

News Stories Posted Wednesday February 5, 2025



Responsible AI co-founder and CEO shares how to be a 'human in the loop'

[College of Business & Technology](#) : Wednesday February 5, 2025

by Kristen Simpson



Georgia College & State University hosted Orcawise co-founder and CEO Kevin Neary last week as part of a new Business Executive-in-



Kevin Neary, Orcawise co-founder and CEO (Photo by Kristen Simpson)

Residence program. Orcawise is an Ireland-based company that specializes in compliance and assists businesses in implementing ethical AI solutions.

Through a packed itinerary, Neary shared his best AI insights with students and the campus community, including how we can benefit from rapidly developing technology.

"I'm really excited by the way Georgia College is connecting to industry," Neary said. "Liberal arts are very exciting for me, because I genuinely see that those are the subjects that are going to be so important in the age of AI."

The Business Executive-in-Residence program, created by the [J. Whitney Bunting College of Business & Technology](#), facilitates the sharing of real-world knowledge and experience to students by industry professionals.

HUMAN OVERSIGHT AND CRITICAL THINKING ARE MUSTS

"The jobs coming down the line are getting more interesting and more exciting, and the only thing that's going to be automated are those jobs that nobody wants to do anyway," Neary said. "AI agents to oversee the automation, human oversight, is going to be so important."

"To get the best AI, we need top-class philosophers, English majors, marketers, lawyers and artists," he said. "Liberal arts, in my mind, equals critical thinking."

STAYING RELEVANT IS IMPERATIVE

“Staying relevant is going to be ongoing education and a mindset shift—we all need an AI mindset,” Neary said. “We have our core education and what we're learning right now, but we need to keep learning and keep adapting and keep changing as we go forward—expect anything coming down the line.”

RESPONSIBILITY AND LIMITATIONS ARE CRITICAL TO ETHICS

“We will be collaborating with AI, and we will be the senior collaborators in that relationship,” Neary said. “We should encourage students to understand that AI is an extension of human ethics.”

“Ensure you're working with employers that have guardrails in place within their AI systems,” Neary said. “The rate of change is so fast that we don't want to lose sight of guardrails, and we need to be constantly reinventing our guardrails so that we can keep up with the rate of change.”

“

To get the best AI, we need top-class philosophers, English majors, marketers, lawyers and artists. Liberal arts, in my mind, equals critical thinking.

- Kevin Neary

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His main message: trust in your ability as a critical thinker, maintain that ability and be prepared to be the change.

“I hope to come back again and continue the relationship here,” Neary said, “And I think the leaders in this university are doing a great job in preparing the students for the age of AI, and I'm really

excited to support that.”

News Stories Posted Monday February 10, 2025



Alumna uses her Chemistry degree to help solve crimes for the GBI

[Chemistry, Physics, & Mathematics, Department of](#) : Monday
February 10, 2025

by Kristen Simpson

Class of 2020 alumna Nicole Hooks is living her dream as a forensic toxicologist for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. While earning her Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry, Hooks built her lab experience portfolio by completing



original research with her faculty mentor, Dr. Catrena Lisse, and volunteering for the Georgia College Science Education Center.

Hooks is certified in blood-alcohol analysis so she can run samples and analyze evidence for the GBI's Division of Forensic Sciences Crime Lab in Augusta, Georgia.

"I love being in the lab," Hooks said.

"Because we work with all kinds of biological samples, we see a bit of everything. I don't sit very long, and I'm a very hands-on person. So, being in the lab for more than half of my job is great."

Each workday for Hooks begins with untested blood samples. Often these are from DUI cases and were collected as evidence. Hooks is responsible for testing these samples for alcohol content, verifying her findings and potentially testifying to a jury about the entire process.

"I love the whole research part of it," Hooks said.

Hooks' passion for forensics started in middle school in Eatonton, Georgia, and it grew into a love for research under the mentorship of Dr. Lisse, professor of chemistry at Georgia College & State University.

"Dr. Lisse helped push my love for forensics, and she encouraged me to go after it," Hooks said. "That's what made it so fun, because there wasn't a single time where she said 'no.' We just always figured it out."

Hooks took part in original undergraduate research mentored by Lisse, where Hooks started a project creating a sensor to detect compounds found in explosives—simply put, a bomb detector. The



Forensic toxicologist Nicole Hooks ('20) works for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. (Photo by Anna Leavitt)

sensor used sol gel technology developed by Dr. Lisse.

