

News Stories Posted Wednesday January 1, 2025



Georgia Trend Names GCSU President to List of 'Notable Georgians'

[President, Office of the](#) : Wednesday January 1, 2025

By Amanda Respass

Georgia College & State University President Cathy Cox has been named to Georgia Trend's 2025 list of 'Notable Georgians.' President Cox and other influential people from across the state will be recognized in the January 2025 edition of Georgia Trend magazine.

“This recognition from Georgia Trend is a direct reflection of the incredible work ethic, vision and passion I’m surrounded by every day here at Georgia College & State University,” Cox said. “I am inspired by the thoughtful and driven students here at Georgia College – and excited to know that they will drive the changes that make our state and nation better in the future.”



Georgia College President Cathy Cox can routinely be found around campus, snapping selfies and posing for pictures with students. (Photo: Anna Leavitt)

Previously, Cox was named to Georgia Trend’s 2024 list of [‘Notable Georgians’](#), the publication’s [‘Georgia 500’](#) list in 2023 and nine times to its “100 Most Influential Georgians” list.

To be included as a “Notable Georgian,” individuals had to have “made a significant impact in the Peach State over the years,” according to Georgia Trend’s website. The magazine’s list of influential Georgians includes doctors, CEOs, educators, politicians, and heads of nonprofits and economic development organizations “from virtually every area of the state.”

“

I am inspired by the thoughtful and driven students here at Georgia College – and excited to know that they will drive the changes that make our state and nation better in the future.

- Georgia College President Cathy Cox

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Cox became the 12th president of Georgia College Oct. 1, 2021. Prior to stepping into that role, she served as dean of the Mercer University School of Law from 2017 to 2021, in addition to serving as president of Young Harris College for a decade prior. A native of Bainbridge, Georgia, Cox served as a state legislator and two terms as Secretary of State, the first woman in Georgia elected to the Constitutional office. Her distinguished career in law, education, politics and journalism embodies what it means to have a liberal arts background, which is at the heart of [GCSU's mission](#).

Cox has served on a number of civic, philanthropic and business organizations and boards, and is a prolific thought leader, delivering scores of keynote speeches, presentations and media interviews on a wide range of topics spanning her expertise in higher education, law, politics and election law. She is married to attorney Mark Dehler.

News Stories Posted Friday January 3, 2025



Repetition - not resolutions - the key to growth in 2025, says former Olympic coach

[Health & Human Performance, School of](#) : Friday January 3, 2025

By Kristen Simpson

Dr. Mike Martino believes in hard work.

From swimming competitively at a national level, to coaching Olympians, to creating a high-performance training model for NASCAR pit crews, he has seen the power of focused dedication pay off in a variety of arenas. Reflecting on his career, the professor of [Exercise Science](#) at Georgia College & State University outlined a set of rules that he recommends to anyone seeking to

grow, improve or achieve more in 2025.

“Because I was an athlete, I know the competitiveness, the dedication and discipline that it takes to be world-class,” Martino said. “That drive, the internal motivation and intrinsic drive to be the best that you possibly can be — I’ve just transferred that over to my teaching.”

According to the Pew Research Center, 49% of people aged 18-29 made at least one resolution in 2024. Out of everyone with a resolution, 79% said their resolution concerned their health.

Resolutions are a good start, Martino said, but only dedication will yield results. He offered three key steps in building better habits in the new year.

Make a plan

“You have to adhere to a program,” he said. “The key is selecting what you’re going to do to help you stay compliant.”



Mike Martino was named the Educator of the Year in 2012 by the National Strength and Conditioning Association. (Photo by Kristen Simpson.)

Track your progress

“Start easy and then progress,” he said. “That will motivate you and improve your wellbeing.”

Martino emphasized that physical gains have holistic impacts, as well. Stronger body, sharper mind.

Know your ‘why’

“Everything you do affects who you are,” Martino said. The key to

improvement, he added, is introspection.

“I encourage my students to understand why they do what they do down to the cellular level, read the research, apply it and then put it into practice,” he said. “Always self-reflect and look to see if there’s something you could have done better, then make changes, see if it improves, and then add that to your experiential professional toolbox.”

“That goes for everything in life,” Martino added. “Do it, then reflect and go back — that’s how we evolve.”

Lessons to live by

Martino learned these lessons from his own mentor, Dr. Tony Caterisano, a professor of health sciences at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, where Martino attended college on a swimming scholarship.

“His class was the beginning of my exposure to exercise science,” Martino said. “He played a critical role in my success, and I stay in touch with him to this day. He’s in his 70s, but he still teaches, lifts and competes — that has always served as motivation to me.”

“My mentors put forth effort and invested time in me,” he continued. “Now I feel it’s the right thing for me to do to pay it forward and give back to our students.”

He accomplishes that by focusing on experiential learning with his students at Georgia College, which he has called home for the past 27 years. But he’s not only a teacher.

“

My mentors put forth effort and invested time in me. Now I feel it’s the right thing for me to do to pay it forward and give back to our students.

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Between classes, Martino has also opened health clubs, practiced mixed martial arts and started the Bobcat Sports Performance program. And in addition to helping students through their practicums and internships, he often works with them at the [Wellness and Recreation Center](#), where he demonstrates resistance training and conditioning techniques.

“It’s not uncommon for students to come in my office, and we just talk about their life. We talk about where they want to go and their career path,” Martino said. “I try to share whatever I can with them, from my experience, to guide them.”

And he doesn’t plan on stopping any time soon.

“I’ll keep going until the day I come in and realize I can’t give anything back to the students,” he said.

Cover Image: Georgia College professor Mike Martino has lent expertise on competition and personal growth to Olympic athletes, students and NASCAR pit crews, among others.

News Stories Posted Wednesday January 8, 2025



Fossils, Fieldwork and Fascination: Two decades in the making

[Biology & Environmental Sciences, Department of](#) : Wednesday
January 8, 2025

By: Cindy O'Donnell

It's been there 20 years — off the beaten path, away from the spotlight, in the basement of Herty Hall. It's not celebrated or revered as much as it should be, except by those privileged to walk through its doors.

Yet, it's one of Georgia College & State University's biggest

outreaches to the public.

The [William P. Wall Museum of Natural History](#) has given free tours to more than 96,000 visitors since opening in November of 2004. This includes more than 37,000 visits by public school children and nearly 26,600 by GCSU faculty and students.

More than 33,000 local and statewide residents also dropped by.

