

GEORGIA COLLEGE

CONNECTION

THE MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS | WINTER 2021



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CONNECTION

Winter 2021

Vol. XVI, No. 7

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Published by

University Communications.

231 W. Hancock St.

Milledgeville, GA 31061

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Physics students install solar panel at BCCHS

A group of Georgia College physics majors recently installed a solar panel at Baldwin County High School (BCCHS). They represented all four years of college — from freshman to a senior who graduated last May. It was the university's first off-campus solar project — delayed slightly from the spring, due to COVID-19.

"This was the most exciting part for me, seeing the transfer of knowledge from my physics scholar, Bo, on down to Evan, our freshman," said Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge, assistant professor of physics.

Every year, Mahabaduge gives a seminar on physics to honors students, who have that "little extra something" about them. The seminars are a recruitment tool for Mahabaduge. Inevitably, after each, a student will email him looking to do more.

In 2019, BCCHS officials approached Georgia College's Office of Sustainability for help installing a solar panel they received as a donation. They wanted to bring power to a small shed used for gardening projects at the school.

The solar panel was mounted with nuts and bolts at the right angle to catch the sun. It connects to two batteries, which will generate up to 300 watts of energy — giving the BCCHS shed enough "off-the-grid" electricity to power tools and a light for several hours a day.

"This collaborative effort with BCCHS provides a lasting economic impact and will hopefully inspire local students to pursue careers in science," said Dr. Chavonda Mills, chair of physics, chemistry, and astronomy.

Georgia College provides extra CARE for students

The COVID CARE Response Team — made up of 45 staff members from across campus — was created in Fall 2020 to help students through the trying ordeal of testing positive for coronavirus or being exposed to someone who has.

Dr. Shawn Brooks, vice president for Student Life, was concerned about the challenges students may face, so he formed a team to support them through those challenges.

"Georgia College prides itself in the care we show to all members of our community. Student Life is at the forefront of providing care to students who find themselves in academic, emotional, or physical distress. This is the spirit behind the creation of our COVID CARE Response Team," said Brooks.

When the university learned of a student who tested COVID-positive, was having COVID-related symptoms, or who had been asked to isolate because of exposure to someone who was positive, they were assigned to a member of the COVID CARE Response Team.

Staff members connected students to resources on campus — such as student health services, academic affairs, or auxiliary services — taking the pressure off the student.



The outreach went beyond just phone calls and texts.

"I had a student who was having to isolate, and she didn't have anyone who could pick up meals for her at the MAX or the money for groceries," said Kari Brown, a member of the COVID CARE team. "I made a few phone calls, and we were able to have groceries delivered. The staff in Auxiliary Services and the MAX also came together to get meals prepared for us to drop off at her apartment."



Georgia College listed as Top Public Regional University by U.S. News & World Report

The 2021 U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges report listed Georgia College as a "Top Public School."

Designated ninth in the South, Georgia

College was the highest-ranked Georgia institution in this category for the second year in a row.

"I am proud Georgia College continues to be recognized as a top-tier public university in our region," said Dr. Steve Dorman, president. "This ranking exemplifies the success of our high-achieving students and also our dedicated faculty and staff who encourage our students to think independently and lead creatively."

The 2021 Best Colleges guidebook shows Georgia College as 21st on the Best Regional Universities in the South list. "Best Regional Universities" are not ranked nationally, but rather against their peer group in one of four geographic regions — North, South, Midwest, and West.

Georgia College was also named as a top undergraduate teaching institution. The university was also ranked the seventh most innovative school in the region — the highest-ranked public university in the state in both categories.

The "Best Colleges" guidebook is made up of a wide variety of data on assessments by peers and counselors, retention rates, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources, graduation rate performance, and the alumni giving rate.

Students start nonpartisan political group during contentious election season

Despite the challenges brought by the pandemic in 2020 and through the ruckus of political mayhem, a new student organization was born at Georgia College. It effectively proved that political discourse can be diverse — even polar opposite — and still remain civil and polite.

On campus, senior Michael Haug found groups for the Young Democrats, College Republicans, and Young Democratic Socialists of America. There was Bobcat Votes, the American Democracy Project, and Turning Point USA. Everyone seemed to have a safe space for likeminded friendliness and a sense of belonging.

But Haug, a political skeptic, didn't seem to fit anywhere. He wanted a place where the undetermined, doubters, and "political oddballs" would feel comfortable speaking alongside people with sure convictions.

Haug started a nonpartisan group, the GC Political Society, with junior Andrew Fierbaugh. The two business management majors wanted to provide a platform where both sides of the political spectrum could talk regularly and be exposed to opinions and ideas that directly clash with their own.



"Essentially, what our organization's trying to do is bring about a situation," he said, "where we can disagree civilly like adults."

The group hosted debates on criminal justice reform and the Electoral College, as well as discussions about the future of the 'left and right' in America. They also partnered with Dr. Brandy Kennedy's Public Opinion class. Haug wants to partner with the political science department more in the future, so the club is educational and spurs more young adults to vote.

