

GEORGIA COLLEGE

Highlights



Think Independently. Lead Creatively.



Highlights 2020

2020 was a year of unprecedented events for the university and the world. As we encourage all of our campus community to think independently and lead creatively, these attributes were more important than ever as we all had to adapt to thrive in what became known as our “new normal.” In spite of adjustments, we saw many successes on and off campus to celebrate; and we are eagerly looking forward to future continued successes.



STORIES OF Student Success

At Georgia College, our students put independent thought into practice in order to become leaders not only during their time at GC, but long afterward. The following students are just a few of our accomplished Bobcats at the local, state, national, and international levels.

Record breaking:

Nine Georgia College students named semi-finalists for Fulbright Scholarship

Fifteen, the most Georgia College students ever, applied for U.S. Fulbright Scholarships in the 2019 – 2020 school year, and more than half were named semi-finalists.

Nine Fulbright semi-finalists is the largest number in the university's history.

In 2017, four Georgia College students were named semi-finalists. In 2020, eight undergraduates and one graduate student claimed the title. They represent a diverse pool, coming from all colleges at the university.

All Fulbright semi-finalists were reviewed by officials in proposed host countries, who selected roughly half to one-third as "finalists" - the Fulbright term for recipients.

Selection for the Fulbright U.S. Student Program is rigorous. They receive about 12,000 applications a year. In the U.S., about 1,900 grants are awarded annually in all fields of study in over 140 countries. More than 360,000 Fulbright recipients have participated in the program since its inception in 1946.

"Is nine unusual? Yes," said Anna Whiteside, assistant director of the Honors College and coordinator of the National Scholarships Office at Georgia College. "To have over half be successful — we've never had that percentage of our applicants make it to the semi-finalist stage. So, that is a huge improvement for us as a university. As a smaller university — in particular a public university that is fairly new to having students apply to Fulbright — having nine semi-finalists is a pretty significant number," she said.

The semi-finalists are:

- Senior special education major **Jasia Clark** of Hull, Georgia, who applied for an English Teaching Assistantship to the Czech Republic
- Senior English major **Makhalath Fahiyim** of Brooklyn, New York, who applied for an English Teaching Assistantship to South Korea
- Senior **James Fortwengler** of Alpharetta, Georgia, a chemistry major and math minor, who applied for a chemical engineering study grant to get his master's at University College Dublin in Ireland
- Senior music major **Madison Graham** of Louisville, Georgia, who also applied for an English Teaching Assistantship to the Czech Republic
- Senior management major **Julian Lopez Hanson** of Gainesville, Georgia, who sought an English Teaching Assistantship to Cyprus
- Senior **Megan Sandal** of Peachtree City, Georgia, with double majors in psychology and sociology, who applied for an English Teaching Assistantship to Malaysia
- Senior **Laura Swarner** of Buford, Georgia, with double majors in English and theatre, who submitted for an English Teaching Assistantship to Bulgaria
- Senior **Amara Tennessee** of Roswell, Georgia, with double majors in public health and world languages, who applied for an English Teaching Assistantship to Colombia
- Third-year graduate student **Jennifer Watkins** of Thoreau, New Mexico, who applied for a creative writing research grant to Italy

“Is nine unusual? Yes.”

Anna Whiteside, assistant director of the Honors College
and coordinator of the National Scholarships Office

Whiteside begins talking to students about the U.S. Fulbright and other national scholarships in their freshman year. It takes several months to a year to get an application ready. She helps students navigate Fulbright's different programs and keeps them informed of deadlines and informational webinars.

Whiteside also helps students improve their personal essays by reading multiple drafts and making suggestions for added details and striking the right tone. Then, she and a group of Georgia College professors conduct scholarship interviews. These interviews can be intense with difficult questions, but they help students clarify goals and vision.

“I'd like to think that, after they finish the process, not only are they feeling more confident about themselves, in general, but also about their ability to put together any kind of application moving forward,” Whiteside said. “A big part of what I do and what faculty do is help students see the reality of what they've accomplished.” 🎧



**Jasia
Clark**



**Makhalath
Fahiyim**



**James
Fortwengler**



**Madison
Graham**



**Julian Lopez
Hanson**



**Megan
Sandal**



**Laura
Swarner**



**Amara
Tennessee**



**Jennifer
Watkins**

Two Georgia College graduates land 2020 Fulbright scholarships

Two recent graduates — **Madison Graham** and **Amara Tennessee** — were named Fulbright finalists, joining three other Georgia College students to receive the prestigious scholarship in recent years.

One award constitutes the university's first Fulbright for a music major and the other to a South American country. A third graduate was chosen as a Fulbright alternate.

The awards followed a windfall year for Fulbright applications. More Georgia College students than ever before, 15, applied for the coveted scholarship. Nine were named semi-finalists — another record number for the university, said Anna Whiteside, assistant director of the Honors College and coordinator of National Scholarships.



◀ Music graduate Madison Graham of Louisville, Georgia, will complete an English Teaching Assistantship in the Czech Republic. He hopes to volunteer at a Basic Art School there, which is the primary venue for art education in the Czech school system. He also plans to join a Czech performing ensemble and explore the country's rich culture.

Graham wanted to return to the Czech Republic after studying abroad there with the Georgia College Jazz Band in the summer of 2019.

"I had several opportunities to observe parts of the Czech education system," he said, "particularly the approach to music education. I was impressed by the size of music programs in the country, as well as the depth of knowledge that is taught there. As a musician, the opportunity to live in the heart of the Western music tradition is quite exciting."

After getting a master's degree, Graham hopes to work in arts education. The Fulbright will help him with diversity and a global perspective.

"As a musician," he said, "the opportunity to live in the heart of the Western music tradition is quite exciting."



◀ Amara Tennessee of Roswell, Georgia, has double degrees in public health and world languages. She'll undertake an English Teaching Assistantship in Columbia, hosting a program on health behavior and attitudes. Tennessee double minored in global health studies and Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino studies.

After high school, she lived in Paraguay, where she worked as a medical volunteer in a mobile vaccination clinic and cardiology and diabetes specialty center. She sees the Fulbright as an amazing opportunity to travel and share her African-American culture, while learning about Columbia.

"I am so incredibly excited to start my journey. I'm excited to have the opportunity to engage in a cultural exchange. Columbia is such a diverse country, not only in their people but also in their geography, and I'm looking forward to being pushed outside of my comfort zone," she said.

In the future, Tennessee hopes to work in global health, reducing the incidence of chronic disease through health education and programming.



▲ **Laura Swarner** of Buford, Georgia, has double degrees in English and theatre. As a Fulbright alternate, she was eligible for an English Teaching Assistantship to Bulgaria, if funding were to become available. She's passionate about storytelling and plans to use it as a tool for language development.

Swarner also hopes to get her master's in scenic design and work as an artist telling stories that "are important and relevant to the modern world and help shift perspectives."

◀ In addition to the two Fulbright finalists and alternate — another recent graduate was honored with Germany's equivalent to the Fulbright. Math and physics graduate **Cain Gantt** of Johns Creek, Georgia, received a German Academic Exchange Service (DADD) to pursue his graduate degree at the Universität Hamburg. 🌐



KENDYL LEWIS

Servant Leader

Kendyl Lewis has the heart of a public servant. The Georgia College junior not only started an organization on campus to help students with food insecurity, she's also championed the initiative in the community.

Couple her service with her stellar academic record and double majors in psychology and economics, and you see why she was named a finalist for the coveted Truman Scholarship.

"I had one of those moments where you realize you've worked so hard and to actually get the good news like this — I was in shock," she said about being named a finalist. "At the same time, it just felt like such affirmation of the work that I have been doing, not that I'm looking for that; but it just made me realize that people do notice, and it's making an impact."

In 2019, 773 students applied for the scholarship named in honor of President Harry Truman. Lewis was one of 190 finalists who participated in an in-person interview to determine the scholarship recipients.

"I would say it's the top public service scholarship that helps pay for graduate school," said Lewis. "I really love the mission of the Truman scholarship because it creates this network of individuals to help the next generation of public service leaders."

Between 55-65 scholarships are awarded each year by the Truman Foundation. Award recipients receive \$30,000 for graduate school. Students must have an extensive record of campus and community service, be committed to a career in government or the nonprofit and advocacy sectors, have good communication skills, and possess a strong academic record with likely acceptance to the graduate school of the candidate's choice. Lewis is a prime example of those.

Leadership experience is also considered, something Lewis has focused on developing during her time at Georgia

College. She is president and founder of the university's student organization Swipe Out Hunger, part of a national organization that works to end student hunger.

"Kendyl's long track record of working to combat food insecurity by leading important efforts on campus — like Swipe Out Hunger — and also by serving as a Zero Hunger Intern in Washington, D.C., have demonstrated that she is going to truly be someone who changes the way that this country works to feed all of its citizens," said Anna Whiteside, assistant director of the Honors College and National Scholarships coordinator.

Swipe Out Hunger helps raise awareness about food insecurity and aids students who struggle with hunger. "My motivation for starting Swipe Out Hunger was there weren't really any readily available resources for students struggling with hunger at Georgia College, and I wanted there to be a way for students to receive assistance in a way that wasn't stigmatizing or a shameful experience for them," said Lewis.

"It just seemed senseless to me that I had paid for this meal plan and wasn't fully utilizing it; but there might be another student in one of my classes that can't afford a meal plan, and they really would value those swipes more than I do."

The group has established ways for students to apply for meal assistance without having to have a consultation with financial aid and without having to disclose any of their financial records.

"We accomplished this through working with Sodexo and basically showing the need that students have, and students are interested in helping out other students," she said. "So based on that, they were able to donate 500 swipes, which essentially came from swipes that have been wasted by students in previous semesters."



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“We've also worked with the George College Foundation for their “A Seat at the Table” scholarship. We do fundraisers for that, and the scholarship goes to students struggling with hunger as well.”

She continues to keep the conversation going even outside the organization, hosting Times Talks, promoting awareness at events, and finding fun ways to engage with the campus so students can learn about food insecurity. Now she's even taken the conversation off campus to meet the community's need.

“I've been working with a community member who is very passionate about food recovery in the Baldwin County school system,” she said. “We've worked to design a plan where Baldwin County Schools can recover unused food from their cafeterias to send home with students over the weekends to meet their needs.”

Lewis' involvement on campus also includes the Council of Student Ambassadors and Student Government as well as Leadership Programs and the Honors Program.

“I've been involved with all the Leadership Programs offered on campus, and I'm currently in the GEM (Georgia Education Mentorship) program,” said Lewis. “Leadership Programs have really just given me a foundation for a lot of the other work

I'm doing on campus. I don't think I could have done everything I've done with my food insecurity work if it weren't for the support from leadership programs.”

“The community aspect provided through the Honors College has been amazing. I've been able to connect with Honors students that care about the same issues as me. They have provided me with a community that helps me in all aspects of my life.”

Through her journey at Georgia College, faculty and staff have been there to support and encourage her. Dr. Harold Mock, director of leadership programs, provides her with “a well-rounded perspective” and has shown her what she's capable of; Dr. Chris Clark, professor of economics, “really pushed” her in classes; and Dr. Kristina Dandy, associate professor of psychology, advised Lewis for her research and is a “great role model.”

While still a student at Georgia College, Lewis plans to continue her involvement on campus in Swipe Out Hunger and engage in independent research on food insecurity. After graduation, her goal is to pursue a public policy master's degree.

In addition to being named a Truman finalist, Omicron Delta Kappa (ODK), the National Leadership Honor Society, named Kendyl

Lewis as Circle Leader of the Year.

Lewis served as president of the Georgia College Circle of ODK. In 2018, she was recognized as the Omicron Delta Kappa Emerging Leader of the Year; and she was inducted into the Georgia College Circle in January 2019.

“Kendyl is a remarkable student and leader,” said Dr. Harold Mock, faculty secretary of Omicron Delta Kappa and director of leadership programs. “She epitomizes Georgia College's commitment to leadership for the public good. Through her work combating food insecurity, she is a model to all of us.”

Omicron Delta Kappa, the National Leadership Honor Society, was founded in 1914 at Washington & Lee University. ODK recognizes and encourages superior leadership, exemplary character, and intellect and collaboration across the five phases celebrated by Omicron Delta Kappa: scholarship, athletics, community and university service, journalism and rhetoric, and the creative and performing arts. Members are expected to demonstrate responsible leadership and service in university and community life, superior scholarship, genuine fellowship, and dedication to democratic ideals. 📍

KELLY BOUSQUETTE

Students for Change

From the stories she'd heard about the Central State Hospital campus, **Kelly Bousquette** expected to find hollowed out halls and ghostly buildings in various states of disrepair; but what she found was surprisingly lush.

"It's not as creepy as a lot of people say it is," Bousquette said, speaking of her visit in October 2019 with a city councilman and the local redevelopment director. They met to talk about how her organization, Students for Change, might be able to help revitalize use of the grounds. Her organization, started officially in September of 2019, has, in the words of Georgia College President Dr. Steve Dorman, created a "very important link between Georgia College students and the larger community." It was this link that earned her a place among the nearly 300 nationwide recipients of the 2020 Newman Civic Fellowship.

Bousquette was unaware of her nomination for the award. Her primary goal was always helping people. Her mission, in creating Students for Change, was to "help advocate, fundraise, and aid with the CSHLRA (Central State Hospital Local Redevelopment Authority) projects including the development of a community garden/greenhouse, homeless shelter, rape crisis center, and mental health museum," said

Bousquette. If that sounds like a lot to take on at once, it's nothing compared to what Bousquette was doing before.