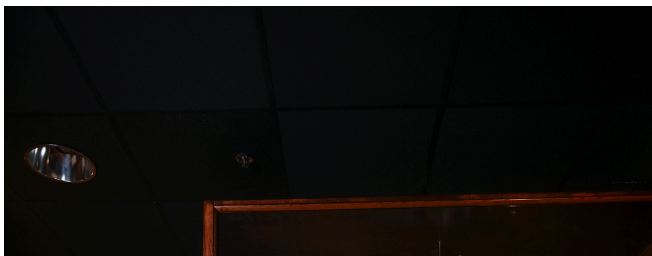
“That’s a lot of impact for such a small space,” said Ashley Quinn, collections manager of the museum. “We’ve come a long way from a room with tables showing specimens to school children to something that’s permanent, impactful and tells an important, educational story.”

One of few paleontological exhibits in the state, the gallery is the only university museum of its kind in Middle Georgia. It also contains one of the largest assortments of fossils in the Southeast, covering the last 500 million years.

Between exhibits and storage areas — the university has a collection of more than 40,600 specimens. Unlike larger museums, which display mostly copies or replicas, up to 90% of Georgia College’s bones and fossils are real.

More than 160 Georgia College students have used museum collections for undergraduate and graduate research over the years. Some helped dig up specimens. Others studied new angles on fossils. About 200 students have published research papers.

“Our collection puts us on the map nationally and on the world stage,” Quinn said. “This huge collection is right here in Middle



Georgia, kind of in the middle of nowhere in some people’s minds, but impressive to global researchers.”



Collections Manager Ashley Quinn.
(Photo by Anna Gay Leavitt.)

Quinn got a recent phone call from scientists in India, who wanted to use pictures from the university's collection of 36-million-year-old sea snake fossils from the Eocene period. Marine fossils included whale teeth and spines of sea snakes dug from kaolin mines in Wilkinson County when Dr. Dennis Parmley taught here in the late 1980s to 2018.

Other scientists and Georgia Bureau of

Investigation officials often call for assistance identifying bones and fossils. Museum staff and faculty also work with the National Park System.

"Yet, it's still a surprise to most people this museum is here. People seem to accidentally find us," Quinn said. "These collections are very important, because they record the entire timeline of evolutionary life on Earth from invertebrates found in the sea at the beginning of life 500 million years ago to fossils of fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals."

"Nowhere else can you go to see history and specimens like this in Middle Georgia," she said.

Quinn is a bit of a hidden gem too.

It's not an exaggeration to say she came to Georgia College and never left.

From Putnam County, Quinn started as an undergraduate, getting her [Bachelor of Science in biology](#) in 2000. She stayed on to organize the university's fossil collection and got her masters in

2005.

In 2018, Quinn founded the Paleontology Association of Georgia. Archeologist and historian Stephen Hammock asked her to be president of the Ocmulgee Archaeological Society in 2020. This led to an invitation to join and chair Fort Hawkins Foundation, Inc. in Macon.

“This is one of the most dynamic ladies I know,” Hammock said.

Quinn studied with the museum’s visionary and founder Dr. William Wall, who retired in 2012. She was there as Wall accumulated the university’s first collections in rhinoceros fossils. She was there when the first tabletop, interactive lessons on fossils were given to school children.

At the museum since its opening, Quinn helped develop exhibits and grow public outreach programs, which now include online educational resources for K-12 teachers and a page Just for Kids.

“Ever since then,” she said, “we’ve been adding to the collection, whether it's invertebrate and vertebrate paleontology, mammalogy, herpetology, ichthyology or ornithology. We have a growing entomology collection and herbarium now too.”

Joining Quinn in the operation of GCSU’s Museum of Natural History are [Dr. Bruce Snyder](#), ecologist and associate professor of biology and environmental sciences; fossil preparatory technician Heidi Mead,

BY THE NUMBERS

Throughout 20 years, the Natural History Museum has seen or received:

- **96,000 Total Visitors**
- **6,500 Visits a Year**
- **Over 40,600 Specimens in Collection**
- **Features a collection of bones and fossils from 500 million**

'95; and museum interpreter Rick Joslyn.

**years—90% of
which are real**

As faculty coordinator, Snyder guides efforts and plans for the museum's future. Mead prepares fossils, stabilizing them with consolidating agents, plaster or storage jackets for display. Joslyn works directly with school children on field trips, giving age-appropriate information about exhibits.

Dr. Melanie DeVore, professor of biology and GCSU's paleobotanist, has seen the museum grow since it opened. She's watched faculty expand their collections through research, most recently including [Dr. Dominic DeSantis' snake specialty](#) and [Dr. Kristine White's work on marine amphipods and crustaceans](#).

"Paleontology is an important portal for enabling students to see the importance of science," DeVore said. "Displaying faculty research at GCSU permits us to show how science is done, and how all the sciences are tied together."

To that end, Quinn has provided content and programming for school-aged children, potentially building young paleontologists.

"Ashley Quinn is the essential ingredient that makes all of this work," DeVore said.

It's Quinn's job to organize the museum collection and catalogue specimens into a digital database. She also makes sure faculty, students, staff and the public have ready access to fossils and information.

In addition to 40,600 catalogued specimens, much more is backlogged, waiting to be processed. Only a small fraction is displayed in the museum.

It's a matter of personnel, time and space.

In previous years, 5,000 specimens were stored in a professor's office upstairs. Today's overflow is kept in a large collection room with moving aisles of shelves. Fossils are found in the biology department prep lab, comparative anatomy lab and herbarium. More is at the Lake Laurel bio-station.

About 100 large buckets of dirt-encrusted materials wait for processing, Mead estimates. The work requires meticulous "micro sifting" to find tiny bone fragments and larger relics that need stabilization.

Students often drop by the lab to observe or acquire preservation skills.

"It's crazy. You can't describe it. It's euphoric," Mead said, "and it doesn't matter if you find something big or a little rabbit skull. It's just as exciting. Knowing you're the first human to see this fossil from a creature that lived millions of years ago is just great."

All this stuff — invertebrate and vertebrate fossils, rhino bones from South Dakota, mammals from

Australia and Africa, bird skulls and skins from South America — comes from faculty and student research.

The collection began 43 years ago, when Wall first took students to the barren Badlands of South Dakota. Heidi went with him as a student in 1994 and Quinn in 2006, when summer trips also

**COOL
TREASURES
INCLUDE:**



The skull of a six-foot, flightless "terror bird" (*Titanis walleri*) that lived 3 million years ago

A gaping jaw loaded with authentic teeth of a "megalodon shark" that died out more than 2 million years ago and was three times larger than today's Great White shark

Skulls and horns of a furry, odd-toed prehistoric rhinoceros (*Titanotheres*) that date back 50 million years ago in the Eocene Age and, of course, the crowd-pleasing favorite—**a realistic replica of a massive T-Rex dinosaur head** jutting from a ferned area of the museum with an almost-crooked smile of gigantic but disarmingly friendly teeth.