Georgia College Theatre forges ahead, against all odds

Dr. Karen Berman, like many theatre chairs this summer, faced insurmountable obstacles due to COVID-19 pandemic. But — with typical gutsy grit — she forged ahead.

"I wasn't going to let COVID deter us," Berman said. "We decided we would go for a virtual season, which basically means we're either livestreaming a performance or pre-taping and creating film for the very first time in our shows."

At first, Berman feared student reaction. Her faculty was "devastated," when award-winning hits like "Little Shop of Horrors" got canceled. They had researched and planned since late winter, putting their own personal concepts into shows. It all went into the trash.

And, in two weeks, a bold new season emerged.



It was filled with original scripts and music by faculty, students, and community members — a variety of 'what can we try' moments. The president, provost, and dean provided Theatre and Music with \$20,000 each to buy new video cameras, lighting, and sound equipment that enhance Zoom productions. Software programs were purchased, as were kits for students to use from home.

You can view their productions at <https://gcingivingvoice.com/>.

Second archaeological dig to provide further insight into life at Andalusia



A second archaeological dig took place Nov. 4 - 6 at Georgia College's Andalusia: Home of famed author Flannery O'Connor.

The principal archaeological excavation team focused their efforts on areas around the grounds of the main house, the Hill House, equipment shed, dairy barn, and the milk processing shed. The excavation is part of a multi-year survey conducted by Southern Research Historic Preservation Consultants to discover artifacts on O'Connor's property.

"We're trying to paint a better picture of what the site looked like in the past," said Matt Davis, director of historic museums at Georgia College. "Through archeology, primary document

research, and analysis of the site's extent buildings, we can gain a fuller understanding of the property's historic resources and better tell the story of O'Connor's life at the farm."

The last archaeological dig was in June 2019, which pinpointed the location of pens where she kept her flock of more than 40 peacocks.

New Andalusia Institute has robust opening

During spring 2020, 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.

Andalusia Institute's online programs also sparked global interest in Milledgeville, Georgia history, Southern studies, and mid-20th century literature.

For more information, visit www.gcsu.edu/andalusiainstitute.



Political Science faculty dominate local media coverage during election



Georgia College's government faculty seemed to be everywhere this electoral season as they helped the media and public navigate political jargon, rumored illegality, swinging states, and possible voter fraud.

On election night, faculty gave live commentary at multiple locations. As results trickled in, they guided viewers through messy partisan confusion and helped a perplexed nation come to grips with polarizing political divide.

Presidential elections always stimulate great interest, attracting more attention and higher voter turnout. This year, however, it was "record breaking," according to Senior Political Lecturer Claire Sanders. In Georgia alone, half of registered voters cast early ballots and large numbers voted on election day, as well.

Prior to the election, Sanders appeared in a national video in The Telegraph by McClatchy news group about Georgia moving from red to blue and becoming a purple state. Professor Dr. Hank Edmonson spoke with WGXA News about families on the campaign trail. And Professor Dr. Scott E. Buchanan, new chair of the Department of Government and Sociology, spoke to WGXA News about the Electoral College.

On election night, three faculty helped the media sort through incoming results.

Sanders provided legal context for viewers at WGXA News. Buchanan was on Zoom, giving political commentary for WRBL News Channel 3, a CBS affiliate in Columbus. Assistant Professor W. Clif Wilkinson, Jr. answered questions via Zoom for 13WMAZ, a CBS affiliate in Macon.

In the election aftermath, Sanders gave numerous interviews to media outlets. This included two articles in Norway's largest newspaper, VG (Verdens Gang). Norwegian reporter Nora Thorp Bjørnstad came to campus to interview Sanders about the Georgia recount and how partisanship in Congress could affect President-elect Joe Biden's ability to enact his legislative agenda.

Sanders also spoke to 13WMAZ about legal challenges and what a recount would look like in Georgia. She was interviewed at WGXA News on poll workers, the state's political leanings, and what's next in the election.

"This was my first time conducting a live interview on television, which was an exciting yet nerve-wracking experience," Sanders said. "The frequency of the interviews definitely contributed to my professional growth. These interviews allowed me to take my experience in election law and administration and share it outside the comfort zone of my classroom."

Georgia College selects new Senior Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management

Joel Robinson joins Georgia College as the Senior Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management at Georgia College following a national search.

Robinson comes to Georgia College from Ruffalo Noel Levitz where he has served as an enrollment consultant since 2017. Robinson has an extensive history in enrollment management and student success. Prior to his work with Ruffalo Noel Levitz, Robinson served as assistant provost in academic affairs for Northern Kentucky University, associate vice president for enrollment management at Northern Kentucky University and senior associate director of admissions for marketing/recruitment at the University of Cincinnati.