On top of majoring in liberal studies, psychology, sociology, and criminal justice, Bousquette was in multiple student organizations during her freshman year, including GC Miracle, Habitat for Humanity, and Gamma Sigma Sigma, among others.

"In my sophomore year, I got some advice, in the nicest way possible, that I should maybe focus my attention because I wouldn't get as much done spreading myself so thin," Bousquette said.

The Newman Civic Fellowship was created to recognize students for their contribution to public issues. It grants Bousquette access to resources and mentorships throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, as well as scholarship and post-graduate opportunities. Bousquette is hoping that she'll be able to pass on the knowledge to the leaders in her organization. The award also came with a certificate. However, the award came at a time when Bousquette's organization was temporarily on lockdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"April was going to be our biggest month," Bousquette said. "We were going to have our drive for the Bright House."

The Bright House in Milledgeville is a division of the Southern Crescent Sexual Assault and Child Advocacy Center which has been working with Students for Change. They had intended to open up the house for tours in April, as well as hosting Sounds of the South, a large benefit bar crawl in downtown Milledgeville; but those events were postponed. She's still hopeful that they'll be able to hold the drive virtually.

"I'm also in the GC Service Council. Right now, every Tuesday, we're holding webinars on how you can have virtual meetings for your organization, but I know that every family is struggling. It's something that I'm struggling with myself. It's an adjustment that I haven't gotten used to just yet," Bousquette said.

With everyone still reeling from the tumult that the global lockdown has created, the only thing that is assured is that the world will need more students like Kelly Bousquette in the aftermath — more students with the drive to help solve civic issues, bridge the gaps between universities and communities, and who are not afraid to go into those areas that need help the most. 📍

Nursing students receive exclusive disaster preparedness training

The COVID-19 outbreak dominated the world's attention since the end of January 2020 when it was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization.

The deadly virus spread fast. It was unexpected. It was the type of widespread illness that has the ability to hit countries hard when they're caught unprepared.

That element of being prepared is the lesson some Georgia College nursing students were able to take with them as they attended disaster emergency response training at the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP).

"It's easy to be in a bubble and think things won't happen where you live — but you need to get out of that perspective," said senior nursing major Ariana Braner. "Having an opportunity to see first-hand how much the CDP and the Department of Homeland Security put into being prepared — it takes the sting out of disasters when they do strike."

Students were trained in how to safely dress and remove personal protective equipment, which have been vital in the fight against COVID-19.

The CDP in Anniston, Alabama, is the only facility of its kind in the nation that is dedicated solely to training hospital and health care professionals in disaster preparedness and response. Georgia College is one of only 13 schools in the nation that has had the opportunity to receive training from the CDP. Dr. Catherine Fowler, assistant professor of nursing, accompanied the 58 nursing students for the three-day training at the center in December 2019.

"It was a completely fascinating and valuable experience for our students," Fowler said, who also acted as a student and received the additional training. "They received in-depth didactic and hands-on training, and the students were completely engaged in the training process."

Students sat through more than 10 hours of didactic training focused on Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive materials (CBRNE) response, skills, and knowledge.

"One of the most interesting parts of the training was the fact our instructors at the center came from such diverse backgrounds. From the military to flight medics and paramedics — we got all of their perspectives," Braner said.

The two courses, Emergency Medical Response Awareness for CBRNE Incidents and Healthcare Emergency Response

Operations for CBRNE Incidents, helped students understand the lifesaving role they could play during mass casualty disasters. During the last day of training, students participated in a triage scenario, where they learned how to properly dress themselves in protective suits, consisting of gloves, goggles, and a head-to-toe suit. If properly donned and taken off, the suit prevents further exposure and contamination.

"The triage scenario was definitely my favorite part of the day," said Mackenzie Micheletti, a senior nursing major. "It looked like an ambulance bay, and we were challenged to work quickly while sirens went off in the background."

Students went through the scenario of providing triage, tagging and treating patients — who were represented as teddy bears, strategically placed throughout the triage zone. Micheletti said practicing how to administer what could be lifesaving nursing skills while donning the bulky protective suit was an eye-opening experience.

"Disasters come in all forms," said Micheletti. "It doesn't have to be a terrorist attack. It could be a bus that crashes and has mass casualties or a train derails, spilling its contents and contaminating its surroundings. We don't know what that next disaster could be, so that's why we were trained on several events that could unfold."

Another act of aid the GC nursing program has implemented in the community response arena is the institution of the Medical Reserve Corps. Fowler initiated it during the fall of 2019, allowing nursing students and faculty to place their name in a database of volunteers.

"That means when disaster strikes in Milledgeville or a 20- to 25-mile radius, our students and faculty will be available," she said. "The bottom line is that it is vitally important to our community. This is a database of willing and trained volunteers, and that is invaluable."

The nursing program is already looking forward to sending the next cohort of students in the future to the CDP.

"Knowing that I want to work for a hospital, I know that they have different teams and boards along the lines of disaster relief and response," said Micheletti. "These types of groups are exactly where we can add our knowledge and training that we got at the CDP and in the nursing program. It's all about putting this planning into practice." 📍



Environmental Science student named NOAA Hollings Scholar

A Georgia College environmental science major was one of only two students in the state to win a distinguished national science scholarship named after the late Senator Ernest F. Hollings, who supported ocean policy and conservation.

Junior Nadya Gutierrez of Johns Creek was recently selected as a National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration Hollings Scholar. This honor includes a two-year academic award of \$9,500, a 10-week paid summer internship at a NOAA facility, and funding to present her NOAA research at two national scientific conferences.

“It’s very competitive — only 123 scholarships were awarded across the country this year,” said Anna Whiteside, assistant director of Georgia College’s Honors College and coordinator of its National Scholarships Office.

“Nadya has an excellent academic record and has shown a commitment to NOAA-related fields. This award will give Nadya the unique opportunity to get hands-on experience as an intern at NOAA, as well as the opportunity to join an esteemed network of scholars.”

The scholarship was established in 2005. To be considered, college sophomores must major in a NOAA mission field such as oceanic, environmental, biological, and atmospheric sciences; math; engineering; remote sensing technology; physical sciences; social sciences; or teacher education.

Gutierrez was referred to the National Scholarships Office by one of her professors, Dr. Allison VandeVoort. She applied, excited by the chance to work with professionals in careers she dreams of joining.

“It’s such an honor to be selected for this scholarship,” Gutierrez said. “I am very humbled and grateful for such an amazing opportunity. It will help me in so many ways by giving me experience in conducting and presenting research.”

Her application stood out, she thinks, because of Georgia College’s commitment to undergraduate research. Last year, Gutierrez explored the infrastructure of dams and how they affect macroinvertebrates populations. Most students wouldn’t begin such study until junior year, she said.

Gutierrez also worked as a supplemental instructor leader at the Learning Center for Biology and Ecology. This tutoring experience — as well as her geology minor and high school involvement at national environmental science competitions — made her a well-rounded candidate.

Her hope is to get an internship that benefits the livelihood of Americans and helps her gain a deeper understanding of the world. She’d like to study population ecology in estuary ecosystems and learn how urban runoff affects different populations in natural habitats. Gutierrez hopes to present management plans that restore estuaries.

“I am very grateful for the scholarship I’ve been awarded,” she said, “but I am more excited for the internship that comes with the program. There aren’t many opportunities to conduct mentored research with professionals from federal agencies such as NOAA.”

The internship could open the door to working with other government agencies in the future. Gutierrez hopes to someday work for NOAA, the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service), or the DNR (Department of Natural Resources).

Being a NOAA Hollings Scholar gives Gutierrez confidence to try other national competitions in the future, like the Fulbright or Rhodes scholarships. It will also make her more competitive when applying to graduate school. 📍

Getting Noticed

Three GC students recognized by
Kennedy Center for undergraduate research

Georgia College's Theatre Department was nominated in four categories during the recent Region IV (nine-state region) of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in South Carolina. Of the four categories, Georgia College made it to the finals in three categories with two students taking first place.

Senior **Laura Swarner** of Buford, Georgia, and junior **Sachen Pillay** of Milledgeville both took first place in their categories. A third student, junior theatre major **Tiffany Hawkins** of Wadley, Georgia, made it to the finals for her role as "Black Marie" in the fall 2019 production of "Barbecue." Hawkins was one of 16 actors in the region nominated for the Kennedy Center's Irene Ryan Acting Award.

"We are so proud of our students," said Dr. Karen Berman, recently retired artistic director and chair of theatre and dance.

Swarner, who is double majoring in theatre and English, was also a semi-finalist for this year's Fulbright Scholarship. She took first place in scenic design for the set of "Ballet Russes," performed on campus last fall. Mentored by Scenic Designer Issac Ramsey, Swarner's dramaturgical research was on the early-20th-century Russian ballet company. The set was a conglomerate of muslin flats and mirror imagery. Her research delved into the context of the era, architectural styles, and biographies of the play's major characters.

This was Swarner's first mainstage set design and her senior capstone. She put a lot of pressure on herself to get things right. Her oral presentation to judges included a portfolio on Russian history, scenic design renderings, scale drawings, a set model, and production photos.

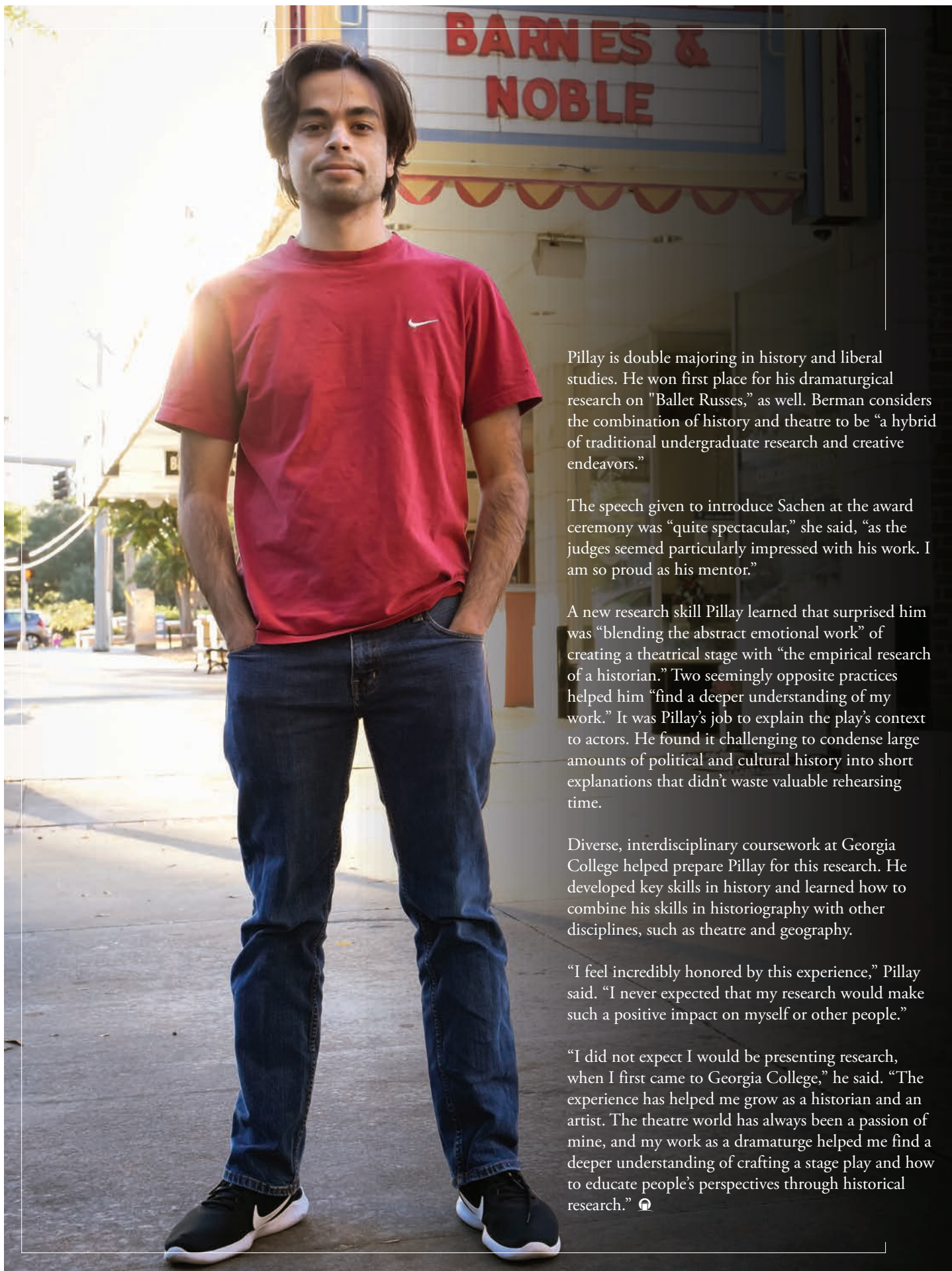
"I feel very honored and excited and, honestly, just super grateful for the opportunity and support that I had throughout the



process," Swarner said. "Georgia College prepared me by teaching me what I need to know in order to develop my ideas and present them professionally."

"One of my favorite parts of the research," she said, "was looking at the construction and history of old theatres, where the (ballet) company performed and the magnificence of their architecture. As part of my research, I was also able to read a portion of Nijinsky's diary and learn about schizophrenia and the treatment of mental illness during the early 1900s."

In April, Swarner received a free trip to the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. to compete against seven other regions. She was one of only eight undergraduates in the nation to compete for the Center's top award in scenic design. She also received master classes at the Kennedy Center from acclaimed professional scenic designers in the U.S.