Various treasures in the Natural History Museum such as a flightless "terror bird,

included stops in Idaho, Utah and Wyoming. They'd bring back "truckloads of specimens," Mead said.

Over the years, other professors added their collections. Ornithologist Dr. Robert Chandler worked at Georgia College in the mid 1990s to 2016. He took students to the Santa Fe River in Ginnie Springs, Florida, scuba diving for remains of the terror bird *Titanis walleri*.

For 20 years, paleomammalogist and biology professor Al Mead has taken students to the swampy forests of Brunswick, Georgia, to excavate 60,000-year-old bison and mammoth bones. The ongoing project now includes scientists from other universities.

Their personalized attention leaves an impression. Like the two brothers who [found the bison bone](#), some youngsters visit the museum, then choose Georgia College for their undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Quinn would like to bottle this enthusiasm. She wants visitors to "remain excited."

"I try to be personable to reach people and tear down the wall of separation between the public and science, especially for kids," she said. "When they come to museums or see paleontology on TV, I want them to know this could be a dream of theirs."

The molding of future scientists is also what keeps Snyder involved with the museum.

“

We want this to be a place where communities come together and share ownership. We'd like the museum to be a place people in Baldwin County and Middle Georgia want to take

care of and be proud of, a place they can treasure.

- Ashley Quinn, Collections Manager

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“There's the collections-based work happening behind-the-scenes,” he said. “But then, all these exhibits and the thousands of students we bring through here are helping to get this information out to the public, encouraging the next generation of researchers.”

In addition to hosting visitors, Quinn also does public outreach in classrooms and libraries around the state. Recently, she showed fossils to residents in Macon County.

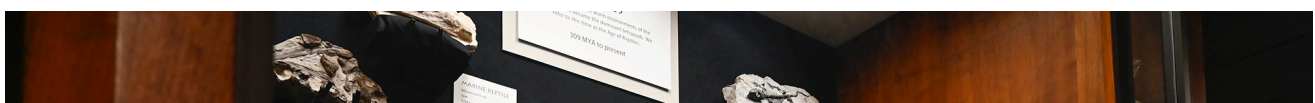
Faculty bring their biology, environmental science, mammalogy, anatomy, history and museum studies classes. English students are assigned writing tasks there. Art classes use specimens for drawing. Students even stopped by once for a class on interpretative dance.

From 5,000 specimens and a few public visitors to more than 40,600 specimens and 6,500 visitors a year — Georgia College's Museum of Natural History has made significant strides.

“Seeing the museum grow and become popular is exciting,” Quinn said. “We have a much broader reach and impact than one would think.”

“We want this to be a place where communities come together and share ownership,” she said. “We'd like the museum to be a place people in Baldwin County and Middle Georgia want to take care of and be proud of, a place they can treasure.”

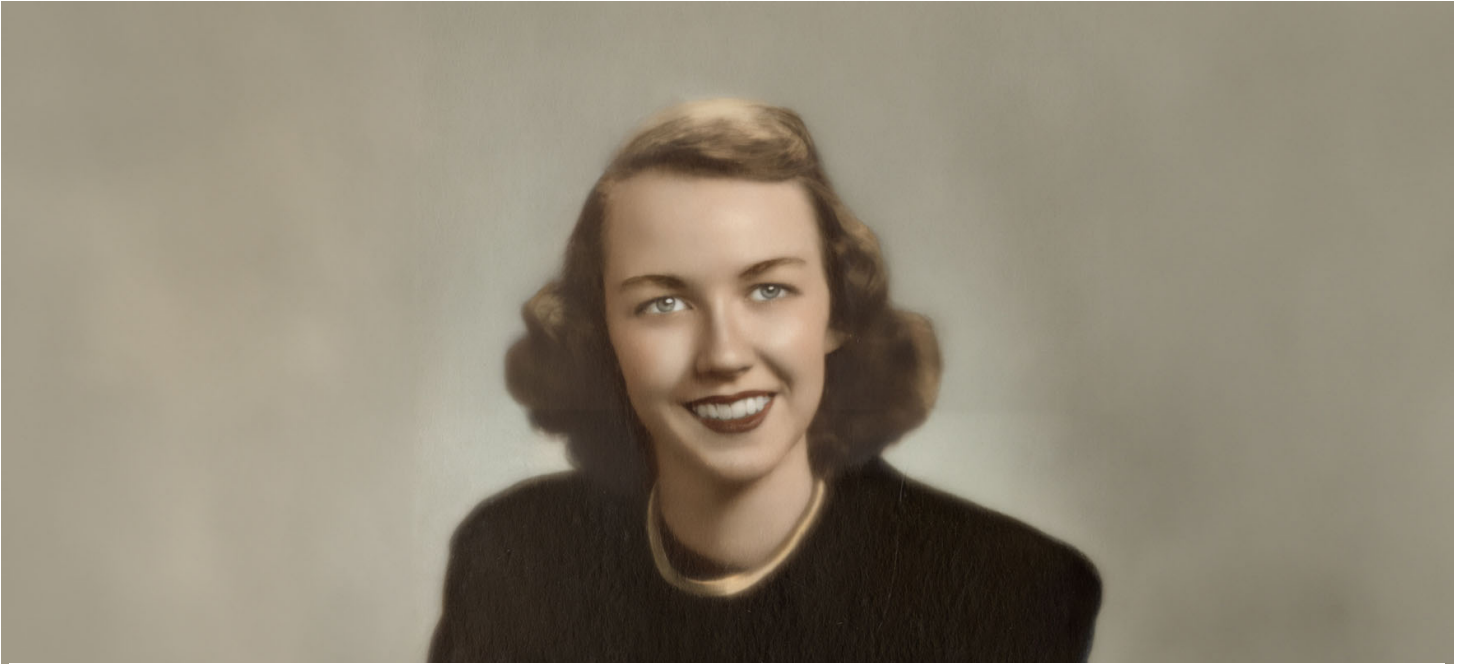
For those [planning to visit](#), hours at GCSU's Museum of Natural History are Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or by appointment for groups.