“We didn’t have the resources to buy explosives, so we made our own,” Hooks said. “It was very loud and hot, but didn’t blow anything up. We were able to successfully use the sensor to detect that compound.”

Hooks also volunteered in the [Science Education Center](#) directed by Lisse. Hooks coordinated and participated in the center’s ‘STEM-ming into the Community’ program, where the center takes chemistry into local schools.



Nicole Hooks works on forensic analysis in the lab. (Photo by Anna Leavitt)

“To this day, it was my favorite part of college,” Hooks said. “Dr. Lisse is amazing in how she fosters these young people.”

“With those outreach events, I was able to practice communicating scientific concepts to an audience of non-science people,” Hooks said. “Being able to explain what I do is a big part of my job, and I

had a lot of experience doing that at the Science Education Center.”

GCSU'S NEW FORENSIC CHEMISTRY PATHWAY

Georgia College students earning their chemistry degree can now choose [forensic chemistry](#) as a specific concentration. In addition, the Georgia College [Department of Chemistry, Physics and Astronomy](#) offers a [forensic chemistry certificate](#) in two tracks: trace evidence or materials.

“I love the forensic chemistry concentration because it blends chemistry, biology and criminal justice to solve real-world problems,” Dr. Lisse said. “I love seeing students gain confidence, conduct research and prepare for careers in forensic labs, law enforcement or graduate studies.”

“They learn how to apply science to criminal investigations and contribute to the justice process,” Lisse said.

“

Dr. Lisse helped push my love for forensics, and she encouraged me to go after it. That’s what made it so fun, because there wasn’t a single time where she said ‘no.’ We just always figured it out.

- Nicole Hooks ('20)

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News Stories Posted Thursday February 13, 2025



Andalusia Interpretive Center named 2025 'travelblazer' award winner

[Andalusia](#) : Thursday February 13, 2025

by Amanda Respess

The Andalusia Interpretive Center received a 2025 'travelblazer' award from the Georgia Association of Convention & Visitors



Bureaus during the GACVB Annual Conference. The award celebrates tourism attractions that foster innovative partnerships and collaborations while boosting economic development in the state.



From left: Rebekah Snider, Exective Director of Visit Milledgeville; Ben Young, Editor in Chief and Publisher of Georgia Trend magazine; Angela Criscoe, Executive Director for the Georgia College School of Continuing and Professional Studies; Amanda Dyson-Thornton, Executive Director of the GACVB. (Photo courtesy of GACVB)

[“Andalusia](#), Flannery O'Connor's home, continues to inspire and educate visitors from around the world. The addition of the interpretive center provides a deeper understanding and holistic perspective of Flannery and her family’s history,” said Angela Criscoe, executive director of the School of Continuing and Professional Studies, which encompasses Georgia College & State University’s Historic Museums division.

“This travelblazer award recognizes not just a historic home, but a living legacy where literature, Southern culture and personal history converge to create an unforgettable experience for every guest who steps through our doors,” Criscoe said.

The Andalusia Interpretive Center [opened its doors](#) in March 2023. The 5,300-square-foot space was a \$3.5 million investment in the preservation and interpretation of O’Connor’s life and work. The center includes artifact and archival storage and an exhibition space, plus a retail and conference space, as well as staff offices.

Jay Markwalter, statewide tourism director for the Georgia Department of Economic Development, presented the travelblazer awards.

“The interpretive center offers a window into the world of one of America's most iconic authors, featuring open-concept exhibition spaces, artifact storage and even the opportunity for visitors to witness the curatorial process. This groundbreaking approach

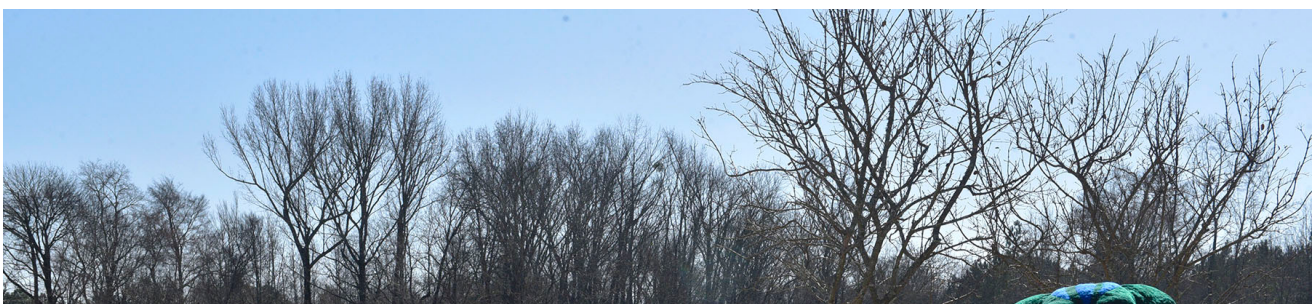
allows O'Connor's materials to be preserved right before our eyes," Markwalter said.