Pillay is double majoring in history and liberal studies. He won first place for his dramaturgical research on "Ballet Russes," as well. Berman considers the combination of history and theatre to be "a hybrid of traditional undergraduate research and creative endeavors."

The speech given to introduce Sachin at the award ceremony was "quite spectacular," she said, "as the judges seemed particularly impressed with his work. I am so proud as his mentor."

A new research skill Pillay learned that surprised him was "blending the abstract emotional work" of creating a theatrical stage with "the empirical research of a historian." Two seemingly opposite practices helped him "find a deeper understanding of my work." It was Pillay's job to explain the play's context to actors. He found it challenging to condense large amounts of political and cultural history into short explanations that didn't waste valuable rehearsing time.

Diverse, interdisciplinary coursework at Georgia College helped prepare Pillay for this research. He developed key skills in history and learned how to combine his skills in historiography with other disciplines, such as theatre and geography.

"I feel incredibly honored by this experience," Pillay said. "I never expected that my research would make such a positive impact on myself or other people."

"I did not expect I would be presenting research, when I first came to Georgia College," he said. "The experience has helped me grow as a historian and an artist. The theatre world has always been a passion of mine, and my work as a dramaturge helped me find a deeper understanding of crafting a stage play and how to educate people's perspectives through historical research." 

Award Winning

Walker garners Black Caucus American Library Association award

Dr. Shaundra Walker has a mission to make information discoverable through the power of the library. She's the Director and Associate Director of Instruction and Research Services at the Ina Dillard Russell Library. She's spent nearly 20 years in library systems in both academic and public spheres.

Her career in libraries began when she started her Master of Library Science at Clark Atlanta University. While pursuing her degree, she started working for the DeKalb County Public Library.



Walker recently garnered an award for her work in promoting African Americans and other people of color in the library profession.

"At that time, they were doing some really innovative, creative things," she said. "They were providing materials in Korean, Chinese, and Japanese. They also had a really strong ESL program. It was just such a different library experience from what I knew growing up."

Walker realized what inclusivity could do for a library system. As part of the Black Caucus American Library Association for 20 years, she also learned best practices in bringing communities into the library to both share and discover information. Recently, Walker won the 2020 Demco Award for her work promoting diverse groups in the library profession.

This passion of the library profession took Walker to Mercer University after earning her master's. There, she pursued her doctorate in educational leadership with a

concentration in higher education administration. As a graduate of two Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Spelman and Clark Atlanta, her research began to look at trends in those universities when it came to library science.

"I became interested in the fact that African-Americans were excluded from most library education programs," she said. "I wasn't aware of that history when I was attending those HBCUs. As I got more experience in the profession it was something that was always really interesting to me. I was doing this research while I was also working at the DeKalb Library, so the combination of the curriculum and experience that I was having at my job was really impactful."

Walker has been at Georgia College for nine years. She's made a place for herself in the profession, by applying critical race theory to the field of librarianship. Her work examines libraries as they relate to aspects such as race, class, and power.

"People really think of libraries as being very neutral apolitical institutions," she said. "And really nothing could be further from the truth. I like to give people a different perspective by exploring issues of equity and diversity in the life of a library."

Walker teaches a course on cultural competency for library professionals. She shares her expertise on how to communicate, understand, interact, and create programming that develops relationships with underrepresented communities in library systems.

"Regardless of whether it's an academic institution or public library, our communities are becoming more and more diverse, so there's a real need for cultural competency in library systems," she said.

In the beginning of 2019, the Russell Library was granted a \$12,000 National



Endowment for the Humanities Common Heritage Program. Walker said the grant has started to fill a shortage in local African-American history in the Georgia College library collection.

“Based on conversations with my colleague, Nancy Davis Bray, I became aware that there was an absence of information about the local African-American community,” she said. “I just want to have a truer, more accurate history of Milledgeville in our collection. I hope that it’s through this project that we can develop a template that we can use with other underrepresented communities.”

Bringing communities into the library system to take part in inclusive programming, while also building a staff that is culturally competent, has been the framework of Walker’s career. She poses that the role of the library may be shifting, but the importance and need is ever-present.

“I think personally that libraries are central to a functioning democracy,” Walker said. “You need free and unfettered access to information. Our responsibility is to make that available. Our society will always need an institution like the library.” 🗣️

Leading the Way

Physics professor only U.S. educator to receive prestigious fellowship

Georgia College Physics Professor **Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge** was named a 2020 Fellow of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSoTL). He was one of nine educators — and the only U.S. applicant — to receive the prestigious lifetime award.

“This is a very competitive international fellowship and a great honor. I think it speaks highly of both Dr. Mahabaduge’s hard work and Georgia College’s commitment to excellence in teaching and learning,” said Dr. Jordan Cofer, associate provost for Transformative Learning Experiences.

Dr. Eric Tenbus, dean of the College of Art and Sciences, offered his congratulations too, saying, “What a fantastic honor! It’s a wonderful reflection of Dr. Mahabaduge’s commitment to undergraduate education and teaching excellence.”

Other winners this year were from Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. Normally, fellows are recognized during the ISSoTL annual conference. But, due to COVID-19, the October event in Perth, Australia, was canceled.

Mahabaduge’s group is the second cohort to be awarded this honor, since the ISSoTL Fellowship was established in 2019. Its vision is “to empower communities of learners committed to scholarship,

mentorship, leadership, and engagement,” according to ISSoTL. Fellows seek “new ways of thinking, doing, and learning” and strive for “holistic, meaningful, intentional approaches to higher education.”

Being named an ISSoTL Fellow is a lifetime title. Fellows are expected to impact the scholarship of teaching and learning at local, regional, national, and

international levels — demonstrating a particular commitment to mentoring emerging and junior scholars. They also support the development of emerging regions.

“This international scope and diverse perspective on higher education will definitely benefit me to grow as a

professor,” Mahabaduge said. “I can bring in successful teaching strategies used by educators around the world to my classroom that will benefit our students.”

“International collaborations can also lead to creating study abroad experiences for our students,” he said. “I took one of my students to China on a research abroad experience last year, and I hope to develop similar partnerships that will directly benefit our students.”

The ISSoTL Fellowship is just one thing on a busy schedule — something that highlights the career of a faculty member who’s always thinking creatively and engaging students in new ideas.

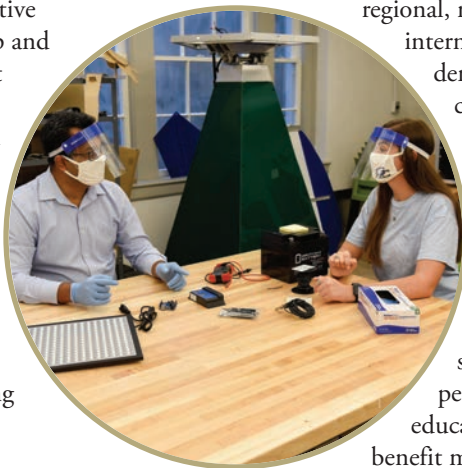
Mahabaduge has secured several fellowships since joining Georgia College in 2016. That year, he was named a Russell Library Faculty Fellow. He moved from the university level to get a SoTL Fellowship with the University System of Georgia (USG) in 2017 and participated in the Governor’s Teaching Fellows Program at the University of Georgia in 2019.

Earlier in the year, Mahabaduge was also the 2020 recipient of the USG’s Board of Regents Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award — bestowed for “a strong commitment to teaching and student success.”

This year’s international fellows “represent diverse models of excellence,” according to ISSoTL. All applicants went through a rigorous review. One appraiser said Mahabaduge’s “excitement and commitment to teaching really shines through.”

“As a personal feat,” Mahabaduge said, “winning this fellowship makes a complete set for me in terms of fellowships. Each of the fellowships helped me to develop as a researcher and as an educator.”

Mahabaduge was a prime candidate, due to his willingness to engage students in his own solar cell research and advocate in the community. He started an annual Renewable Energy Day for local elementary students and, last summer, traveled to India to teach Tibetan monks about physics. Mahabaduge has also connected his physics classes with university students from his home country, Sri Lanka. 📍





Georgia College's Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs **Dr. Costas Spirou** was invited to join a special advisory committee for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU).

He joins AASCU's Advisory Committee on Academic Innovation and Transformation.

The committee "will provide input on the range of programs, events, and services that AASCU provides our members in the areas of civic engagement, international education, teacher education, and student success," according to Dr. Teresa M. Brown, vice president for academic innovation and transformation at AASCU.

Members serve a three-year appointment. The group meets several times each year, primarily virtually.

AASCU is the collective voice of nearly 400 public colleges, universities, and systems that holds students and community at the heart of their mission, according to their website. The association works to expand student access, success, and opportunity, promote world-class teaching and experiential learning tied to career advancement, and support applied research and service that advances economic development and quality of life in communities across the country.

Chancellor's Learning Scholars Program

Four Georgia College faculty were recently selected for the University System of Georgia's Chancellor's Learning Scholars Program.

- **Dr. Scott Butler**, Professor of Public Health
- **Dr. James Schiffman**, Associate Professor of Communication
- **Dr. Jehan El-Jourbagy**, Assistant Professor of Business Law
- **Dr. Stefanie Sevcik**, Lecturer of English

These faculty members went through the nomination/application process and were selected for this statewide program. As Chancellor's Learning Scholars, they will take part in faculty development opportunities related to online learning and high-impact practices with peers from all around the state. They will then bring their experiences and knowledge back to Georgia College and lead faculty learning communities for their peers. When asked about the program, Dr. Jordan Cofer, Associate Provost for Transformative Learning Experiences, said that "it certainly speaks to the good work that GC faculty are doing. GC is known for innovation in the classroom and these four are certainly deserving of this honor."

All Chancellor's Learning Scholars serve a two-year term.

Prehistoric shark named after retired Georgia College professor

Dr. Dennis Parmley's close encounter with a shark didn't happen at a crowded beach or the ocean — but in a kaolin mine in Wilkinson County.

He was never in danger. It had been dead 35 million years.

But the shark — or rather some fossils of its teeth — recently earned Parmley the rare honor of having a prehistoric and previously unknown species named after him. The news has been celebrated on science websites, TV news, and even in *Newsweek*.

For 17 of his 30 years at Georgia College, the vertebrate paleontologist dug fossils from sediment at Hardie Mine in Gordon, Georgia. Faculty and hundreds of students joined him there over the years. As did his colleague and friend, David Cicimurri, curator of natural history at South Carolina State Museum and world expert on shark fossils. Together, they found many nautical remnants showing Middle Georgia was once a coastal region. The mine was rich in bones from whales, fish, marine snakes, crocodiles, and even a leatherback sea turtle. But it was a long, smooth shark's tooth — noted for its pair of smaller teeth on either side — that recently led Cicimurri and two other scientists to believe they'd stumbled across something new.

The teeth were dug up years ago at the Middle Georgia mine but remained in collections among other shark fossils. Back then, Parmley and Cicimurri thought the teeth represented several different species of shark. But now Cicimurri and his team believe they're from an ancient ancestor of today's sand tiger shark, long extinct, and never before identified by modern science.

After isolating hundreds of teeth and comparing them to contemporary sharks, the group named the species "*Mennerotodus parmleyi*" after Parmley to honor his contributions to vertebrate paleontology in Central Georgia. No one knows the Gordon site better or has collected more shark fossils than him, Cicimurri told Parmley.

At the same time, scientists also announced another new species as the "*Mennerotodus mackayi*," a 65 million-year-old shark that went extinct with the dinosaurs. Its fossils were found in Alabama. Both new species were grouped into the prehistoric genus "*Mennerotodus*," previously thought to have lived only in Europe and Asia. But they now think this family of sharks originated in North America.

Most of the South is overgrown with too much vegetation for fossils. But Middle Georgia — where ocean met land in the late Eocene Age — is "definitely unique," Parmley said. Rapid burial is what creates fossils. During some catastrophic event, sharks and other marine animals at the mine must have been quickly covered in rock sediment often found above layers of kaolin.

"It's an important discovery," Parmley said, "because it's part of our national treasure in this state. It gives us a little window into the past — not only about the kinds of animals and diversity of animals back then — but also the ecology and what habitats there were."

Parmley retired in 2018, but not from science. He still has a paleontology lab in the basement of Herty Hall and keeps busy categorizing relics of "boney fish." He also identifies snakes for the public when they're found in yards and gardens.

Parmley came to Georgia College in 1989 as a young professor to teach herpetology (study of snakes), vertebrate zoology, and ichthyology (study of fish). A graduate student told Parmley about the Gordon mine. He was surprised at its abundance of fossils and wrote many academic papers with colleagues on discoveries there. He suspects he's done more research on the site "than anybody else in the world."

Parmley collected thousands of fossilized teeth from the mine and helped identified more than 20 species of shark.



One of his greatest accomplishments was finding the vertebra of a colubrid water snake, determined to be the oldest snake fossil of its type in the world. Parmley also helped find the vertebrae and teeth of a few land mammals at the mine that "washed into shore." Georgia College Professor and Paleomammalogist Dr. Al Mead led the study of those rare fossils.

These and many other fossils are still stored at the university — along with teeth from "*Mennerotodus parmleyi*." Fossils from this species linger among thousands of other shark's teeth, just waiting to be singled out and showcased.

Parmley estimates the shark would have been 7-to-10 feet long and, like modern sand tiger sharks, fished along the shoreline. It lived at a time when the climate and water temperatures were changing, like today. This makes discoveries like this even more significant.

By recognizing past patterns, he said, we might predict future trends.