A fossil display at the Natural History Museum at Georgia College

News Stories Posted Thursday January 9, 2025

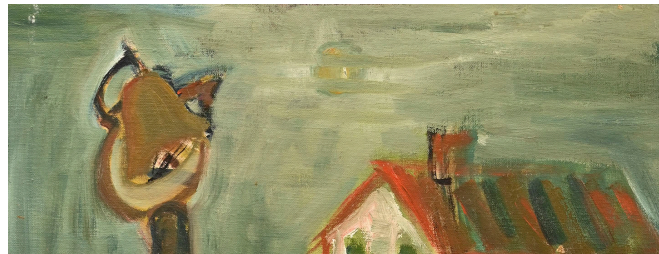


Newly Discovered Art by Flannery O'Connor to be Unveiled at Georgia College

[University Communications](#) : Thursday January 9, 2025

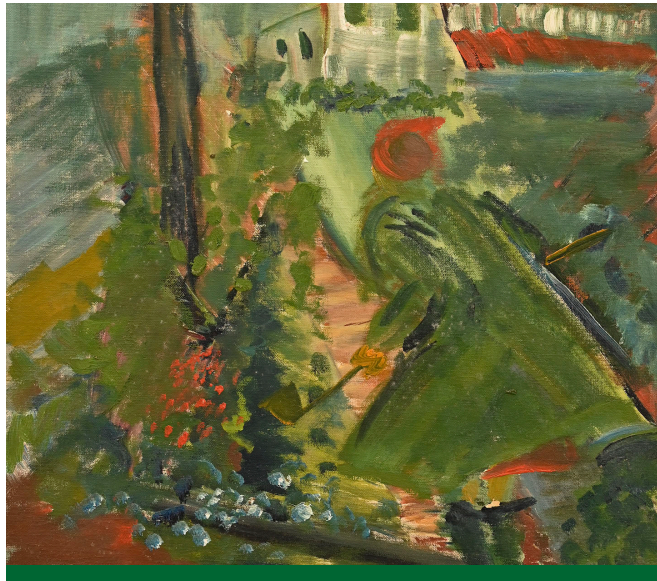
By Amanda Respass

One of the great American writers, Flannery O'Connor is a world-renowned icon of southern gothic fiction — but she was also a visual



artist, and a newly discovered collection of her work will soon be unveiled to the world.

Totaling 70 pieces — from oil paintings and a self-portrait, to wood-burned illustrations and linoleum-block prints — the collection will be revealed this March at O'Connor's alma mater of Georgia College & State University (GCSU), in Milledgeville, Georgia, where she lived most of her life and completed her greatest works.



A painting by Flannery O'Connor depicting the family home at Andalusia Farm with her mother, Regina Cline O'Connor, in the foreground next to the dinner bell (Photo by Anna Gay Leavitt.)

“Scholars continue to study Flannery, to research her, and to use her as a model in creative writing programs,” said Dr. Katie Simon, interim executive director of GCSU’s [The Flannery O'Connor Institute for the Humanities](#) and an associate professor of [English](#). “She’s taught as an example of literature — but scholars are starting to look at her as a visual artist, as well. These paintings reveal that she never stopped creating visual art until her death.”

O'Connor's first notable visual works were original cartoons she created as an undergraduate student at GCSU (then called [Georgia State College for Women](#)). These illustrations were published in the university's student newspaper and literary magazine. O'Connor earned her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology degree in 1945. Artwork created by O'Connor throughout her life will be debuted at an exhibit called “Flannery the Visual Artist,” which will anchor a months-long slate of events at GCSU, celebrating the centennial of O'Connor's birth on March 25, 1925.

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Scholars continue to study Flannery, research her, use her as a model in creative writing programs ... but scholars are starting to look at her as a visual artist, as well. These paintings reveal that she never stopped creating visual art until her death.

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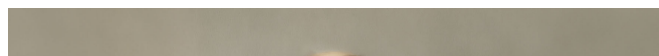
Stored for decades by family and close friends, this collection has never before been viewed in its entirety by the public. Several of the pieces were gifted to GCSU last month, by the Mary Flannery O'Connor Charitable Trust.

“Georgia College is the epicenter of Flannery O'Connor,” said GCSU President Cathy Cox. “From our stewardship of Flannery’s home at Andalusia, to our library’s special collection of her work, the university attracts O'Connor experts from around the world to explore her roots and cultural impact, and we’re excited to share these new dimensions of her artistic legacy with the world.”

The exhibit will open to the public at 9 a.m. Wednesday, March 26, in Georgia College & State University’s Magnolia Ballroom, and will run all day until a 4 p.m. presentation titled “O'Connor’s Other Art” by Dr. Robert Donahoo, professor of English at Sam Houston State University.

On March 27, the art that has been gifted to Georgia College will be relocated to O'Connor’s former home, Andalusia Farm — a designated National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior, which is owned/operated by GCSU — where it will be paired with additional personal items and artifacts in an exhibit called “Hidden Treasures.” That exhibit will run through the summer.

FLANNERY AND
GEORGIA



Flannery O'Connor is synonymous with Milledgeville and the South, and for good reason.



Mary Flannery O'Connor, circa 1947
(Image courtesy of the Flannery O'Connor archives of Georgia College Special Collections.)

After growing up in Milledgeville, then earning her degree from Georgia College, she lived at [Andalusia Farm](#)

from 1951 until her death in 1964. During that time, she completed 32 short stories and two published novels. These stories often focused on the southern region of the United States and its complicated history.

"If you're in Georgia, you might celebrate Flannery as a really famous local writer; however, her reach goes way beyond the state, and way beyond the South," Simon said of GCSU's most famous alumna.

O'Connor's literature has remained in print continuously since her death. Her anthologized works, "The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor," won the National Book Award in 1972. She is even attracting a new generation of fans through Maya Hawke's portrayal in the Ethan Hawke-directed biopic "Wildcat," released last summer.

"We believe this art can be best understood and appreciated in relation to the place where it was created, Milledgeville," said Dr. Farrell O'Gorman, co-trustee of the O'Connor Charitable Trust, as

well as chair of the English Department at Belmont Abbey College.

"We greatly value GCSU's clear commitment to preserving O'Connor's legacy and to sharing her work with visitors from across the country and around the world."

O'Connor also often explored her Roman Catholic faith in her

writing, as well as themes of morality and ethics in the post-Civil War world.

“Flannery's struggle was, ‘I want to be a good creative writer, and I want to be a good Catholic. And is that possible?’ For Flannery O’Connor, it was,” said Dr. Bruce Gentry, Flannery O’Connor Institute fellow and professor emeritus of the [GCSU English Department](#). “There are plenty of writers who are seriously religious, and they can be good writers, too, but it’s not a path that is easy to follow. Flannery is unique.”