"Thanks to the tireless efforts of Georgia College & State University, the interpretive center not only preserves O'Connor's legacy, but also provides a platform for the public to experience and learn about the environment that shaped her stories," Markwalter continued.

The travelblazers program launched in 2020 and, according to GACVB, "is designed to recognize community destination development projects exemplifying multi-partner collaboration and creative product development."

The award was presented by Markwalter, along with GACVB Executive Director Amanda Dyson-Thornton, Georgia Trend Publisher Ben Young, and Executive Director of Visit Milledgeville Rebekah Snider, who serves as the current president of the board of directors of GACVB.

The Andalusia Interpretive Center is one of five [travelblazer award winners](#) for 2025. The awards presentation took place Tuesday, Feb. 4, during the GACVB Annual Conference held at the Gas South Convention Center in Gwinnett County.





GCSU's Thunder stands beside the entrance to the Andalusia Interpretive Center. (Photo by Kylie Rowe)

News Stories Posted Monday February 17, 2025



Alumna takes chemistry degree to anesthesiology

Chemistry, Physics, & Mathematics, Department of : Monday February 17, 2025

by Kristen Simpson

Georgia College & State University alumna Kelly Anderson ('15) has been a practicing anesthesiologist assistant for the last six years.

Each day starts early in the morning, her work ranging from assisting C-sections to removing appendixes at Northside Hospital in Canton, Georgia. She's responsible for prepping operating rooms, pre-operative evaluations, managing patient airways, patient advocacy and more.

"What I really love about what I do is seeing a patient through an acute issue all the way to their recovery," Anderson said. "For me that's a

10-fold experience—being able to help someone through the process of getting better."

One might wonder how chemistry led Anderson to her path, and she didn't consider it at first either. Originally she was interested in pharmacy, but seeking an immediate impact in patient care drove



Class of 2015 Chemistry alumna
Kelly Anderson (Photo by Anna Gay
Leavitt)

her to pursue anesthesiology.

Understanding chemistry is imperative to managing anesthesia, since it teaches professionals how different medications react to the human body, or other drugs.

“There are neurons in the brain that fire for pain, and there’s medicine we can give that will interact with those neurons to either stop the firing or blocking pain receptors,” Anderson said. “It’s a mix of the chemistry of medicine and the chemistry of a patient’s body.”

Originally from Buford, Georgia, Anderson graduated in 2019 with her master’s in medical science from South University in Savannah, Georgia, and has been practicing since.

During her undergraduate studies at Georgia College, Anderson researched how heavy metals travel through city waterways under the tutelage of Dr. Catrena Lisse, professor of chemistry.

Anderson researched the water quality of the Ocmulgee River in South Georgia, and how heavy metals traveled through the river’s connection to the Oconee.

“Dr. Lisse was always so willing to help and come with me on adventures,” Anderson said. “We would drive and camp through all kinds of forestry to reach river quality sites.”

“

Her outreach into the community is really remarkable, and I’m so thankful I had the opportunity to reach out.

- Anderson

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As Dr. Lisse was building the [Science Education Center](#) in 2015, Anderson helped her develop the 'STEM-ing into the Community' program, where the center takes chemistry into local schools.

"Her outreach into the community is really remarkable, and I'm so thankful I had the opportunity to reach out," Anderson said. "It taught me a lot of empathy and desire to help see how science could go further."

"It made me want to find a job where I was applying my knowledge every day, and I found that fit for me," Anderson said. "I see a whole spectrum, and it's very rewarding to help patients through their scariest times."

GCSU'S NEW BIOCHEMISTRY PATHWAY

[Biochemistry](#) is now a specific concentration that can be chosen by students earning a chemistry degree at Georgia College. In addition, Georgia College offers an [accelerated pre-pharmacy track](#) and partnerships with pharmacy schools at the University of Georgia, Mercer University, Auburn University and Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine.