"There was a cold snap. Then, it warmed up again. Something happened in the environment that the sharks just couldn't tolerate," he said. "There's an old saying, 'You either adjust or you migrate or you die.' And a lot of them died. They went extinct, and others will again in the future."

"It's a natural thing, but humans seem to be accelerating it. So, if we can find out why," Parmley said, "it might give us clues on how we might better protect what we have today." 🐋

Dr. Holley Roberts appointed to Professional Standards Commission

Governor Brian Kemp appointed **Dr. Holley Roberts**, interim associate provost, to the Professional Standards Commission (PSC) in September 2020. She will serve on the Educator Preparation/Certification Committee, one of two standing committees that are a part of the commission. The Educator Preparation/Certification Committee receives and reviews items referred by the Educator Preparation Division relating to the status of PSC approved programs. The committee makes recommendations to the Commission for the approval, denial, or revocation of preparation programs, and monitors and advises the Commission on a variety of issues related to educator preparation.

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission was created by the Georgia General Assembly on July 1, 1991, to assume full responsibility for the preparation, certification, and professional conduct of certified personnel employed in the Georgia public schools. Roberts is one of two commissioners serving from higher education.



Georgia College Assistant Director of Leadership Programs **Ashley Copeland** has been selected for the Anti-Defamation League's 2020 Glass Leadership Institute.

The Glass Leadership Institute, now in its third decade, brings together leaders from academia, private enterprise, and the public sector to develop cutting-edge strategies to combat hate and bias. Participants engage in dynamic, interactive sessions on a broad range of topics, empowering them for the important work of fighting hate for good and the full range of issues on the Anti-Defamation League agenda. With instruction from top field experts, the 2020 class focused its efforts on civil rights, advocacy, and education, and combatting anti-semitism, cyberhate, and extremism.

Copeland is among the 20 members of the 2020 class, selected after a rigorous review process from applicants across the southeast.

"To be a lifelong learner means to ask questions, seek out answers, and to be curious. I am honored to be selected for the 2020 Glass Leadership Institute and to continue my learning," remarked Copeland. "I hope to better understand how to secure justice and fair treatment for all and implement actions in my personal, professional, and civic life that reflect this learning."

"Ashley is certainly one of the rising women leaders at Georgia College," said Chief Diversity Officer Carolyn Denard. "Selection for this program not only validates the good work that Ashley is doing, but it also provides an excellent opportunity for her to develop more informed strategies to challenge acts of hate and prejudice, to refine her own leadership skills, and to network with other leaders across the country focusing on issues that are critically important in our society today."

Copeland teaches in the Georgia College Leadership Certificate Program, leading the signature colloquium, "How to Change the World." In this course, students analyze global challenges, practice leveraging resources, and learn to harness the power of political and social systems to address the needs around them.

Copeland holds a master's degree in educational leadership from Minnesota State University, Mankato. She is a 2012 graduate of Georgia College, where she received her bachelor's degree in exercise science.

She serves as an ambassador for the Milledgeville-Baldwin County Chamber of Commerce. She is an alumna of Leadership Baldwin and of the 2017 class of Georgia Forward's Young Gamechangers leadership action program. 📍

ONE BIG ADVENTURE

Psych professor wins national award for contributions to group therapy

Many people are tempted to Google their own names.

If **H.L. Lee Gillis** did that, he'd find more than 1.6 million hits directly connected to his work in psychology — a fitting legacy of his many years researching group psychotherapy and adventure therapy.

It's no wonder, then, that Dr. Gillis was nationally recognized by the Society of Group Psychology and Group Psychotherapy, Division 49 of the American Psychological Association (APA). He was recently presented with APA's "2020 Arthur Teacher Group Psychologist of the Year Award" which honors important contributions to knowledge of group behavior.

"For me personally, it's a matter of having adventure therapy recognized by a national organization. This is a big deal. I was honored just to be nominated," Gillis said.

"There's an acknowledgment there that's been really powerful," he added. "On the Division 49 board, I've gotten to meet and work alongside people I respect. I had read their publications. Great scholars. Great academics. Making those connections through the years was an avenue to getting our work published in higher-tiered journals."

Gillis has been a professor of psychology at Georgia College since 1986 and department chair for the past 15 years. His journey to "mindful group adventure therapy" began at age 10, when he started attending summer camp. Gillis worked as a camp counselor through the 1970s, guiding youth in small-group activities.

He got his first taste of psychology at Davidson College in North Carolina and

became involved with a Wilderness Instructors course in Blairsville, Georgia. It introduced Gillis to enterprises like "trust falls" and 12-foot rappelling walls. During a summer course on abnormal psychology, he helped a psychiatrist conduct rock climbing with male adolescents. It was there, Gillis noticed a peculiar change. Patients, who wouldn't ordinarily talk and answer questions, were suddenly opening up.

"Something happened when they started climbing. The conversations were different," Gillis said. "I've essentially been chasing that my whole career. What was it? What made the difference? Was it the risk, the excitement, the fear? Being able to accomplish something they thought they couldn't do?"

The rest, as they say, is history.

A research term paper led to interning at an environmental education center, which led to graduate school at Middle Tennessee State University and a Ph.D. in counseling psychology from the University of Georgia. Gillis has worked with Project Adventure in Covington, Georgia, and as a licensed psychologist at Coliseum Center for Families in Milledgeville.

Over the years, he's won numerous honors, including Georgia College's "Distinguished Professor Award" in 1993. Gillis co-authored three books, multiple textbook chapters, and a copious number of publications. He's given over a dozen keynote addresses and nearly 145 professional presentations. He helped make training videos, as well. All revolved around wilderness groups and adventure therapy. In fact, Gillis was among the first to write on

this subject and co-authored "Adventure Therapy: Theory, Research, and Practice." He's also been a board member, fellow, and past president of APA's Division 49.

Gillis has taught Georgia College courses on group dynamics, interpersonal relationships, and personality theory, as well as senior seminars in adventure therapy and teamwork.

At Georgia College, his students are treated to similar small-group techniques and learn by experience. Instead of lectures, they read and discuss psychology articles, problem solve, and give presentations. Sometimes,





visitors see Gillis' students walking around the Arts and Science building. Each group member pulls the ends of a bandana so tautly, a cup of water on top doesn't spill. These types of activities connect people and show the importance of working together.

"That's what I'm working toward with my students too. They're problem-solving," Gillis said. "It's learning, instead of lecturing. This develops trust and makes it psychologically safe for students to be themselves and share with each other."

When students work in the lab, Gillis said their schoolwork "becomes real." They examine data and apply what they've learned in statistics and psychology classes. Many go on to be therapists, social workers, counselors, and psychologists.

"Initially, I was trying to get my foot in the door with research and get more involved with my studies," recent graduate Garrett Cook said. "I grew up backpacking, hiking,

and camping with my dad. The idea of using those types of activities to help young adults work through their drug addiction was extremely interesting to me. I felt like the adventure therapy lab would be a good fit, and I can say now that I was right."

Lab students deal mostly with secondary data on Excel spreadsheets. This helps them acquire important skills employers seek in the workplace. They learn how to analyze numbers, review literature, manage large sets of data, and report findings in an understandable way.

It was enjoyable work for Cook and a refreshing change from regular schoolwork. His time at Georgia College and in the adventure therapy lab helped him develop critical-thinking skills and "a healthy level of skepticism," which he uses every day at work to make decisions.

Recently, Cook was the lead author on a peer-reviewed article about adventure

therapy, published in the "Journal for Therapeutic Schools and Programs." Its major conclusion showed age had no bearing in the effectiveness of adventure therapy. However, post-treatment findings identified the need for additional support following discharge, because clients who tried alcohol at younger ages experienced more-severe relapses six months later.

"You know you're doing something that could potentially advance the field's knowledge in that area," Cook remarked, "when everyone in lab feeds off each other's ideas. There's an energy and a pace that's uncommon in normal classroom settings. It's exciting stuff."

Cook is just one of hundreds of students Gillis has worked with at Georgia College. He helps them find their passion through his.

You could say it's been an adventure. 📍

NEW FACES IN Administration

Georgia College welcomed several new faces in senior administrative roles at the university in 2020.

These individuals include:



Dr. Michael Stratton
Dean of the J. Whitney Bunting
College of Business



Dr. Brian Newsome
Dean of the John E. Sallstrom
Honors College



Dr. Carolyn Denard
Associate Vice President
for Inclusive Excellence
and Chief Diversity Officer



Dr. Holley Roberts
Interim Associate Provost
for Academic Affairs and
Director of the Graduate School



Dr. Irene Burgess
Executive Director of the
Andalusia Institute



Dr. Veronica Womack
Executive Director
of the Rural Studies Institute



Javier Francisco
Interim Executive Director
of Admissions



Lee Fruitticher
Associate Vice President for
Finance and Administration



Joel Robinson
Senior Associate Vice President
for Enrollment Management



UNIVERSITY Milestones and Accolades

WHAT AN HONOR

50th Anniversary for honors program coincided with new Honors College designation

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Since 1970, Georgia College nurtured and developed bright minds through its honors program. In time for its 50th Anniversary celebration in November, the program transformed into an Honors College — complete with its own dean and plans to make the honors experience even more dynamic for students.

“Moving to an Honors College adds prestige. It’ll position Georgia College to compete in an ever-tighter marketplace for honors students in the region, the state, the nation, and even in the world because we have something really special here at Georgia College,” said Dr. Brian Newsome, inaugural dean of the Honors College.

The naming of the college after Dr. John E. Sallstrom was approved by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents in October in time for the program’s 50th Anniversary celebration during Alumni Weekend. Sallstrom founded Georgia College’s honors program.

There are no specific criteria to meet when forming an honors college. A national honors council dictates best practices for such units — the key practice being appointment of a dean. This raises the Honors College as an equal among colleges at the university. Newsome attends Council of Deans meetings and reports directly to Dr. Costas Spirou, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs.

A distinguishing feature of an honors college is “robust financial support,” Newsome said. A substantial financial gift was donated for the new Honors College by Professor Emeritus Dr. Ken Saladin.

With the naming gift, Transformative Experience grants will be available to support study abroad and internships. In addition, a new Saladin Scholars grant program will offer additional support for students seeking to use transformative experiences as a springboard for graduate school or national scholarship applications. Students interested in honors typically seek a higher level of engagement with critical texts and tough questions. They “want to be engaged enthusiastically in the pursuit of ideas,” Newsome said. The naming gift makes these intellectual adventures possible.



"It's about raising the profile of honors at Georgia College," he said. "An honors college means having the resources for transformative experiences. When I interviewed here, I found a deep appreciation for that type of honors community, and that appealed to me."

The Augusta, Georgia, native came armed with lots of honors experience and plenty of ideas. He has a background in modern European history and international relations and was dean of curriculum and assessment at Elizabethtown College in South Central Pennsylvania.

To start off, Newsome talked with Admissions, Advancement, the Honors Faculty Council, Registrar's Office, Advising, University Housing, Outdoor Center, Leadership Programs, and the GIVE Center to come up with strategic priorities for the Honors College. He held Zoom listening sessions with honors students to be certain their needs were met. He's also solicited input from honors alumni for their perspective.

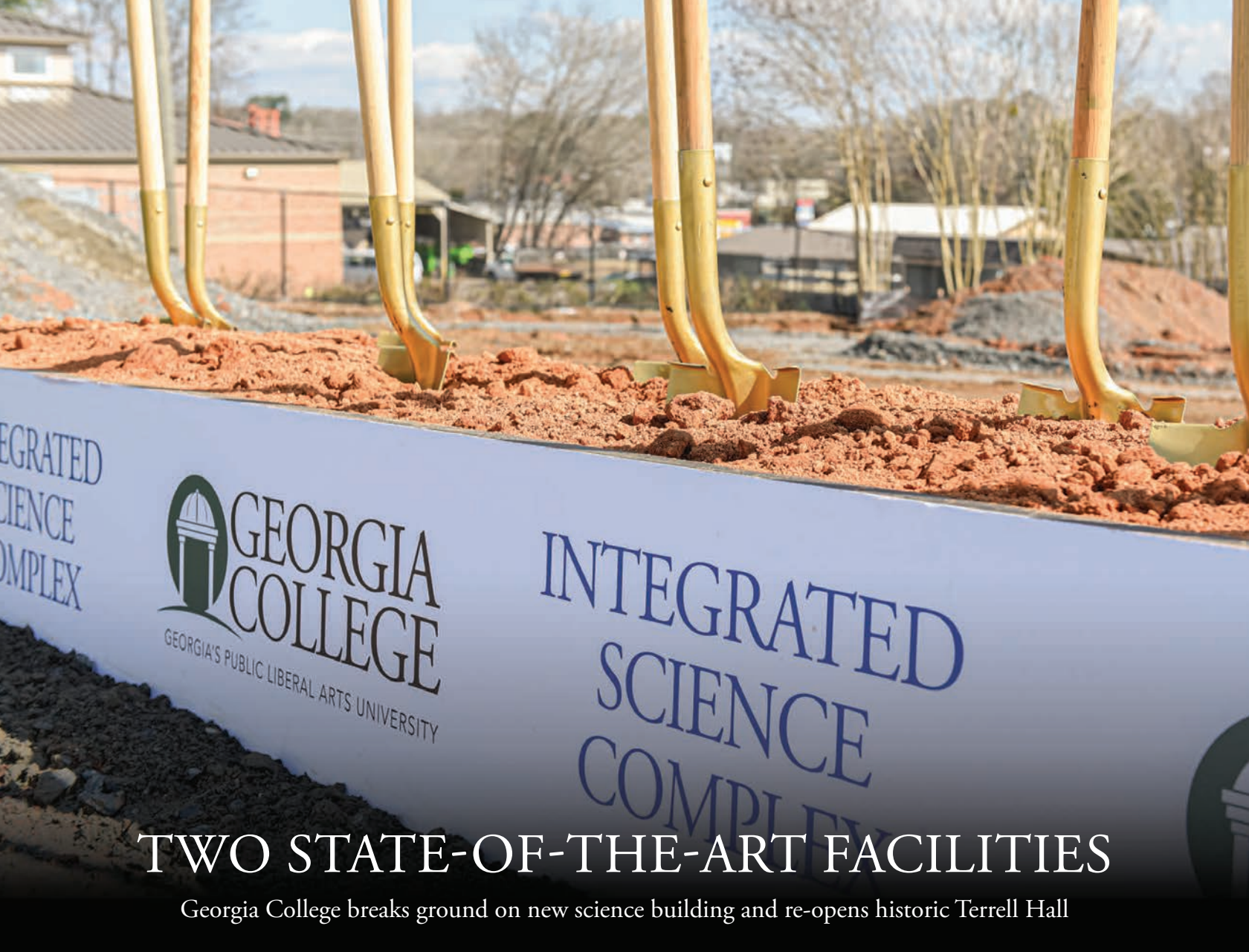
"From my perspective, honors isn't about doing more. It's not about piling on work for the sake of piling on work. Rather, it's about doing things differently. Tackling tough questions, engaging in material, and doing it as part of a community of peers and faculty members," Newsome said.