FLANNERY AT 100

Georgia College & State University will celebrate O'Connor throughout March, in a slate of events that explore her literary work, visual art and influences in modern pop culture — even in music.

“Flannery is taught as an example of craft to writers, but more recently, we're seeing how she has been a model of craft to musicians and songwriters, too,” Simon explained.

Author Irwin H. Streight’s 2024 book, “Flannery at the Grammys,” cites O’Connor’s influence on musicians including Lucinda Williams, Bruce Springsteen, PJ Harvey and Tom Waits, among many others.

In recognition of these impacts, Flannery at 100 will feature a [songwriters’ workshop](#) led by folk musician Sally Jaye. A concert at Andalusia Farm by Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter [Shawn Mullins](#), and a daylong music festival featuring Colin Cutler and Hot Pepper Jam are also on the schedule.

In addition to the music festival and the exhibits of O’Connor’s visual art, Flannery at 100 will feature a variety of presentations; a free screening of “Wildcat” with an introduction by the film’s producers, Mary Rogers and Joe Goodman; the inaugural Southern Gothic Lecture Series; and several book readings, hosted by the O’Connor Institute for the Humanities. There will also be free tours

of Andalusia all day Tuesday, March 25, and Saturday, March 29.

[See the full Flannery at 100 calendar of events online](#). Learn more about Flannery O'Connor and schedule a tour of her former home at Andalusia [online](#), or call 478-445-8722.

For more information about the "Flannery at 100" events and exhibits, contact Amanda Respass, GCSU director of public affairs, at amanda.respass@gcsu.edu or 478-445-7828.

"Any discipline can help your writing: logic, mathematics, theology, and of course and particularly drawing. Anything that helps you to see, anything that makes you look. The writer should never be ashamed of staring. There is nothing that doesn't require his attention."

— Flannery O'Connor, The Nature and Aim of Fiction

A graphic depicting a quote from Flannery O'Connor's essay

News Stories Posted Thursday January 16, 2025



GCSU awarded \$25,000 Georgia Power Rural Business Accelerator Grant

[Grants & Sponsored Projects, Office of](#) : Thursday January 16, 2025

by Kylie Rowe, University Communications Intern

Dr. Nicholas Creel,
associate professor of
Business Law and
director of the Center for
Innovation and
Entrepreneurship at



Georgia College & State University, along with Create Milledgeville, is using their newly awarded Rural Business Accelerator grant to host a 15-week intensive program for local businesses.

As a founding member of Create, Inc. in Milledgeville, Creel met a Georgia Power Economic Development employee who told him about the grant opportunity. After being awarded the grant,

Creel and his team at the [Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship](#) are in the process of determining which small business they are going to fund.



Dr. Nicholas Creel (photo by Anna Gay Leavitt)

“That's what this grant was geared to do, to create specifically what we call an accelerator program, where we take businesses that either haven't started yet, or that have started but want to experience rapid growth in a short amount of time,” Creel said.

The goal for this grant and Creel is to benefit Milledgeville by supporting local business and boosting the local economy. Creel has participated in multiple projects with Create Milledgeville and the Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship with this same goal in mind.

During summer 2024, he and [Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge](#) - associate professor of Physics, director of Vertically Integrated Projects Program and point of contact for NSF S-STEM and PRESS - taught a [class about solar panel installation](#). This class, through the Georgia College [Continuing Education and Professional Education](#), was made possible through a \$100,000 grant from The Partnership

for Inclusive Innovation. Participants of the class were certified by the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners.

“The NABCEP is the gold standard,” Creel said. “If you want to get a job putting together solar panel systems for a company, that is what they look for.”

This free certificate course was one of the four projects funded in 2024 by the Community Research Grant Program. It was a vital achievement in the objective to continue Milledgeville’s economic growth.

Creel, along with Create Milledgeville, also teaches local courses about social media marketing, accounting and other business techniques. With his extensive background in economics and entrepreneurial research, Creel estimated that Georgia College has the opportunity to increase the local economic output even more with this intentional promotion.

“We’re trying to get people to go out there and create their own jobs – create their own companies,” Creel said.

With the planned summer 2025 program, Creel and Create Milledgeville are looking to use this grant to the best of their ability and teach useful business skills courses to anyone who wants to participate.



Georgia College Alumnus named President of College of Coastal Georgia

[College of Arts & Sciences](#) : Thursday January 16, 2025

by Kylie Rowe, University Communications Intern

Dr. Johnny L. Evans, Jr. ('93) has been named as the new President of the College of Coastal Georgia after serving as interim President of CCG since June 2024. Evans earned his [Bachelor of Science in Chemistry](#) from Georgia College.

Evans [credits Georgia College with much of his academic success](#) and draws from his formative experiences at GCSU to foster student success in his academic career.

Dr. Ken McGill, professor of Chemistry and Physics, gave Evans the confidence to pursue academic success and Evans credits him with his achievements.

"Dr. McGill is one of the first people to tell me that I was smart enough to do this," said Evans.

Inspired by GCSU's dedication to providing transformative experiences, Evans spent his academic career striving to provide those experiences for other students. He encouraged students to use their skills to better their communities by using service learning in his classes.

In 2016 when Baton Rouge had a terrible flood, Evans brought students to the scene and helped people clean up their properties and recover from the damage the torrential rains had caused. He has actively participated in and led students in various natural disaster relief efforts and medical clinics around the world.

Evans now takes these experiences into his current position as President of the College of Coastal Georgia. He hopes to provide the same experiences for other students so that they can leave college pursuing a job that they love every day.

“

Georgia College taught me how to communicate, how to build relationships, and how to make people feel cared for. And that is something that I live out in my entire career.

- Dr. Johnny L. Evans, Jr.

”

Cover Image: Dr. Johnny Evans, photo courtesy of The College of Coastal Georgia

News Stories Posted Friday January 17, 2025



GCSU steering professional development with Leadership & Management Academy

[Leadership Programs](#) : Friday January 17, 2025

by Kristen Simpson

Continuing & Professional Education is offering management expertise through [Leadership and Management Essentials Certificate](#) at Georgia College & State University.

The certificate program takes local businesses,



school districts, healthcare organizations and municipalities through a four-day workshop where they're taught additional communication, budgeting and project management skills by leading faculty.



Dr. Harold Mock, center, teaching a leadership workshop (photo by Kristen Simpson)

"We developed the [Leadership & Management Academy](#) as a place where municipalities, school districts or businesses could advance their leadership skills, come to us and help their employees," said School of Continuing and Professional Studies Executive Director Angela Criscoe.