"Whether students want to go to professional school, enter the workforce or any other goal, we make sure they get the best experience and qualifications to fulfill their dreams," said Dr. Wathsala Medawala, associate professor of chemistry. "Our faculty-student interaction is very strong, enabling the students to always get the guidance they need."

News Stories Posted Thursday February 20, 2025



GCSU president highlights strategic growth, community impact in annual university address

[President, Office of the](#) : Thursday February 20, 2025

By Mike Cavaliere

Following a period of what Georgia College & State University President Cathy Cox called “pandemic instability,” the institution rebounded in the past few years with record-breaking enrollment numbers and historically high first-year student class sizes.

“

Most of our students chose a smaller university with a face-to-face learning environment like GCSU because they want to be a part of a community...It is our responsibility to deliver the opportunities for meaningful personal connections and experiences in which students can learn and grow.

- President Cathy Cox

”

Expansion, however, is not the ultimate goal, Cox explained to a crowd of colleagues in her annual State of the University address, held Friday, Feb. 21, on the university's campus in Milledgeville.

“There are strategic ways we can approach growth,” she said. “Dramatically growing our undergraduate enrollment is not our objective.”

The university welcomed its largest freshman class ever in fall 2023 — totaling 1,816 new students — then followed that with a new record-high total enrollment in fall 2024 of nearly 7,100 Bobcats. Applications also boomed for the 2024 entering class, growing by 44% over the those received just two years prior, in 2022.

These gains, Cox said, “reset” GCSU's enrollment level, enabling “us to gain as much benefit as possible from the University System of Georgia's funding formula, which drives our entire budget.”

That formula operates on a two-year lag, meaning that, due to enrollment levels steadily climbing after a period of pandemic-fueled decline, the institution expects to see a funding increase of an estimated \$3 million in the coming fiscal year — gains that will help the university advance its mission “without changing the model in which we operate,” Cox added.

To that end, maintaining institutional differentiators — such a

GCSU's 16:1 student-to-faculty ratio, or its commitment to hands-on learning experiences — stands as priority No. 1.

"It's vitally important that we maintain a high level of interest in our university and its distinctive manner of teaching because we can't enroll every Georgia high school graduate, nor do we try," she said. "We are in the enviable position of being able to control our own destiny right now."

Cox also identified the university's high-demand online graduate programs as a key growth opportunity for 2025, in order to address the workforce needs of the state.

Ensuring that the local and statewide communities are better off because of GCSU is also a top priority.

BETTERING BALDWIN COUNTY & BEYOND

Georgia College recorded an economic impact in central Georgia of [\\$308 million in 2024](#), which accounted for a 9% increase over its reported impact the three years prior.

Zoom in for a deeper perspective on the positive effects of the university's community work.

The Mobile Health Unit, for example, which [launched in 2024](#), provided 289 free health screenings to residents in underserved rural communities last year.

The [Center for Health & Social Issues](#), housed within [College of Health Sciences](#), also partnered with external groups to distribute 45,000 pounds of food in Baldwin County, helped raise over \$85,000 for a community park in Oconee Heights and collaborated

with the University of Georgia and other stakeholders to earn a \$4.9 million federal grant to fund new local streetlights and other infrastructure in Baldwin County neighborhoods.

The university is also a leader in historical preservation.

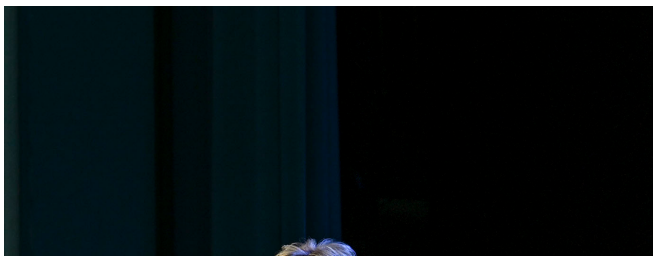
One of the few paleontological exhibits in the state, and the only university museum of its kind in Georgia, the [William P. Wall Museum of Natural History](#) features more than 40,600 specimens spanning 500 million years. A free community resource, the museum hosted more than 6,680 visitors in 2024 and, since its opening in 2004, has welcomed 96,000 visitors, including more than 37,000 public school children and 33,000 state residents.

