alma mater's lyrics were written by Margaret Meaders ('26). Music was added later, thanks to a class

assignment for composing alma mater music. Garrard was in that class. She took up the challenge, hoping to provide many generations with a song they could cherish for years to come.

In 1965, Garrard turned in her assignment. It became the music for [Georgia College's alma mater](#), still used today. She received an A.

“When I graded assignments, it was obvious that Ruth’s was the best,” Lucy Underwood, the late professor emerita of [music education](#) said in a Georgia College video. “When you write an alma mater, it should be straight forward and easy to sing. If you want people to participate, you need to give them something they can handle.”

It’s the only music Garrard ever wrote, but she loved the [music department](#) and all its professors, especially Underwood.

“

I came up with a melody first. Then, I created not just one harmony, but four. I wrote it in the style of a hymn.

- Ruth Sandiford Garrard

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“I worked hard on the accompaniment to the alma mater to show her I could do it,” said Garrard, who majored in music education with a double emphasis in piano and voice. “Writing this music was more from the influence of Lucy Underwood than what I learned in piano.”

Creating the music to the alma mater with piano took Garrard a few days to pin down the winning harmony.

“I came up with a melody first,” she said. “Then, I created not just one harmony, but four. I wrote it in the style of a hymn.”

Georgia College reintroduced the alma mater at the beginning of the school year in 2014. Garrard and her husband, Lamar, attended the ceremony. Dr. Wendy Mullen sang the Alma Mater and was accompanied by a violinist and pianist.

After she graduated, Garrard taught music to students in grades one through seven in DeKalb County. Then, she taught fifth- through seventh-grade math at John S. Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School in Augusta, Georgia from 1986 until 2003. She also accompanied the music theater class at DFA. Garrard played piano and did children's music at her church. Now, she fills in as a church pianist and teaches piano.

"Music enhances the learning experience," Garrard said. "I've always thought it was important. The 'Mozart effect' theorizes the more you play classical music for young children, the more their learning increases."

"Although students may not remember certain things, they'll remember words to songs," she said. "Adding music is a better way to learn. The main things I remember are sung."

Garrard also sang in the a cappella choir during her four years in college and traveled with them during spring break. She attended choir reunions until Dr. Max Noah's passing.



President Cathy Cox presented Garrard with special framed copy of the alma mater in 2024. (Photo by Anna Gay Leavitt.)

“They were always good reunions,” she said. “The beautiful thing about Georgia College was that these alumni were from all over the place. It was good to see that. I loved that opportunity. We still made a beautiful sound after all those years.”

Music has always been important to Garrard. She wishes for it to have the same effect on the Georgia College community as it has had on her.

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“I want the words to their alma mater to be in their memory. I hope this song’s great words will remind them of their time in college and help them connect with others from Georgia College.”

- Ruth Sandiford Garrard

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