Each day of the workshop is a new course topic with a different instructor. Leadership essentials, business fundamentals, people management and team building are some of the topics they cover, and each subject could be taught from a pool of expert faculty.

- Dr. Harold Mock, director of Leadership Programs at Georgia College and assistant professor of history.
- Dr. Ward Risvold, assistant professor of business communications.
- Dr. Jennifer Graham, associate dean of students for Student Integrity and Success.
- Dr. Aric Wilhau, assistant professor of management.
- Dr. Liz Speelman, director of the Outdoor Center and senior lecturer of outdoor education.



"It's a joy to teach such a wonderful group of public servants through the Leadership & Management Academy," Mock said. "My hope for each of our students is that they leave our session empowered to provide the very best leadership on behalf



Program participant Laura Calfee (photo by Kristen Simpson)

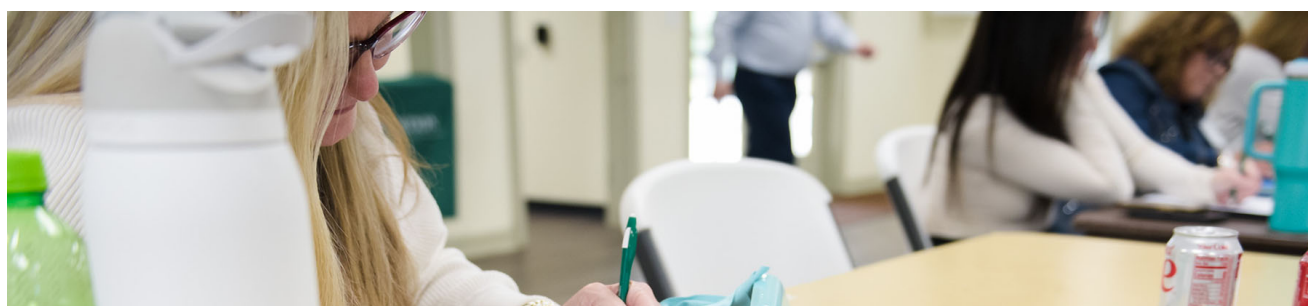
of their communities.”

The program debuted with a course for the city of Chamblee, Georgia. Since then, the program has served Forsyth, Georgia, and school districts, with an advanced certificate in development.

“It’s an intimate group, but it’s very interactive,” said Laura Calfee, capital projects financial manager for Forsyth on day one. “I’ve learned a lot already so far, and I appreciate the material that’s being covered.”

Course material was designed with collaboration in mind, so it can be customized to fit the needs of specific industries or niche businesses. To do so, interested parties should contact Director of Continuing & Professional Education, Angie Woodham, at angie.woodham@gcsu.edu or 478-445-5278.

“Programs like the LMA help enhance employee engagement, satisfaction and preparedness for higher-level roles, reducing turnover and building leadership capacity,” Woodham said. “We are proud to bring the LMA to Georgia, as it fosters lifelong learning and professional growth through impactful, real-world applications.”





LMA workshop participants complete hands-on activities and case studies, guided by the GCSU faculty experts. (Photo by Kristen Simpson)

News Stories Posted Tuesday January 21, 2025



Georgia College online master's programs ranked among best in nation by U.S. News & World Report

[The Graduate School](#) : Tuesday January 21, 2025

By Mike Cavaliere

Georgia College & State University's online master's programs were ranked among the top 100 in the country, and among the top five in Georgia, in [U.S. News & World Report's 2025 rankings](#), released

RANKINGS SUMMARY

Georgia College's key rankings for 2025 are

today.

The university's [master's degree in nursing](#) ranked No. 1 in Georgia and tied for No. 17 in the country, among both public and private institutions.

GCSU's online master's degrees in [criminal justice](#) and [business](#) ranked highly, as well, each earning the distinction of being ranked No. 2 in Georgia in their respective categories. The [Master of Business Administration program](#) ranked No. 4 in Georgia, and the [master's degree in education](#) tied for the fifth-best program of its kind in the state, along with Kennesaw State University and Georgia Southern University.

"These top rankings in online education reflect Georgia College & State University's unwavering commitment to the student experience," said Georgia College President Cathy Cox. "Through our 32 different graduate programs, our faculty members strive to offer students unique and meaningful learning opportunities that prepare them to step into or advance in dynamic careers. We understand that graduate students often need flexibility to pursue secondary degrees, and we're dedicated to providing those options through distance learning without sacrificing the personal connections that make this university such a special place to learn."

rankings for 2023 are listed as follows:

- **No. 1 best online master's in nursing degree in Georgia**
 - **No. 17 in the nation, of 198 total institutions ranked (tied)**
- **No. 2 best online master's in business degree in Georgia**
- **No. 2 best online master's in criminal justice degree in Georgia**
- **No. 4 best online Master of Business Administration degree in Georgia**
- **No. 5 best online master's in education degree in Georgia (tied)**

Nationally, the graduate-level criminal justice degree program placed No. 38 out of 96 total programs ranked, while business placed No. 56 out of 205 schools ranked. Of 313 universities ranked in the education category nationwide, GCSU's program placed 85th. Nationally, the [Master of Business Administration program](#) placed 135 of 355 total institutions ranked, among both public and private institutions.

A PERIOD OF GROWTH

This year's rankings reinforce a trend of upward mobility for Georgia College, with several of the recognized programs showing growth over U.S. News & World Report's [previous year's findings](#). The university's Nursing program, for instance, jumped 11 spots in this year's report, while criminal justice showed even larger gains, leaping 23 spots over its placement last year.

“

These top rankings in online education reflect Georgia College & State University's unwavering commitment to the student experience. Through our 32 different graduate programs, our faculty members strive to offer students unique and meaningful learning opportunities that prepare them to step into or advance in dynamic careers.

- Georgia College President Cathy Cox

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Virtual programs at Georgia College & State University cater exclusively to masters' students. Undergraduate course offerings — which contributed to GCSU being ranked as the [No. 6 public university in the South by U.S. News & World Report last year](#), as well as the No. 4 most innovative among all public and private institutions in the region — are offered only in-person, guaranteeing

students hands-on experiential learning opportunities in intimate classroom settings. With a student-to-faculty ratio of 16:1, 51% of Georgia College classes have less than 20 students, while 77% have less than 30 students.

U.S. News & World Report bases its rankings on metrics such as student engagement, faculty credentials and training, expert opinion and student services/technology.

News Stories Posted Friday January 24, 2025



GCSU continues successful Business Executive-in-Residence series

[College of Business & Technology](#) : Friday January 24, 2025

By Kristen Simpson

Students at Georgia College & State University saw leadership firsthand through the [College of Business and Technology's](#) new Business Executive-in-Residence series.