“We put a lot of our intellectual capital into our stellar museums, offering world-class educational experiences to our community,” Cox added, citing the two National Historic Landmarks owned by the university: [Georgia’s Old Governor’s Mansion](#) and [Andalusia](#), each of which attracted about 10,000 visitors last fiscal year. The Andalusia Interpretive Center also [recently earned recognition](#) from the Georgia Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus as a tourism site that boosts economic development.

Continuing its long tradition of stewardship over GCSU alumna/world-renowned author Flannery O’Connor’s work, the university will also unveil a newly discovered [collection of visual artwork](#) created by O’Connor on campus next month. The collection features oil paintings, a self-portrait, wood-burned illustrations and linoleum-block prints and will be open to free public viewing beginning March 26.

“It is a huge benefit for a community to have a state college or university in its midst,” Cox said. “The way we serve these communities is almost endless.”

PUTTING THE LIBERAL ARTS TO WORK



Hands-on learning experiences are also foundational to GCSU’s mission as Georgia’s designated public liberal arts university, Cox



President Cox delivered the State of the University Address in Russell Auditorium on Feb. 21, 2025. (Photo by Anna Gay Leavitt)

explained, and those opportunities are often created through faculty research projects.

“Our Teacher/Scholar Model asks faculty to pursue research in a different way than R-1 and R-2 institutions do,” Cox said. “We want our faculty to engage in research in which they engage our students directly in their research,

as many do, or by research and scholarship that directly enhances what they are doing in the classroom.”

A total of \$3.5 million in research funding was awarded to faculty to lead such projects in 2024. That investment led to 67% of all Georgia College graduates participating in undergraduate research during their time on campus, some as early as their freshman year.

Faculty projects involving mentored undergraduate research include:

- A major grant earned by GCSU faculty for continuing ongoing [cancer research](#).
- Continued funding to train certified [SANE nurses](#) and bolster the number of [nurse practitioners](#) in Georgia.
- Collaborative, [interdisciplinary projects](#) funded by the National Science Foundation.

Cox cited other noteworthy faculty projects from 2024, including:

- Dr. Dana Gorzelany-Mostak analyzed how [popular music](#) impacted election communication in the 2024 presidential contest.
- English faculty Peter Selgin and Chika Unigwe were named

finalists for the [Townsend Prize for Fiction](#), Georgia's highest literary fiction award.

- A poem by Dr. Kerry Neville was included in a much-lauded collection of [poetry inspired by Taylor Swift](#).

"There are so many more great works and projects by our faculty that I would like to mention if we had more time," Cox said. "You are using your expertise to enrich the intellectual curiosity of our students and contributing to the betterment of our larger world. In doing so, you are living out our Teacher/Scholar model."

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

Georgia College's banner year in 2024 also included the following milestones.

Rankings on the Rise: After moving into [U.S. News & World Report's Top 20](#) for public schools in 2023, the university ranked sixth in the Regional Universities South category last year, as well as reaching No. 4 "Most Innovative Schools" among public and private regional universities in the South. The university's graduate offerings were also ranked in the top 100 in the country and the top 5 in Georgia.

Nation's Best Academic Success Rate: For the fourth consecutive year, Bobcat scholar-athletes scored the highest [academic success rate](#) in the country, among all schools competing in the NCAA Division II.

10-Year Re-Accreditation: GCSU met rigorous national standards set forth by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in 2024, which led to a [10-year reaffirmation](#) of the university's academic accreditation.

World-Class Pre-Med Program: For the past 15 years, the students in the [Pre-Med Mentoring Program](#) at GCSU have earned a 100% placement rate in medical schools.

Georgia's Only Public Midwifery Program: The nurse midwifery concentration within GCSU's [Master of Science in Nursing](#) degree

program, which stands as the first and only public program of its kind in the state, is [now fully accredited](#) through the Accreditation Commission of Midwifery Education.

LOOKING AHEAD

Citing the university's ongoing improvement efforts — including the construction of a [new music rehearsal hall](#), plans to hire more than 40 new faculty and upgrades to academic buildings and the baseball stadium, to name a few — Cox closed her presentation with a challenge to faculty and staff: Be proactive, and prioritize personal connections.

"I challenge you to consider these points in all that you do," she told the crowd. "Most of our students chose a smaller university with a face-to-face learning environment like GCSU because they want to be a part of a community. ... It is our responsibility to deliver the opportunities for meaningful personal connections and experiences in which students can learn and grow."