His plans are multi-faceted. New honors students will be grouped in cohorts for icebreaking and teambuilding activities during orientation and beyond. They're encouraged to live at Bell

Hall into their sophomore year for additional bonding and gather at the newly-renovated Humber-White House for honors activities. Space includes a kitchen for food receptions, lounge and study areas, and a conference room for "dynamic conversations." The program's longstanding, popular book discussions and presenters' series are also held there. Students are being encouraged to do more community service, as well, and round out senior capstone projects for honors credit.

Newsome hopes the John E. Sallstrom Honors College will help boost recruitment and retention rates. He plans to develop an honors pathway for students from two-year colleges to transfer to Georgia College, and he's working on establishing an admissions pathway for first-generation and ESL (English as a Second Language) students, as well. 📍





TWO STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITIES

Georgia College breaks ground on new science building and re-opens historic Terrell Hall

Georgia College commemorated two campus buildings in February 2020 with a groundbreaking ceremony for its Integrated Science Complex and ribbon cutting for newly-renovated Terrell Hall. The two facilities mark a combined construction upgrade for the campus worth \$35.4 million.

University President Dr. Steve Dorman was one of a dozen officials who dug ceremonial shovels of dirt — officially commencing construction of Georgia College's first new academic structure to be built since the Arts and Sciences building in 1995. The Integrated Science Complex is located at the corner of Montgomery and Wilkinson Streets across from Herty Hall.

Dorman also presided over a ribbon cutting at Terrell Hall on Front Campus.

Originally built in 1908, Terrell is one of the university's oldest structures. Years ago, it was a dormitory. More recently, Terrell housed various department offices. Its new use will be for communication technology and studies.

"I am delighted to break ground on our new Integrated Science Complex," Dorman said. "This will greatly expand upon our existing strengths in our science programs at Georgia College and provide our students and faculty members with state-of-the-art facilities focused on science, technology, and research."

"In addition," he said, "I am delighted to re-open historic Terrell Hall. The improvements we made to the historical character of the building are breathtaking. This facility brings together all the relevant areas of mass communications and media

studies, and it greatly expands opportunities for our students."

The \$22.1 million Integrated Science Complex will be three full floors with advanced equipment and spaces for students to gather, collaborate, and use for study. Completion for the 43,000 sq. ft. building is slated for late spring 2021. New space will allow the university to offer a concentration in the growing field of forensic chemistry and more science education courses for students who want to teach science.

Planning the building was challenging, due to "the weirdest juxtaposition of dissimilar architecture anywhere on campus," said University Architect Michael Rickenbaker. Next door is Kilpatrick, which is mid-century modern. Across the street is also modernist — the



oldest section of Herty Hall, built in the 1950s.

Diagonally across the street is neo-classical Parks Memorial.

"It's a conflicted site. But we looked back to the entire campus with the porch element,"

Rickenbaker said.

"Brick windows with details around them give depth reminiscent of our older buildings. We even referenced

back to the industrial age to look almost like factories that used to be in this end of town."

"At the end of the day," he said, "we feel confident we have something that really looks like it belongs here."

At the groundbreaking, Dr. Jim James, vice chancellor for real estate and facilities at the University System of Georgia (USG), said Georgia College's campus is a favorite of his. The Integrated Science Complex "was a really tough project," blending old and new, that met its design goals.

The architectural design is striking for its wide expanses of glass windows, making it a beacon of light at night, Rickenbaker remarked. Inside, all teaching and research laboratories have walls of windows — allowing visitors to walk the perimeter of each floor and see science-on-display.

"The efficiency will be unmatched," said Dr. Indiren Pillay, chair of biological and environmental sciences. "The building epitomizes a sea-change in the way we think as scientists at Georgia College. This building is a monument to that."

Planning for the new building began almost as soon as Herty's new wing was added in 2012. New physics and environmental science programs were part of the reason, said Dr. Chavonda Mills, chair of chemistry, physics, and astronomy. The new majors brought in additional faculty and students. Herty also services core courses for pre-nursing, exercise science, and health sciences.

As undergraduate research grew — becoming a transformative experience at Georgia College — space was needed even more.

"It's always been there, in our DNA so-to-speak," Pillay said. "It's natural for us as scientists to provide research for our students. But now it's become more of an emphasis for the mission of the university; and much like our colleagues in theatre and other experiential programs, we've seen an uptick in what we want to do with our students."

Dorman suggested a new building across the street, and planning began. Classrooms will remain at Herty, along with the observatory, planetarium, and Museum of Natural History. Teaching and research labs will be at the Integrated Science Complex.

The new building will allow sciences to move beyond traditional lab work and into problem-based research, Pillay said. This requires more time in labs for students. Immediate access to instruments in the linear equipment room will also be immensely beneficial for students and faculty, Mills said. All disciplines will share space and equipment. She's excited about the potential for collaboration and hopes it will lead to more innovative research.

"There's a lot of functionality there," Mills said. "There aren't any spaces that won't be utilized."

"It's an open concept," Pillay agreed. "We're moving away from the concept of territories in departments. There will be a lot of interconnectedness."

The community will be welcomed into this new space with beautiful landscaping that also acts as a science lab. There'll be a pollinator garden for butterflies and bees, an ecosystem of shrubs and trees used in experimentation, and a cement bio-swale that retains water and becomes a manmade pond in the rain. Water will drain into other areas of the topography.

Outside, traditional Georgia College rocking chairs will beckon. Inside, hallway walls will display research posters and traveling exhibits of art. The first display will be African art, in honor of Milledgeville's Slater family, who owned a house on the property years ago. The site will be marked with a memorial plaque.

Mark Bowen, project manager for Facilities Planning, is overseeing construction. Architectural work was done by Cooper Carry of Atlanta, and Sheridan Construction in Macon is doing the building. Once the Integrated Science Complex is completed, plans will begin to renovate Herty Hall.

"The project team has worked well with our faculty and staff throughout the design phases," Bowen said. "It truly has been a collaborative effort that will culminate in a facility that'll meet the programmatic needs of the university for many years." 📍



Terrell's \$13.3 million renovations took two years to complete. Rick Ruark, associate director for Facilities Planning, was project manager with Lord Aeck Sargent in Atlanta doing the architecture drawings. More than 180,000 hours of labor were put into Terrell's renovations, said Sean Moxley, president of Garbutt Construction Company in Dublin, Georgia, which did the work.

Dr. Eric Tenbus, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said the new Terrell Hall is "gorgeous and puts the communication department into the 21st century. When students pursue mass communication, digital media, journalism, and rhetoric at Georgia College, he said, they can be assured of having access to the most advanced equipment.

Much like the new Integrated Science Complex, bringing together art and science, Tenbus said "Terrell Hall represents another fusion that is important to our atmosphere at a public liberal arts university. And, here, I refer to the fusion of the modern state-of-the-art with the historic in one space."

Historic elements obscured in the 1970s were salvaged — like higher ceilings, wider hallways, old flooring, and windows that were covered up.

Close to 30 coats of paint were stripped off the wood in stairwells and corridors to reveal stunning original woodwork. Arches along main hallways were rediscovered early in the project, Rickenbaker remarked, and restored. Most of the original materials used to build this turn-of-the-century beauty have been historically and painstakingly preserved.

Terrell now has central air conditioning and full use of its basement. Modern updates include advanced multimedia laboratories and engaged-learning classrooms featuring cutting-edge communications technology. There are small classrooms, sun-filled work spaces for students, a large screening room, and a debate area.

Georgia College's collaborative student newsroom will also be in Terrell. Student media will work together in one multipurpose space — the university's live TV news organization, GC360; student newspaper, the Colonnade; and student radio station, WGUR 95.3. Facilities include a versatile production studio and new radio station. Students will have the tools to practice modern, digital-first journalism and experiment with innovative news delivery, while also producing a traditional newspaper and television/radio newscasts. 📺



Georgia College ranks third in state system for four-year graduation rate

Georgia College is well ahead of the national average for institutions that graduate students in four years. A recent three-point increase places Georgia College third in the state's university system, as well — a sign of innovative programming and commitment to student success.

"This is an important indicator of the effectiveness of the education, support provided on campus, and experiences that students receive during their time at GC," said Dr. Steve Dorman, university president. "It shows we're providing a life-transforming and highly-engaged experience that helps prepare students for a lifetime of success."

Georgia College's four-year graduation rate rose three points over last year — putting it 32 percent higher than the national average for public universities, which is 38.8 percent. The new rate is 17 percent higher than the overall national average, 43.7 percent, that includes private institutions.

This achievement shows the university is working efficiently to give students what they need — saving the "precious resource of their time" and lowering the financial burden on families, according to Suzanne Pittman, who recently retired from her position as associate vice president of Enrollment Management.

In fact, Georgia College has an extremely low student loan default rate — just under three percent — one of the lowest in the state. Graduating on time puts students into the job market sooner, so they can begin their earning potential.

Getting a bachelor's degree in four years also makes students more competitive for graduate schools and professions like law or medicine.

"Any time you can show a proven track record of success, it demonstrates you're focused," Pittman said. "It shows other schools and potential employers that you're a serious contender, and you can handle academically-challenging material."

The university raised its four-year graduation rate by more than 12 points in the past 10 years. At 51.2 percent, however, there's still room for improvement. Numbers nationwide remain low on average, officials said, because students change majors, decide to include more courses for a minor, take time off from studies for personal reasons, or tackle fewer credits to maintain their HOPE scholarships.



Our priority is to provide students a well-rounded education and for them to graduate in four years.

Dr. Costas Spirou, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs



"Much of the credit for the increase in our four-year graduation rate goes to our highly-committed faculty and staff," Spirou said, "who are dedicated to teaching and work closely with our students both inside and outside the classroom to achieve their goals."

The university did several things in recent years that impacted the four-year graduation rate, Pittman noted. A professional advising model was established, giving advisors the ability to focus on individual plans for student progress. In freshman seminar, students use a computer program to academically map out their college years. This forces students to think about their future, finish mandated courses early, and put forethought into career management.

Georgia College also invested more funds into the Learning Center, providing tutors and supplemental instruction for those who are struggling. A teaching model, Math Emporium, helps students better understand college algebra.

As part of Georgia College's unique GC Journeys program, students as early as freshman year interact with counselors at the Career Center. The program ensures every student engages in multiple high-impact, transformational experiences. Practices — like undergraduate research, internships, study abroad, and community-based learning — broaden and enrich the college years.

When students participate in these kinds of encounters, they're more engaged on campus and do better in class. As a result, they're more likely to stay on track and graduate on time.

Georgia College connects its common core curriculum directly to the national LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise) essentials — which include critical thinking and quantitative reasoning. A recent National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) showed Georgia College's graduating seniors exceeding in areas like reflective, integrated, and collaborative learning; student-faculty interaction; and "discussions with diverse others."

The University System of Georgia (USG) helped steer this progress with programs like Momentum Year, Complete College Georgia, and Gateways to Completion. The USG has "done a tremendous job" framing the route to success — encouraging schools to share ideas and work toward common goals, Pittman remarked.

"The level of engagement we provide has to be a good thing," Pittman said. "Fortune 500 companies are looking for graduates with well-rounded educations, who are job ready and able to adjust to new settings, who work well in groups, and think critically."

"These are all things a liberal arts education focuses on," she said, "so that resonates with parents and prospective students." 🎓

GC Journeys wins Regents' Momentum Year Award for excellence



The University System of Georgia (USG) awarded its “2021 Regents’ Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation” to GC Journeys — a program where every Georgia College student participates in at least five transformative experiences in their college years.

“We strongly value the success of our students and realize the impact of the intentional and supportive opportunities a program like GC Journeys offers to their college experience,” said Dr. Costas Spirou, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs.

“We are dedicated to providing all our students access to these high-impact practices,” he said, “and will continue to nurture and develop GC Journeys so our students are career or graduate school ready.”

In a congratulatory letter announcing the award, Dr. Tristan Denley, executive vice chancellor and chief academic officer for USG, wrote: “We received many outstanding nomination portfolios this year; and each was thoroughly reviewed by a panel of faculty and administrators from across the University System. When the review committee met to discuss the nominations and finalize their recommendations, they voted unanimously to recommend GC Journeys program as this year’s winner.”