"By initiating our Business Executive-in-Residence program, we are allowing our students to hear directly from individuals in the field,"

said interim dean Dr. Tanya Goette. “Students start to understand how the concepts they learn in class are used in the business world, because the executive is on campus for more than a class presentation.”

The fall semester executive, Barry Wolfe, J.D., is the former director of labor and employee relations for Dean’s Foods and Dairy Farmers of America. He met directly with students and participated in a campus-wide panel on salary negotiations last week.



Barry Wolfe (right) with Richa Moses (left) of the GC Bizcast (Photo by Amanda Respass.)

“I am so impressed with Georgia College, with all the things they do to help prepare students for the next step,” Wolfe said in his interview with [GC Bizcast](#). “It seems to me that if a student leaves Georgia College without taking advantage of all those opportunities, then they’ve really missed out.”

The four-day series kicked off with Wolfe offering guest lectures, lunches, speaking events and meet and greets to Georgia College students. Since the program is designed to improve student opportunities and build academic partnerships, Wolfe also met with faculty across disciplines to share his expertise related to labor relations.

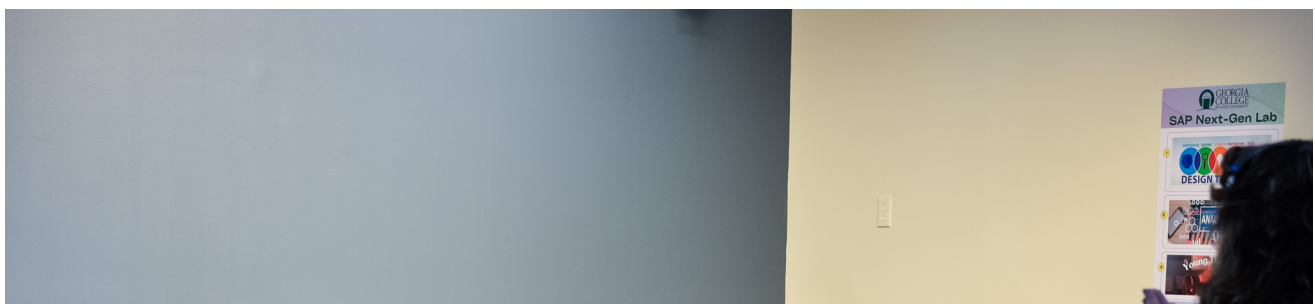
Following a panel discussion, Wolfe was interviewed by student-run podcast [GC Bizcast](#). The podcast series interviews prominent business professionals and makes their expertise accessible to the Georgia College community.

The CoBT is continuing the program with a new executive each

semester. Over time, the business executives invited to Georgia College will provide examples of life experience to CoBT students and contribute chances for both mentoring and networking.

“One young man came and talked to me on Monday, and he was going for an interview. He was unsure and nervous about it, so I talked to him,” Wolfe said. “He came back and said he’d gotten the job, and that our conversation helped him. That made my day.”

The spring semester Business Executive-in-Residence is Irish businessman Kevin Neary, co-founder and CEO of OrcaWise, an AI solutions company. Neary is the keynote speaker for the [2025 Executive Forum](#) at 5 p.m. Monday, Jan. 27. Ticket information for the event is available [here](#). Neary will also [speak to students](#) from 5 to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 28, in the A&S Auditorium.





Barry Wolfe is interviewed by the GC Bizcast. (Photo by Amanda Respress)

Cover Image: *The J. Whitney Bunting College of Business & Technology's first Business Executive-in-Residence, Barry Wolfe (Photo by Kristen Simpson)*

News Stories Posted Tuesday January 28, 2025



New Music Building at Georgia College Set to Open

[Music, Department of](#) : Tuesday January 28, 2025

By Stacey Lumley, Chris Brown and Amanda Respass

Georgia College & State University is entering the final stages of construction on a new music building located on the corner of Wayne and Montgomery Streets in Milledgeville, Georgia. The

wayne and Montgomery streets, in Milledgeville, Georgia. The 10,400-square-foot building will serve as the Department of Music's new dedicated rehearsal space.

"We're very grateful for the university being able to do this, as it allows us to be able to do so much more that will be beneficial to the students," Dr. Don Parker, department chair, said.

The new building will offer ample rehearsal room with all the features music students need to develop their professional skills, including acoustically designed practice spaces that are separated to accommodate different groups, such as choral ensembles, orchestra and percussion.

Parker, himself a percussionist, admits, "Percussionists make a lot of sound!"

The new building also features storage for instruments and equipment, plus social spaces for students.

The building is scheduled to open in fall 2025.

You can [support this important endeavor by clicking here](#). Some naming opportunities are still available. [Darla Pyke](#), development officer for the College of Arts & Sciences, is available to discuss these opportunities.

News Stories Posted Wednesday January 29, 2025



What makes a swing state? Georgia College-hosted focus group explores local priorities

[Accounting, Department of](#) : Wednesday January 29, 2025

By Mike Cavaliere

Ahead of President Donald Trump's inauguration last week, local concerns over election misinformation, the future of artificial intelligence and the volatility of political discourse defined a recent

conversation between Baldwin County residents, in a focus group exploring the issues that matter most to voters residing in political swing states.

[Keep Our Republic](#), a non-partisan civic education group, sponsored the Tuesday, Jan. 14 event, held at Georgia College & State University, with the goal of understanding how local priorities were reflected in the 2024 United States presidential election.

Although perspectives from the group often differed, each of the 15 participants agreed that the adversarial tone of modern American politics — from campaign attack ads to name-calling on the presidential debate stage — have changed the way we talk about political issues, and the way we vote.

“It’s no longer about policy, it’s just about personal attacks,” said one participant, Samuel.

“[People] are going to vote for who won the argument, not what they’re actually going to do,” Shelbi added.

Located in middle Georgia, Baldwin County is one the state’s most politically competitive counties. With a diverse population of 44,000 — mixed between college students, agricultural workers, low-income urban residents and wealthy lakefront retirees — the county has supported Democratic candidates for the past two decades and contributed to flipping the historically conservative state blue in the 2020 presidential race. In that election, President Joe Biden won Georgia by a narrow 11,000-vote margin. However, the county swung in the other direction this past election, favoring the Republican nominee, and so, in turn, did the state, helping to secure Trump’s second term in federal office.