Those opportunities, she stressed, are plentiful in the liberal arts, and they are what develop students into leaders.

"As the world becomes more complex, as its pace of change hastens, the ability to think, adapt, analyze and communicate becomes all the more important," she said. "We have the momentum. And we have the caliber of students who deserve nothing less."

News Stories Posted Sunday February 23, 2025



Annual Alumni Awards recognize 10 Outstanding Leaders

[Alumni](#) : Sunday February 23, 2025

By Margaret Schell

On Friday, Feb. 21, Georgia College & State University recognized 10 alumni for their significant achievements in service to GCSU and beyond the university.

“Our alumni experience unifying and lifelong bonds,” said Seth Walker, vice president for University Advancement. “We are

immensely proud of our alumni award winners and grateful to showcase their remarkable achievements. Their contributions to their professions, communities, families and alma mater are truly outstanding and deserving of celebration.”

Alumni Service Award Jeff Wansley ('87) earned his BBA in marketing. He has a 35-year career in politics and government relations. From Atlanta, he is committed to his community with Atlanta Ronald McDonald House Charities and Hearts and Hands Society. At Georgia College & State University, he serves as chair of the Foundation Board.

College of Arts & Sciences Alumni Achievement Award Jan Smith ('78) received a B.S. in psychology. She's a nationally recognized singer, songwriter, musician, Grammy-nominated producer and Georgia Music Hall of Fame inductee. Smith is also a multi-platinum certified vocal coach and producer for renown music artists like Justin Bieber, Usher, Universal Pictures, Disney and New Line Cinema. She owns and operates Jan Smith Studios Inc.

College of Business & Technology Alumni Achievement Award Virgil Miller ('92) earned his BBA in accounting. He is president of Aflac, Inc. which includes supporting company-wide profitable growth and efficiency initiatives and driving the evolution of product and service offerings. Miller served as a U.S. Marine and is a veteran of Operation Desert Storm. He holds a master's degree in business management from Wesleyan College and a doctorate in humane letters from Gammon Theological Seminary.

College of Education Alumni Achievement Award Holly Stamer Witcher ('01) is the 2025 Georgia Teacher of the Year and a special education teacher at Tesnatee Gap Elementary School. A 23-year teaching veteran, she was also named Teacher of the Year in Rockdale County in 2006 and White County in 2023. Witcher received a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education from Georgia College & State University and a master's from the American College of Education. [Read more about Witcher and her accomplishments.](#)

College of Health Sciences Alumni Achievement Award Dr. Angela Queen ('96) ('00) ('22) is an assistant professor of Nursing at Georgia College & State University. She was a nurse practitioner in an outpatient private practice. Today she is a part-time nurse practitioner for a local hospice and peer reviewer for the Georgia Board of Nursing. Her clinical experience includes oncology, family practice, preventive and alternative medicine, palliative care and women's health.

Ethel Rae Mozo Stewart Award Katarzyna "Kasia" Shaw ('15) received her nurse practitioner degree from Georgia College & State University. She got her degree in Russian and Spanish from the United States Military Academy at West Point. After serving as a second lieutenant, she earned a B.S. in nursing from the University of Delaware. Shaw is vice president of Medical Services with PathForward where she helps the most vulnerable populations.

GCSU Heritage Award Alex Gregory ('78) ('79) received his MBA and MSA. He received his Bachelor of Textile Engineering from Georgia Tech. Gregory is the former chairman, president and CEO of YKK Corporation of America, serving 16 years in these capacities. He serves on several nonprofit boards, including GCSU Foundation Board of Trustees and was the inaugural Alex Gregory Leader in Residence at Georgia College. Gregory has won state national awards and international awards. He's also a retired commander of the U.S. Naval Reserves after 28 years of service.

Honors College Alumni Achievement Award Christopher Eby ('11) graduated summa cum laude from the Honors College at Georgia College & State University with his undergraduate degrees in history and philosophy. He graduated cum laude from the University of Chicago with his law degree in 2015. Eby spent a decade in government service and private practice, representing leading companies, elected officials and private individuals in high-stakes legal disputes.

Outstanding Recent Alumni Award Dr. Emily Bailey, Psy.D. ('14) earned her B.S. in psychology magna cum laude. She's a licensed

clinical psychologist and founder of Atlanta OCD and Anxiety Treatment, LLC. Bailey is an assistant professor of Psychology at Oglethorpe University. She's a member of the International OCD Foundation's Faith and OCD Task Force and presents at national conventions.