The path to this honor started last year when Dr. Jordan Cofer, associate provost of Transformative Learning Experiences, and Dr. Cynthia Alby, professor of Secondary Education, agreed GC Journeys would be “extremely competitive.” Last fall, Cofer worked with various departments to capture steps they were taking

to provide students transformative experiences. These included undergraduate research, internships, study abroad, leadership opportunities, community-based learning, and career planning.

Cofer also worked with officials at Institutional Research and Institutional Effectiveness to collect assessments and documentation that proved the effectiveness of GC Journeys. Then, he joined Dr. Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, the university’s faculty success coordinator, to format an approach for application.

GC Journeys is “comprehensive” and “ambitious,” Cofer said, and that’s what helped propel it to award-winning success.

“It’s not a department initiative; rather, it’s a university-wide initiative,” he said. “While it was conceived and driven by faculty, it’s taken the entire university working together to focus on student success, which is at the heart of a liberal arts education. It’s this type of collaboration that really helped set us apart.”

GC Journeys puts high-impact practices at the center of student experience and at every level of undergraduate curriculum; and this, according to Denley, was a distinguishing feature. The university integrates curricular and co-curricular experiences, which serves “as a springboard for students to explore career pathways, engage with local and global communities, develop leadership skills, and cultivate an academic mindset,” Denley wrote. These are all elements of USG’s Momentum Year award, as well.

“I’m so excited about the award,” Cofer said, “because it’s external recognition of the great work our faculty and staff are doing. It helps confirm that quality education that GC students receive.” 📌

Georgia College recently became a member of the Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC)

According to their website, all institutions of higher education are invited to become ESC members if they have demonstrated a commitment to engaged scholarship, as evidenced by the Carnegie Foundation’s Elective Classification in Community Engagement, or by other demonstrated evidence, as evaluated by the ESC Membership Committee.

“Participation in this national consortium will support our institutional efforts in GC Journeys as well as provide an opportunity for our faculty and students to attend the annual

conference and publish in two peer-reviewed journals,” said Dr. Costas Spirou, provost and vice president for academic affairs.

“This is also a recognition of our continuous efforts and commitment to community-based engaged and experiential learning,” he added.

ESC hosts an annual conference and supports regional conferences and symposiums sponsored by member institutions. The organization also provides intensive training for Emerging Engagement Scholars (graduate students and new faculty) as well as professional development for engagement professional staff during the annual conference. 📌



The Graduate School at GC sees record enrollment

While colleges and universities across the nation struggle to meet enrollment goals, Georgia College's Graduate School has broken records across the board.

For the fall 2020 semester, 1,282 students enrolled in graduate programs at the university — the largest number in history. That number has been steadily rising since fall 2016 when 868 students were enrolled.

Interim Associate Provost and Director of the Graduate School Dr. Holley Roberts attributes the growth to Georgia College's reputation as an institution of higher education and the innovation to offer programs that meet the needs of professionals in our state.

U.S. News & World Report ranked several Georgia College master's degrees in the "Best Online Graduate Programs" for 2020. The graduate nursing programs were recognized as 28th in the country and first in Georgia. Online Master's in Business degrees (excluding the MBA) were listed as 17th in the nation and also first in Georgia, while the online MBA was also the highest ranked in the state.

During this time of economic uncertainty, many people are looking to develop more in their current professions, increase their knowledge in a specific area, or change careers, according to Roberts.

"Growth is happening in many of our graduate programs with the largest being in the College of Education — specifically in our Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program," said Roberts.

The MAT program provides initial educator preparation at the master's degree level for people who already have a bachelor's degree with a major in specific content fields. It's primarily for those people looking to change careers to become a teacher.

"Part of it is, as people are losing their jobs, they decide to go into teaching. If they already have a bachelor's degree, they can be in the classroom, start teaching, and get certified with the MAT," said Dr. Joe Peters, dean of the College of Education.

Since 2015, graduate programs in the College of Education have "grown 412 percent," said Peters. He attributes that primarily to the move to offer programs online. MAT programs began to move online in 2016 and have seen steady growth since then.

"With the MAT program, students can focus in middle grades, secondary, or special education," Peters said.

"In the College of Education, we also have a teacher leadership specialist degree and a curriculum and instruction master's degree. We just started both a few years ago, and they also have record enrollment," he said.

Most graduate programs at the university are online, making easier access for students across the state. With many already in a working profession, online learning brings more flexibility and options as people look to pursue an advanced degree. That's why the College of Education plans to continue to offer more programs online to meet needs.

"Next summer, we're going to do early childhood and middle grades master's degrees 100 percent online for the first time, as well as special education master's and specialist degrees," Peters said.

The university also offers certificates online in education and other fields. It's one more way to help professionals hone existing skills or develop new ones.

The Graduate School is looking to expand offerings across the university to address the needs of professional learners with increasing the offerings in graduate certificates.

"Certificates are non-degree seeking," Roberts said. "They are a series of classes that build on each other to enhance knowledge and skills in a specific area. We are planning to offer several new certificates coming out of health sciences and business. Although they're in the early stages, options could include information systems, data analytics, IT auditing, web development, nutrition, nurse simulation educator, and more."

Meeting the current workforce needs is key to the growth and development of The Graduate School.

"Our goals looking forward are to foster student success, cultivate an engaged graduate community, and focus our recruitment efforts," said Roberts.

Whether in education, business, health sciences, or humanities, Georgia College will continue to provide an education for graduate learners that's both accessible and preeminent.

For more information on the Graduate School at Georgia College, visit www.gcsu.edu/graduate.



Veronica Womack and the Rural Studies Institute: Putting small communities and Georgia College on the map

Georgia College's innovative Rural Studies Institute was established in January 2020. As Dr. Veronica Womack settled into her new role as its executive director, the coronavirus was raging in China. Now a global pandemic, it has sent billions of people home to work remotely by computer — giving more urgency and meaning to Womack's work.

"The current crisis emphasizes some of the most difficult challenges of living in rural places. As we retool our educational systems for online learning, those rural communities with limited access to broadband will have an enormous hurdle to overcome in order to participate," said Womack. "In addition, many rural communities have few hospitals and emergency care services. So, during a world pandemic, they are vulnerable. Many people who live in rural places are in the hard-hit service economy. For recovery in these communities, they will need assistance."

Before the crisis, Womack was already following the right formula. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has helped spotlight inequalities and challenges in rural America. The pandemic has "given rural America an amplified voice," Womack said. Issues she's been talking about for decades, like lack of broadband internet, are now apparent for all to see.

Rural areas also need infrastructure of roads, bridges, and water/sewer systems. They need funding to build up their communities with employment "that allows for thriving, not just surviving," Womack said. To navigate the 21st century successfully, rural residents need to be retrained and given new tools and skills. In addition, young people need jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities to keep them from leaving rural hometowns for the city.

The Rural Studies Institute is meant to fill in these gaps, and Womack is the perfect

person for the job. A vivacious outspoken academic, Womack grew up in rural Alabama and made a career researching the Southern Black Belt region — a conglomerate of more than 300 impoverished counties overlooked by policy makers but never far from her mind.

The Institute will produce research and community-building models to resuscitate and strengthen rural life in Baldwin County, Georgia, and nationwide.

"There's some question as to what would a liberal arts college do with a rural institute? Well, a lot," Womack said.

"A lot of people would love to live in rural places. When you think about the quality of life that we have here — it's not bad quality. People like the slow pace, and the fact that you don't spend hours of your day in traffic, and that our environment is still relatively pristine. But there are things that would

make it better. There are a lot of challenges, and I don't think they're just in Georgia or the south. If you go around the country, you'll hear people discussing the challenges of living in rural places right now."

The idea for a Rural Studies Institute can be traced to a challenge to the university community to consider transformational ideas to meet educational, economic, and health disparities in the middle Georgia area. Womack was a part of a group with Provost Dr. Costas Spirou, Johnny Grant from external relations, and representatives from each college to consider such an idea.

The group envisioned an institute to address disparities in four areas: health, economic opportunity, education, and the environment. Because of Georgia College's unique mission, rural location, and community-based engaged focus, the group decided the Institute could go beyond the agriculture focus of land-grant institutions to highlight all needs in rural communities.

"We felt we could lead the solutions on disparity issues," Womack said. "We're talking about moving communities forward, finding best practices, and developing models that can be replicated all over the place."

Her concern for rural people and black farmers garnered national attention. In April 2016, Womack was invited to address the United Nation's 18th Session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent in Geneva, Switzerland. In 2017, she received a \$150,000 seed grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to examine implementation of public policy in the rural South. Recently, she received an additional \$75,000 from the USDA to continue that work. Her research is also funded by the Robert W. Johnson Foundation to study resilience and health in rural communities.

Womack was featured in a New York Times opinion piece called, "Something Special Is Happening in Rural America." She was interviewed for a radio podcast called "The Homecomers" that was covered by National Public Radio. In 2019, Womack was also quoted in the national weekly magazine, The Nation.

More recently, Womack was a panel member for a discussion on rural politics in a Wall Street Journal video. She is presently a fellow for the Southern Economic Advancement Project (SEAP), sponsored by the Roosevelt Institute, where she's studying the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) and its impact in the Black Belt region.

Often research is only focused on deficits of rural places, like the Black Belt or Appalachia. But Womack also sees a resilience within these communities, a pride of community and culture, and a people who've survived many hardships. The Rural Studies Institute will help identify barriers to economic viability and seek solutions that are reflective of a community's needs.

"I grew up in the Black Belt," Womack said. "I learned ordinary people could make a difference – that you didn't have to settle in whatever circumstance you find yourself. That we can make a difference in our own lives and in the lives of others."

By partnering with local communities, Womack said she'll listen to residents and document their wisdom and stories — while also offering the knowledge and expertise found at the university level. Using both, she believes a more comprehensive and beneficial plan for development can be developed.

The Institute will also look to the future by developing student leaders, who will be the policy makers and CEOs of tomorrow. As such, they'll need to understand the needs of rural Americans.

"How do we build the capacity of rural places to engage in a 21st-century economic development engine?" Womack asked. "The greatest thing we can do is to tap the expertise of the people who live here."

"That's why I really like the approach with Georgia College's Rural Studies Institute of highlighting community assets, so we utilize the expertise and technical assistance from agencies that work on rural issues," she said; "but we also leverage that with the body of knowledge that already resides right here in our rural communities." 📍



Womack's vision for the Rural Studies Institute includes:

1. Building a body of literature, knowledge, and understanding about rural communities. She will do this by collaborating with existing campus experts and tapping networks of national experts. Womack will use traditional research and community-based approaches to engage rural communities and Georgia College students.
2. Creating a podcast to highlight rural storytelling. This was the internship focus of senior English major, Jonesha Johnson.
3. Focusing on strategic planning efforts, relationship building, funding, and technical assistance for rural communities and community-based organizations.
4. Offering workshops for rural leaders and residents. Workshops began in Fall 2021 and were free to attend.



New Andalusia Institute has robust opening

It was a bizarre time to begin a new job — let alone launch an organization from scratch.

COVID-19 quickly turned Dr. Irene Burgess' new position as inaugural executive director of Georgia College's new Andalusia Institute into a quagmire of possible pitfalls. But the opening was "virtually" flawless.

"It's gratifying that we've been able to develop the start of an Andalusia Institute culture, despite the challenges of the time," Burgess said. "Actually, COVID was one of the better things that happened to us. It gave me time to work on our virtual presence, create a Facebook page, and establish ourselves in a way that's really unique."

Putting events online turned out to be a smart move — amplifying the works of famed author and alumna Flannery O'Connor, while introducing the institute to a wider audience. People worldwide tune in for lively discussions about O'Connor's novels, short stories, and essays.

Before the pandemic, Burgess planned to begin slowly, building up the institute with author visits and readings. COVID changed that direction, and Burgess couldn't be happier with the results. More than 200 people registered to participate in virtual events — the most popular given by English Professor Dr. Bruce Gentry.

For years, Gentry led a monthly discussion on O'Connor with residents in Eatonton. Online, his sessions have blossomed into a bimonthly international affair. Viewers from all over the United States — as well as Italy,



Spain, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Argentina, and Turkey — link into his Zoom programs. People who can't otherwise travel to Andalusia find a sense of community, connection, and common interest with like-minded readers via computer. Andalusia Institute's online programs also sparked global interest in Milledgeville, Georgia history, Southern studies, and mid-20th century literature.

"This little thing in Eatonton once a month is now worldwide because of coronavirus," Burgess said. "Only half the audience are scholars. Some are just happy to have someone to talk to because of COVID. Others are fanatic about her books. They love her, and they love her books; but they never had anyone to talk to about it. Now they have an outlet."

Burgess understands the magnetism of O'Connor's peculiar, charming, and sometimes gruesome stories. She grew up in rural Maine and sees many of her townsfolk in the quirky mannerism of O'Connor's

characters. In high school, Burgess read O'Connor and marveled at a world much like her own. Her father was a chicken farmer, before working at a local factory and eventually moving the family to New Hampshire.

She left to get an undergraduate degree in agricultural economics at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Burgess worked as a line supervisor at food production plants, before deciding she'd rather read and discuss books for a living. She got her master's in English at the University of New Hampshire, then a Ph.D. in women writers and English literature of the 16th century at SUNY Binghamton University in New York.