The focus group — moderated by Dr. Nicholas Creel, associate professor of business law and director of the [Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship](#) — aimed to serve as a “miniature version of Baldwin County,” Creel said, featuring members of varying backgrounds and voting behaviors, education and salary levels, marital status, career field and other factors.

Participants were selected based off a community survey. About 200 residents responded, with 15 from that group selected to represent the diverse perspectives that define a political “battleground” for electoral votes.

‘WHAT’S TRUE AND WHAT’S NOT ANYMORE?’

The topic of misinformation loomed large in the conversation, as one factor contributing to political division.

Linda pointed to the 24-hour news cycle and the rise of unreliable reporting as the start of a downward trend, while Shelbi cited social media.

“Division drives politicians,” Greg noted, suggesting that modern mediums simply gave attitudes that had always existed a platform on which to be amplified.

“Our leaders are a reflection of where we are as a society,” Christy added.

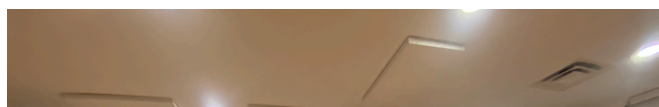
They all agreed, however, that artificial intelligence — specifically, deepfakes and echo chamber-promoting algorithms — has made identifying truth from fiction more difficult.

“[AI] has the potential to be more impactful than anything we’ve created since, you know, the wheel,” Tony said. “It needs to be regulated.”

Claudia agreed: “You don’t know what true and what’s not anymore.”

That point became especially clear in the group’s discussion of ballot-counting.

‘I DON’T TRUST THE MAIL SERVICE’



When asked how confident they were that their votes were accurately counted in the 2024 presidential election, nearly all participants raised their hands — but with qualifiers.

“This time,” Greg noted, adding that he feels the election results seemed less “plausible” in the 2020 election.



Fifteen Baldwin County residents, representing the community's diverse backgrounds and perspectives, gathered Tuesday, Jan. 14, at Georgia College and State University, to discuss their views on the 2024 presidential election, as well as the current state of democracy. (Photo: Stacey Lumley)

“I don’t think any election in history has been more highly and clearly scrutinized than the 2020 election,” Jim said. “This idea that the election was stolen is sheer nonsense.”

“I feel confident ... because I voted in person,” Claudia added.

Linda echoed a similar sentiment: “I don’t trust the mail service,” she said.

“I don’t think there was ever any blatant cheating going on,” Billy interjected. “When [Trump] lost, he lost. When he won, he won.”

The group discussed a variety of other issues, as well. While half said that their future votes will depend on social issues — women’s rights, gun control, etc. — the other half was more concerned with economics — taxes and inflation.

Those factors, they felt, will contribute to Georgia remaining a swing state in the future.

“I’m not going to stick with my color of just red or blue,” Austin said. “Do we get our promises met? ... [That is] going to keep determining if we’re a purple state.”

To watch the full event or request an interview, contact Amanda Respass at amanda.respass@gcsu.edu or 478-445-7828.

Baldwin County residents discussed Georgia’s future as a swing state during a recent focus group held at Georgia College & State University. (Video: Stacey Lumley)

News Stories Posted Thursday January 30, 2025



Gilman scholar determined to embrace a challenge

[National Scholarships Office at Georgia College](#) : Thursday
January 30, 2025

By Margaret Schell

Applying himself to make big things happen is just another day for Georgia College & State University junior Caleb Rogers.

As a double major in [biology](#) and [Spanish](#)



with a minor in [chemistry](#) in the biomedical sciences concentration, he was recently awarded a U.S. Department of State Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship to study the culture of Chile and intern in a Chilean clinic.



Gilman
International
Scholarship
recipient Caleb
Rogers

Rogers hopes the nearly three-week study abroad program this summer will provide an up-close experience of the Chilean culture and valuable insights into international healthcare systems.

“I was shocked when I found out I received the Gilman Scholarship,” Rogers said. “My self-determination paid off. Plus, I’ve built a good foundation for this study abroad opportunity.”

He’s looking forward to an internship in one of Chile’s university clinics, because Rogers is in Georgia College’s Pre-Med Mentoring Program. In his Spanish class, he researched the discrimination of Hispanic individuals in the healthcare systems of other countries. Now, he’ll get to see what the healthcare system is like in Chile.

“It’ll be a great hands-on experience for me which could be used in my capstone project, which focuses on biology,” he said. “I love science.”

Rogers is putting himself through school, so the scholarship process is not new to him.

He wrote three essays demonstrating how he’s shown responsibility at school, his academic interests and how the Chile

Study Abroad Program would help him pursue those goals and financial need.

Rogers will stay with a Chilean host family while he’s there.

“This in-depth experience



Caleb Rogers carefully prepares a sample using a dropper – an essential step in the analysis process. (Photo: Anna Gay Leavitt)

will benefit me in many ways,” he said. “I pride myself in speaking Spanish, but getting out there speaking it socially is something I’ve not had an opportunity to do yet.”

Anna Whiteside introduced Rogers to the Gilman Scholarship, encouraged him to apply and walked him through the scholarship

application and reviewed his essays. Whiteside is the assistant director of the [John E. Sallstrom Honors College](#) and coordinator of the [National Scholarships Office](#).

“I’m so grateful to her for motivating me because I was very busy at the time,” Rogers said.

“I put a lot of myself into the application and essays, showing that I worked hard to get where I am today,” Rogers continued. “I’ve had to fight for many opportunities in my life. Getting this scholarship is validating for the work I put into it.”

His goal is to become a pediatric oncologist. Rogers is interested to see how hospital staff work with children.

He also found Dr. Brantley Nicholson, coordinator of the Chile Study Abroad Program, to be helpful in answering all his questions and guiding him through the application process.

“I’ve known him since my freshman year, and he’s encouraged me to go on this study abroad program for a few summers,” Rogers said. “Many others at Georgia College have helped me as well. The support they showed is invaluable to me. It’s been incredible.”

To apply for a Gilman Scholarship, students need to be eligible for

the Pell Grant and either applying to, or have been accepted to, a credit-bearing study abroad or internship program. Interested students can contact the International Education Center to choose and apply for an appropriate study abroad program. Then, students can contact Whiteside about their application and essays. The application deadline for this scholarship is March 6.

“I think students who want to study abroad but need financial assistance should apply for the Gilman Scholarship,” he said, “Put yourself and your story out there – it might land you an opportunity to study abroad.”

Fall 2025 entering and returning students are able to [apply for scholarships](#) through the GCSU Scholarship Application. The application is open now and **will close Feb. 17**. Scholarships for specific fields of study have varying deadlines and can be [found here](#).