Trailblazer Dove Award Pierre Clements ('86) earned a BBA degree from Georgia College & State University and an Executive MBA degree with a concentration in international business from Mercer University. He is managing partner of Inside Group International. Clements received multiple business achievement and community awards over the past 25 years. He's a member of several organizations including GCSU Foundation Board of Trustees and 100 Black Men (Atlanta Chapter).

A dark green banner with a subtle leaf pattern. The text "GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY" is in a small, white, serif font. Below it, "ALUMNI AWARDS" is written in a large, gold, serif font.

GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY
ALUMNI AWARDS

WINNERS



Jeff Wansley
Class of 1987



Jan Smith
Class of 1978



Virgil Miller
Class of 1992



Holly Witcher
Class of 2001



Angela Queen
1996, 2000, 2022



Katarzyna Shaw
Class of 2015



Alex Gregory
1978, 1979



Christopher Eby
Class of 2011



Emily Bailey
Class of 2014



Pierre Clements
Class of 1986

2025 Alumni Award Winners

News Stories Posted Wednesday February 26, 2025



Students present undergraduate research at Academy of Economics and Finance Conference

[Economics & Finance, Department of](#) : Wednesday February 26,
2025

by Kylie Rowe

The [Department of Economics & Finance](#) sent six students to present their undergraduate research at the Academy of Economics and Finance Conference on Feb. 13 in Pensacola, Florida. [The College of Business & Technology](#) students who

participated in the conference are: Sam Kinney, Joe Dubsky, Solomon Ashu, Steven Hershberger, Izzy DeFelice and Michaeline Schmeelk.

These students spent a year studying topics they formulated themselves and conducting research under the mentorship of the economics faculty. To present at the AEF Conference, students had to submit an abstract before being accepted as presenters. They also had the opportunity to submit their papers for award consideration at the conference.



Senior Finance and Economics major Solomon Ashu presents his research paper at the AEF conference in Pensacola, Florida.

"The judges always say how polished our students are, every single year," said Dr. Brooke Conaway, professor of economics and faculty advisor.

Taking time to perfect their papers and presentations gives judges and others at the conference a glimpse into the commitment to excellence demonstrated by GCSU students and faculty.

"I feel like the economics department, the entire department, equipped us with the tools to be able to do research like this," said Solomon Ashu, a senior finance and economics major, presenting

on whether having multiple sexual partners affects happiness. "I honestly think at any other school, it wouldn't be the same."

GCSU prioritizes support for students in their [undergraduate research](#), and mentorship from faculty and staff impacts students' decisions on life-changing choices, such as their field of study.

“I think if I had gone to a different college, I wouldn’t even be an Econ major,” said Izzy DeFelice, a senior economics major, who presented on whether the use of hormonal contraceptives increases risky behavior.

Along with influencing decisions, Georgia College’s commitment to a [liberal arts education](#) continues to give students opportunities to set themselves apart when entering the workforce. Undergraduate student Joe Dubsky used his research to push himself further ahead in the field he wants to explore.

“I found quantitative easing interesting. We talked about it in ‘Money and Banking,’ so I kind of wanted to combine [quantitative reasoning and the Federal Reserve] to have something on my application that could put me ahead of other students,” said Dubsky, a senior economics and finance major, presenting on whether quantitative easing policies affect sectoral abnormal returns.