From there, Burgess did a number of things. She taught at Wheeling Jesuit University, where she became chair of the English department. She was associate dean for academic affairs at Wilmington College in Ohio, then provost at Eureka College in Illinois; vice president of academic



“““

Working here, I've become aware of her as an individual. People tell stories about her. I go to the Andalusia museum so often, and I talk to scholars and people who met her. She's become real to me.

– Dr. Irene Burgess

programming at the Appalachian College Association; and head of a scholastic consortium in Pennsylvania. But she was looking for something different.

Burgess saw an ad for Georgia College, which was starting an institute based on one of her favorite post-modern writers. She jumped at the chance to visit campus and see where O'Connor got her undergraduate degree in sociology. Burgess couldn't wait to tour the Andalusia farmhouse, where O'Connor spent her remaining years writing and suffering from Lupus — a devastating inflammatory disease when the immune system attacks its own tissues.

Becoming head of a new institute based on O'Connor was a rare chance to build something from the ground up. Burgess was intrigued and jumped at the opportunity — bringing along skills uniquely suited to the job, like her experience starting organizations and raising funds, as well as her interest in literature and O'Connor.

At her interview, Burgess asked Georgia College administrators the “why” question. Why did they think it was a good idea to start an institution based on the writer? University President Dr. Steve Dorman gave a satisfying answer. He said the famous alumna had to go elsewhere for a master's in Fine Arts. He wanted “future Flannery O'Connors” to get the support they need here.

This answer so captivated Burgess that she's planning a future writing residency on 487 acres of land behind the Andalusia property. She hopes to build individual houses and a writing center with advanced accessibility and support for the disabled. She feels this would best honor O'Connor, who walked with crutches due to her illness. The author developed Lupus in her mid 20s and died at age 39, while living at Andalusia with her mother. Nearly all of her short stories, novels, essays, and letters were written during those years.

Burgess envisions a writing residency for all people, but one especially equipped to assist people with all types of disabilities. There are other writing residencies in the country. Out of 5,000 higher education schools, however, maybe 50 are tied to alumni writers. None is built to uniquely support the disabled.

“There's this whole group of artists who have disabilities. About one-in-five people in the U.S. has a disability,” Burgess said. “One of the problems with

writing residencies — many are in old houses converted to be accessible. We're building something from scratch. Why not build something that's highly accessible? Build it so everyone can use it. Make it easier for all people.”

“It will be a challenge,” she said. “But it could also be very appealing and distinctive.”

Another idea Burgess is working on involves collecting and preserving memories of O'Connor. Burgess is taking Dr. Stephanie Opperman's oral history class to learn more about the art of historical storytelling. The oral history project is being podcasted and kept at Ina Dillard Russell Library. A student from Gentry's Southern literature class is busy transcribing interviews from people who remember O'Connor and members of her family.

While living at Andalusia, O'Connor kept in touch with former professors. College literary groups often visited the farmhouse in the spring, sitting in rocking chairs with O'Connor on the front porch. Every Monday night, O'Connor was part of a reading and discussion group in Milledgeville — called “The Quart Club,” because each member brought a quart of ice cream. People remember their parents talking about the club and how O'Connor read her stories out loud.

Several university scholars help lead discussions for the institute's monthly virtual events — like Dr. Jordon Cofer, associate provost of Transformative Learning Experiences; and Dr. Carolyn Denard, associate vice president and chief diversity officer in the Office of Inclusive Excellence. Various people know O'Connor's work and life history well and have tidbits to offer — like Nancy Davis Bray, associate director of Special Collections at the library; and Dr. Monica Miller, head of the Flannery O'Connor Association in Macon and professor at Middle Georgia State University. Monthly events are also being used to highlight emerging new authors, like Yaa Gyasi.

Georgia College was an intellectual hub for O'Connor, and Burgess wants the Andalusia Institute to continue this tradition. Along with the Andalusia museum, the institute will keep the memory of O'Connor and her work alive and vibrant.

“It's kind of a thrill,” Burgess said. “I've taken this deep dive into reading and understanding Flannery. Working here, I've become aware of her as an individual. People tell stories about her. I go to the Andalusia museum so often, and I talk to scholars and people who met her. She's become real to me.” 🎧



GEORGIA COLLEGE WINS National Undergraduate Research Award



Georgia College makes undergraduate research opportunities for students a priority. Over the years, undergraduate research has grown from a small, faculty-driven initiative into a campuswide “transformative experience” in which the university purposefully encourages all students to take advantage of during their time here.

Now, Georgia College has garnered national attention for its work in promoting and engaging students in undergraduate research. The university was recently named the winner of the Council on Undergraduate Research Campus-Wide Award for Undergraduate Research Accomplishments (AURA).

“The award is essentially for the top undergraduate research programs in the nation,” said Dr. Jordan Cofer, associate provost for transformative learning experiences.

“The Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) is well-known when it comes to undergraduate research. That’s the major organization everyone looks to, so this sort of national recognition is important,” he said.

According to the CUR website, this award recognizes higher education institutions that have successfully implemented the characteristics of excellence, have devised exemplary programs to provide high-quality research experiences to undergraduates, and have evaluated the success of these programs.

Georgia College provides those high-quality experiences for students across every major and department, ensuring all students have the opportunity to take part in undergraduate research. But it all started from humble beginnings.

“Our story is really compelling because in 2011 we had a group of faculty get together

to create learning communities, and they really investigated what it would be like to centralize undergraduate research,” Cofer said. “Those initial faculty members really helped build our undergraduate research program from the ground up.”

Dr. Dee Sams, faculty coordinator for Mentored Undergraduate Research & Creative Endeavors (MURACE), worked with the group that hoped to more strategically bring undergraduate research opportunities to students at Georgia College. They knew the impact a centralized approach could have for students.

“I saw so much value in it for students; and, even back then, I had been doing research with undergraduates,” said Sams. “For me, it was kind of a no-brainer.”

She joined the faculty circle in 2011 as they came together to research, plan, and, in the end, write a proposal to submit to the



Provost's Office outlining the importance of undergraduate research and ways of expanding the practice on campus.

"The energy was so positive among the group members, and the vision was so clear," said Sams.

In August 2012, MURACE, among other things, was created from that faculty-led project. Sams has been at helm since then.

She said she couldn't have imagined back then "that we would be where we are with the campus engagement and being up for this award." But she and other faculty hoped the initiative would take hold.

The work from Sams and many others across campus through the last nine years has helped put Georgia College on the forefront of the undergraduate research movement.

Sams has helped write a handbook for mentoring undergraduate research students, which is used across the world.

"We have an internal journal as well," said Cofer. "We've created an event for the State of Georgia, Posters at the Capitol (PaC), where students can present their undergraduate research for legislators."

Faculty mentors can apply for mini-grants to help fund research with students. At the National Council for Undergraduate Research Conference two years ago, Georgia College had the third most students presenting — out of all the universities in the country.

Students even started their own organization that focuses on undergraduate research.

"It fits our mission," Cofer said. "It's an important practice to do and getting national recognition for something we do really well. I think that's really important — especially for the faculty to be recognized for something they've done and have been doing."

Sams even helps lead a course for faculty to design undergraduate research projects.

"I was ecstatic. I don't know if Jordan or I was happier," she said about learning Georgia College was named an AURA finalist. "For me it was just like, 'oh wow, we've worked so hard to bring this to our students.' And, and to have others recognize it, is great." 🎧

Redesign of two GC websites results in enhanced user experience, more modern look

For many campus community members, there are two Georgia College websites that help them take the pulse of the university: gcsu.edu and frontpage.gcsu.edu. In 2020, both of those sites underwent a major redesign that focused on making them more modern and user-friendly.

"A highly-requested feature was the ability to schedule announcements and events," said Director of Web Communications Keely Hopkins about the Front Page redesign. "Also, a focus from University Communications was the ability to automate the Daily Digest, which would save us around three hours each day, five days a week. These were the initial features that we wanted to create."

Front Page, the official news and events website for the university, was first launched in 2014 by the Office of University Communications. With feedback from the campus community and in-office adjustments, a plan was made to complete a major redesign that would make the site more user-friendly. Another focal point of the redesign was to create a cohesive, modern look that would focus more on the content.

Ensuring the campus community had input into the redesign process was integral to the production of the site. Early on, University Communications reached out to heavy users of Front Page to make sure their needs would be met by the redesign. University Communications worked closely with Information Technology along the way to meet those needs.

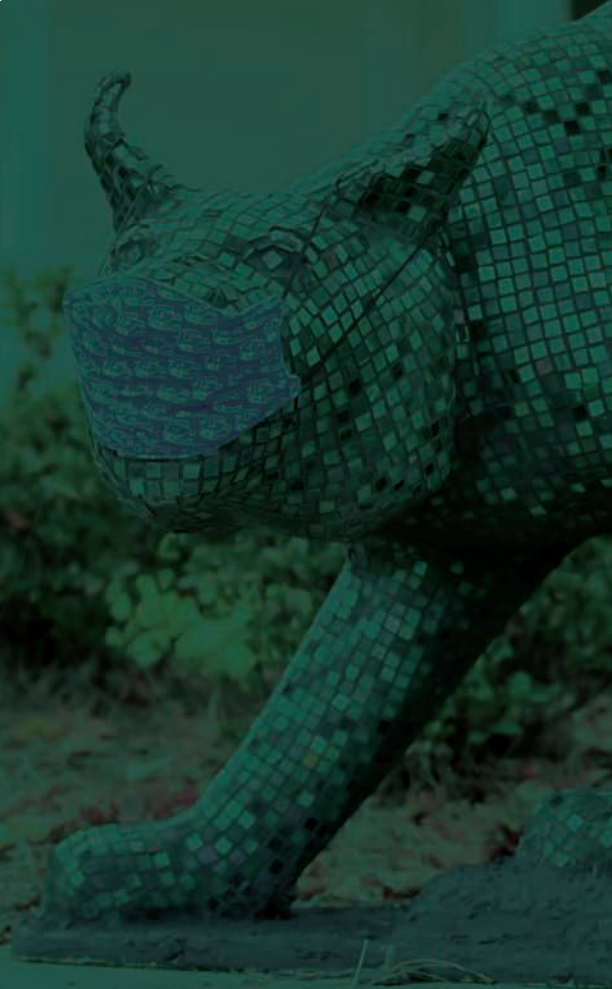
Information Technology and University Communications also worked together to find the right fit for an agency to help with the redesign of the public website, gcsu.edu. From the vendor pool, Rivetica, a higher education marketing agency based in Atlanta, was chosen. Hopkins and Rivetica were in constant communication, working closely to pass along information to IT and University Communications. The group did several presentations to stakeholders on campus that outlined the proposed changes to the websites.

"New features include many components that allow our content managers to focus on their content and worry less about styling," said Hopkins. Rivetica also created several components that Hopkins said content managers have asked for including social media icons, slideshows, videos, infographics, and news and events RSS components.

The success of both website redesigns required the expertise and resources of teams across campus. The product of that teamwork is a forward-facing web presence that is sleeker, more user-friendly, and a bold step into the future. 🎧

RESPONDING TO COVID

In the spring of 2020, the world virtually stopped as COVID-19 was recognized as a global pandemic. In spite of the challenges that the university has faced since this time, Georgia College was able to adapt and move forward in ways that demonstrated the true resiliency and strength of our campus community. We are proud to share with you a few of the ways that the university responded to assist, and we look forward to continuing to pursue preeminence despite the challenges we may continue to face now and encounter in the future.







INTO THE. Uncertain

The university adapts, adjusts to the COVID-19 pandemic

Weeks before the start of the spring semester, rumblings of the novel coronavirus became louder and more imminent. On March 11, the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

“It became more evident that this was going to become a challenge by the beginning of the New Year. We were hearing more about the virus and saw pockets of it pop up in places like New York City,” said Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Costas Spirou. “It was clear the situation was heightening, and higher education would have to find ways to adapt.”

Spring break was scheduled for the week of March 16. Spirou said it came at a perfect time for GC administration to work with the University System of Georgia (USG) to assess the situation as it was unfolding in the state. On March 12, the USG issued a directive to temporarily suspend instruction for all institutions. But then, on March 16, the USG issued a directive for all 26 of its institutions to move to remote instruction.

“We were very fortunate to have spring break, which allowed us time to plan,” said Spirou. “The shift came quickly, but we worked very hard to have our courses delivered remotely by March 30. We were committed to moving forward, and our faculty worked intensely during an extremely challenging time.”

The Center for Teaching and Learning was integral in the transition from face-to-face to remote learning. Director Dr. Jim Berger and his staff had to quickly pivot to find ways to guide faculty on how to utilize systems, like the university’s learning management system GeorgiaVIEW, and virtual conferencing platforms, like WebEx and Zoom.

“We had a lot of communication going out at that time,” Berger said. “We wanted to ensure that faculty maintained communication and established a sense of community with their classes. But also, guide them in how to deal with the anxiety of students and how to deal with their own anxiety during a pandemic.”

The work that went into making sure students and faculty transitioned to remote learning with as few hitches as possible leaned on the support of Information Technology and the library. SERVE was widely available to handle technology tickets, and the library acted quickly to retrieve class materials and have them accessible for students online.

“Faculty and staff answered the call in what I believe to be in the spirit of Georgia College,” said Spirou. “They served and supported students to a great extent, and that’s what gives us that special connectiveness that the university is known for.”

While some parts of campus dealt with the aftershocks of moving so swiftly to remote learning, other parts of campus were banding together in light of the pandemic. Georgia College provided medical supplies to aid in the fight against COVID-19 across the state at the end of March. Departments and offices around Georgia College aided in providing the supplies, including the Departments of Biology, Chemistry, the



Schools of Nursing and Health and Human Performance, the Student Health Center, and Facilities Operations.

“We had a request come from our system office to assess the supplies we had and start conducting inventory,” said Director of Public Safety and Chief of Police Brett Stanelle. “We started in our Emergency Management team, and we branched out into other units around campus to see what aid we could provide.”

Among the supplies provided were hand sanitizer, face shields, shoe covers, safety gloves, and two medical ventilators.

Costume Supervisor Cathleen O’Neal started using her sewing skills to create masks for hospitals in Atlanta and for Navicent Health in Baldwin County.

By late spring, O’Neal had constructed 140 masks — donating 110 surgical and N-95 face covers for Atlanta area hospitals and also 30 N-95 face masks to meet critical need at the Eatonton Health and Rehabilitation nursing home.

“Just sitting around the house, watching the news — it’s very daunting, especially if you’re helping by staying home and want to do something more,” she said. “This really spoke to me. It’s a great way for the community and those of us in the theatre and costume world to help out in our way. It warms my heart that I can do something.”

In late March, GC United, a website aimed at uniting the campus community far and wide, made its debut. It featured news and updates from campus like recaps of virtual class reunions and recordings of student jazz performances.



While efforts to strengthen an online community thrived, GC administration and the USG began to look toward the future. Georgia College, under the directives of the USG, decided to begin classes earlier in August. The adjusted academic calendar allowed students to stay home after Thanksgiving break. During the summer, Facilities Operations and Information Technology worked to outfit campus with alterations that would enable students, faculty, and staff to return to campus safely. These efforts included plexiglass barriers, larger classroom settings, social distancing floor stickers, installing cameras in classrooms, ordering face shields, and changing air filters. The USG-issued mask mandate on campuses also helped in the mitigation efforts.

“It’s taken a tremendous amount of time and effort, and we’ve taken a collaborative approach to get to this point,” said Spirou. “There are going to be things that come up that you can’t anticipate, but we are following the science — we have that on our side.”

Prime to ensuring students, faculty, and staff returned to campus safely was creating a streamlined process to notify several departments of positive cases as they arise on campus.

“Our top priority is the safety and well-being of our students,” said Dean of Students Dr. Tom Miles. “That had to be at the top of our concerns when we were developing this process.”

The communication process had to be rapid for it to be truly effective, Miles said. In the newly-implemented process, once Student Health Services is notified of a positive case,



communication is set to go out to offices from Student Life to Facilities Operations to Academic Advising — all triggering their immediate, unique actions on the case.

“There is not a soul on this campus that hasn’t been impacted by this pandemic,” said Miles. “We can project and anticipate what will unfold — but we have to remain flexible, and that’s what we’ve done.”

Part of the Office of Student Life’s response has also been the creation of the COVID CARE Response Team. The team consists of 45 staff members from across campus that help students who have tested positive for COVID-19.

“These team members reach out by both text message and phone calls to check in with the student,” said Vice President for Student Life Dr. Shawn Brooks. “The staff also provide their contact information to the student so that if the student encounters any problems related to their illness or isolation, the student has someone to turn to for assistance.”

Journeying through uncharted territory is one of the hallmarks of a liberal arts education, and Spirou said this time in our university history is a challenge — but one it’s primed to rise to.

“The challenges that we are facing really test our sense of flexibility in dealing with ambiguity,” said Spirou. “Georgia College is a liberal arts institution. We teach students about that same flexibility, willingness to shift, and the importance of it all. It’s difficult. It’s intense. But it is integral to success.” 🎧



Doing ur Part

Georgia College helps aid the local and state fight against COVID-19

In the spring of 2020, Georgia College answered the call in providing medical supplies to aid in the fight against COVID-19 across the state of Georgia. These critical supplies were used by the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Georgia Emergency Homeland Security Agency (GEMA) in areas around the state.

The call for critical medical supplies came from the University System of Georgia (USG) and requested all Public Safety and emergency management personnel to collect medical supplies that are typically used for everything from research and campus maintenance to nursing programs and on-campus health clinics.

"Doing our part to deliver aid during this time of crisis is critical in combatting COVID-19 across the state — but it's also just the right thing to do," said President Steve Dorman. "I'd like to thank all departments at Georgia College for acting swiftly to collect supplies from across campus that will now be

distributed by GEMA throughout the state to Georgia's front line medical care workers in dire need."

Departments and offices around Georgia College aided in taking stock of their equipment and pulling supplies to be redistributed. Among those that provided supplies were the Departments of Biology and Chemistry, the Schools of Nursing and Health and Human Performance, the Student Health Center, and Facilities Operations.

Supplies that were provided included:

- 115 assorted size containers of hand sanitizer
- 28 face shields
- 650 shoe covers
- 440 pairs of safety glasses/goggles
- 87,377 nitrile/vinyl gloves
- 2 medical ventilators

Dr. Lisa Griffin, director of the School of Health and Human Performance, helped find the supplies within her area. The School donated hand sanitizer and gloves.

"We believe it is essential for all of us to step forward and do what we can humanly do during any time of crisis," said Griffin. "We are proud that GC is getting involved and reaching out asking academic areas for assistance in this time of uncharted waters for our nation and state."

Ventilators became key in combatting the deadly disease, and the supply of those not in use was dwindling. Georgia College provided two medical ventilators, which the Georgia Department of Natural Resources picked up Saturday, March 28 — their first stop that day to collect 14 around the state. In total, USG institutions provided 38 ventilators.

"We unfortunately have Georgians who are in need of assistance — and it's not just Georgia. We're seeing this crisis have global impacts," said Stanelle. "The USG and Georgia College wanted to make sure we did our part, especially given the current state of instruction. We knew we had equipment sitting in store rooms that could be used for the greater good." 🙏

HELPING HANDS PROVIDES RELIEF TO STUDENTS AFFECTED BY COVID-19



The Coronavirus has created hardship for Georgia College students, making it extremely difficult for them to fund basic necessities.

Georgia College received more than 260 requests from students needing financial assistance.

For many, losing a job meant they would not be able to pay for food, medicine, rent, or utilities. Others could not go home because the risk was too great to their families who have compromised immune systems.

The Helping Hands Hardship Fund was originally conceived by the Student Government Association (SGA) to help students with unusual situations who needed a helping hand. With the COVID-19 crisis, University Advancement, Student Life, and the Office of Financial Aid came together and made a decision to utilize the fund to aid students who faced significant financial hardships as a result of the pandemic.

“The biggest need we saw was for money to buy food,” said Dr. Shawn Brooks, vice president for Student Life. “We had students report they were only eating once a day because they didn’t have money to buy food. One student wrote about being down to her last box of cereal.”

More than \$28,000 has been raised for the Helping Hands Hardship fund. This amount was also supplemented by \$5,500 that was originally raised for the fund when it was established.

The idea of Helping Hands stemmed from the COVID-19 pandemic and the related move to online education for GC students.

“Dr. Shawn Brooks and Student Life recognized that some GC students may be facing extreme hardships because they were no longer employed in local businesses, did not have access to technology needed in an online environment, or couldn’t afford the costs associated with moving from campus housing to other housing,” said former Vice President for University Advancement Monica Delisa. “Student Life reached out to Advancement and the Office of Financial Aid, and we identified this fund as being set up for exactly this type of crisis.”

The team predicted student need would be larger than funds already in the account, so they began the campaign to add funds through donations.

Student Life distributed a form to all GC students to self-identify if they need aid. The Office of Financial Aid worked with Student Life to identify and qualify students who need assistance and award financial help.

“In these uncertain times, having a sense of financial security will enable students to engage fully in the online learning process and to succeed,” said Delisa. “It is always our goal in University Advancement to ensure that our students do not have to worry about finances, that they can concentrate on being the best students and future community leaders they can be.”

“A measure of a community is not found when things are going well,” said Brooks. “Rather, the measure of a community is how they respond when things are not going well or when there is a crisis.”

He applauded students, alumni, and friends of Georgia College for contributing to students’ well-being. Some students have provided food and shelter to other students; alumni and friends have provided financial assistance. Everyone who helps can make a huge difference in the lives of students. Brooks has received emails from students, extending their gratitude to individuals who contributed to the fund.

“My biggest hope is that we have been able to make a difference in students’ lives with the Helping Hands fund,” said Brooks. “Like everyone else, I hope and pray for a quick end to the COVID-19 pandemic.” 🙏

“““

The measure of a community is how they respond when things are not going well or when there is a crisis.

Dr. Shawn Brooks
vice president for Student Life



Giving Back

Professor Emeritus Dr. Ken Saladin gifts \$1 million to Honors College

It was a twist of fate that brought Dr. Kenneth Saladin to Georgia College in 1977, but that fate turned into an enduring personal fulfillment from teaching that would keep him at the university for 40 years.

“I’m often asked by colleagues and friends why I spent my career and life in Milledgeville,” Saladin said. “It actually turned out to be a great fit for me; and from the very beginning, I have loved teaching here.”

When Saladin came to Georgia College, he was one of seven faculty in the Department of Biology — now a department that has grown to 30 faculty members. He witnessed the transition of the college from a small, local institution to one of prominence as the state’s designated public liberal arts college in 1996. While teaching, publishers contracted with Saladin to review textbooks in development, which led to an opportunity by a publisher to write one himself. His first anatomy and physiology textbook went on to become the company’s best seller and is used by university students around the world today.

He spent his tenure at the university teaching a broad spectrum of biology from human anatomy to animal behavior. Throughout all his work at Georgia College and higher education, one important facet of Saladin’s career has been his involvement with the Georgia College Honors Program. He served on the Honors Faculty Council for 20 years and taught Honors courses and colloquia.



“
The Honors Program
and now, the Honors
College, is the crown
jewel of Georgia College.
”

Professor Emeritus Dr. Ken Saladin

“Serving on the Honors Council was a comfortable niche for me, and it gave me an opportunity to work with faculty that were dedicated to high-caliber students,” he said. “I got a lot of satisfaction by teaching honors students and watching them lead successful careers after graduation.”

“The Honors Program and now, the Honors College, is the crown jewel of Georgia College,” Saladin said. “It epitomizes what it means to teach students how to think — not what to think but how to think — analytically, collaboratively, and across disciplines.”

In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Honors Program at Georgia College this year, Saladin gifted \$1 million to provide resources to enrich honors education and provide broader support for transformative experiences. These experiences include internships, study abroad, and community-

based learning. Saladin also hopes the funds will help inaugural Dean of the Honors College Dr. Brian Newsome get the College off on creative and dynamic footing.

“Dr. Saladin’s generous gift positions the new Honors College to enrich Honors education in so many ways: scholarships, resources for the Humber-White House, new curricular and co-curricular offerings, and enhanced support for transformative experiences, including student research, internships, community-based learning, and study abroad. I couldn’t be more excited, and more grateful,” said Newsome.

Saladin also gives tremendous credit to the previous Honors Program directors: Dr. John Sallstrom, Dr. Doris Moody, and Dr. Steve Elliot-Gower. Saladin says it was Sallstrom’s “doggedness and perseverance” that has made the Honors Program, now Honors College, what it is today.

“It is meaningful to me to support the Honors College and Georgia College to this extent because basically I have a deep sense of satisfaction in it,” Saladin said. “There is satisfaction in feeling like you are making the world you live in a better place — for the people around you and the people that will live well after you. What better way to do that than to contribute to education — to create an endowment that will enhance education for students for many years to come.” 📍

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

University Advancement wrapped up their multi-million-dollar capital campaign in 2020, exceeding their goal of raising more than \$30 million dollars in support for the university. This support will be able to provide much-needed resources for the campus community that will help move the university forward on its path to preeminence.

TOTAL AMOUNT RAISED

\$30,852,775.95



Number of Gifts: **37,581**
Includes Legacy, Cash, Recurring, and Pledges

Total Donors: **10,848**

New Donors: **5,443**

New Endowments: **221**
Includes new endowed scholarships

New Annual Scholarships: **61**

Each year of the campaign, the number of students awarded scholarships was:

2014-2015: 429 2015-2016: 438 2016-2017: 476
2017-2018: 505 2018-2019: 570 2019-2020: 526*

*Additional scholarships were scheduled to be awarded before the end of the year.

Learn more about the campaign at campaign.gcsu.edu



Follow your Passion.
Find your Purpose.

GEORGIA COLLEGE ATHLETICS

#1

IN THE USG

GC student-athletes are first in the University System of Georgia (USG) with NCAA Federal Graduation Rates at 87%; this rate is higher than Georgia College's student body.

#1

IN THE USG

Georgia College student-athletes are first in the USG for NCAA Federal Graduation Rates over the last four class average at 74%.

3.28

AVERAGE
GPA

The Bobcat Athletic teams posted a 3.28 GPA for the 2019-20 academic year, with every one of the teams coming in at a 3.0 or above for the second-straight season.



Amber Coy

- GC Softball's **Amber Coy** was named a semifinalist for the Wooden Cup Award and a Peach Belt Nominee for NCAA Woman of the Year.



Libby Bochniak

- GC Softball senior **Amber Coy** and GC Volleyball junior **Libby Bochniak** both earned Academic All-America status; Bochniak was the first in Bobcat Volleyball history.



Tessa Allen

- **Tessa Allen** became the fifth women's runner in school history to earn All-Region status, taking 17th place at the NCAA Southeast Regional race.



Shawn Olmstead

- Georgia College had two winners of the PBC Elite 15 Award for top GPA at a sport's conference championship tournament: **Shawn Olmstead** from men's cross country and **Rebecca Lawrence** from softball.



Rebecca Lawrence



2020 HIGHLIGHTS

Think Independently. Lead Creatively.