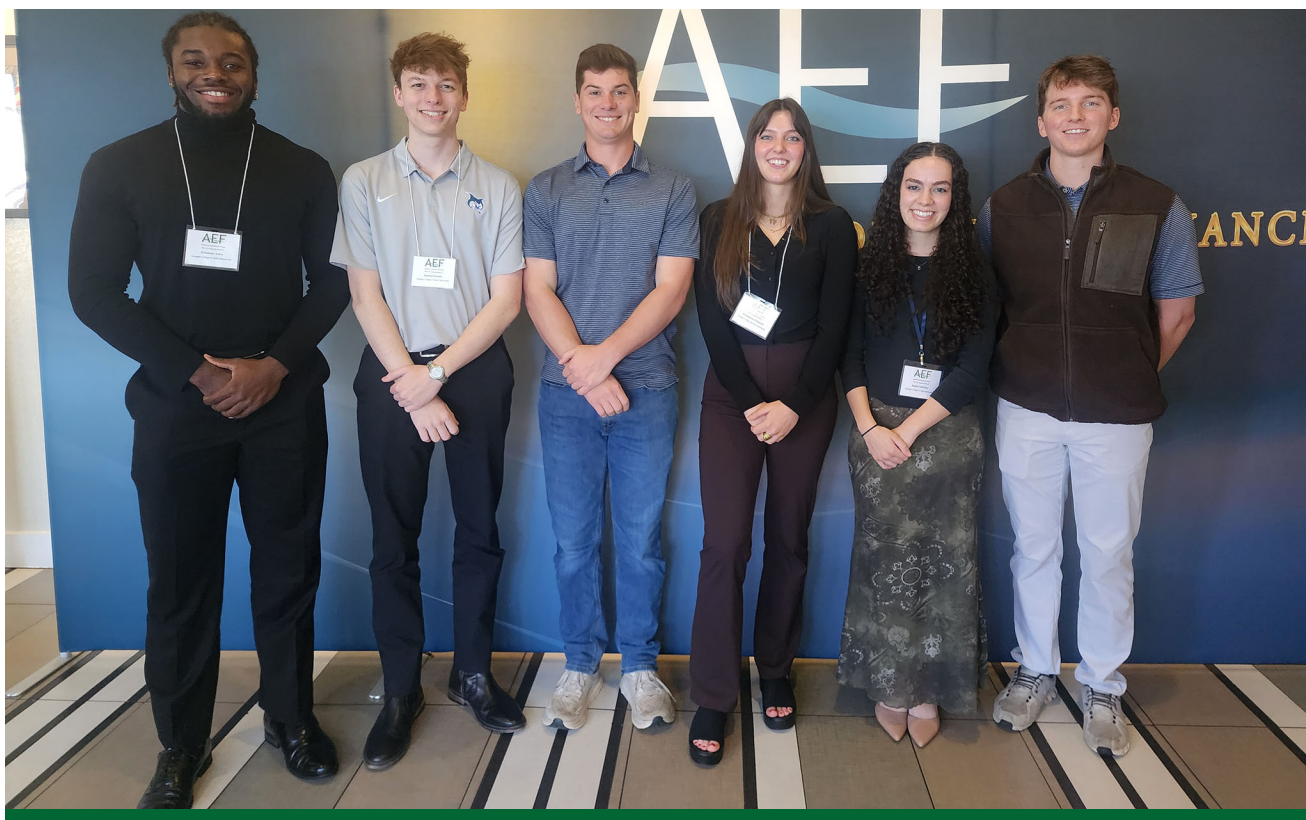
Undergraduate research that applies to future work opportunities is crucial for students looking to go directly into the workforce; however, at the AEF conference, presenters also have a chance to network with graduate school programs to explore if that is a path they want to choose.

Georgia College faculty and staff are dedicated to giving students the materials and opportunities they need to thrive in undergraduate research and beyond.

“They spend a lot of time outside the classroom giving me opportunities to really dive into what I’m looking at and trying to

make it better,” said Steven Hershberger, a senior economics major, presenting on whether military service affects income in careers.





Presenting their original research at the AEF conference, from left: Solomon Ashu, Sam Kinney, Steven Hershberger, Michaeline Schmeelk, Izzy DeFelice and Joe Dubsky.

News Stories Posted Thursday February 27, 2025



Bobcat Basketball Star Excels On and Off the Court

[Athletics](#) : Thursday February 27, 2025

By Al Weston, Video by Chris Brown

Jada Warren is a prime example of the scholar-athletes that thrive at Georgia College & State University. Having already earned her undergrad degree in [exercise science](#), she will add a master's in [health and human performance](#) at the end of this semester.

The 2024-25 season has been a breakout one for her on the court as well. On Feb. 8, Warren broke the school's record for career rebounds, one that stood since 1988. She also leads all of NCAA Division II Women's Basketball in rebounding this season.

Combine this on-court effort with accolades such as the Peach Belt Conference's nomination for NCAA Woman of the Year, leadership roles in both the Black Student Alliance and Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. and a cabinet position in the Student Government Association, and you have a complete scholar-athlete.

"Georgia College has meant everything to me," Warren said. "I know that's a bit of a cliché to say...You can put your name in any room that you want it to be in, and I think that's what has excelled my experience."