"We are excited to welcome Joel to Georgia College in his new role," said Dr. Costas Spirou, provost and vice president for academic affairs. "The knowledge and expertise he brings will be of great value and importance to our continued enrollment efforts. I thank the search committee for doing an outstanding job attracting many highly-qualified candidates across the nation."

During Robinson's time with the Northern Kentucky University, he focused on enhancing the recruitment and retention of diverse student populations, which produced record-setting results. As associate vice president for enrollment management with the university, his leadership resulted in six consecutive years of record enrollment growth that reached nearly 16,000 students.

"I look forward to joining the team at Georgia College as we continue to recruit the best and brightest students from across the state and beyond," said Robinson.

Robinson received his Master of Education and bachelor's degree in Communication from the University of Cincinnati.



PSYCH PROFESSOR WINS NATIONAL AWARD FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO GROUP THERAPY

Dr. H.L. Lee 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.

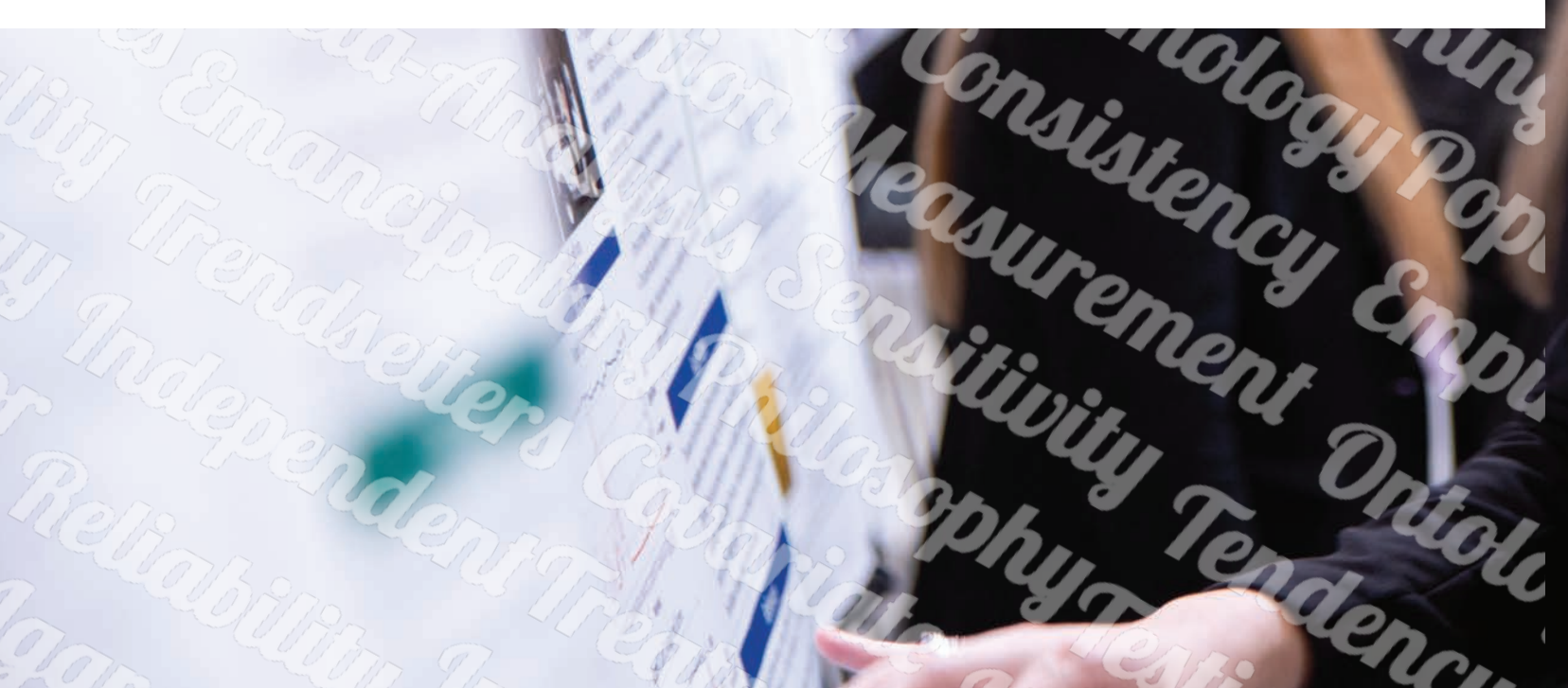
"For me personally, it's a matter of having adventure therapy recognized by a national organization. This is a big deal. I was honored just to be nominated," Gillis said.

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.

Over the years, he's won numerous honors, including Georgia College's "Distinguished Professor Award" in 1993. Gillis coauthored 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 coauthored "Adventure Therapy: Theory, Research, and Practice." He's also been a board member, fellow, and past president of APA's Division 49.



Trend SETTERS





How Georgia College is leading the way in undergraduate research

Finding connections between music used by American presidential campaigns to gain insights into candidate identities.

Conducting dramaturgical research on an early 20th century Russian ballet company.

Determining if solar panels could improve battery performance in golf carts.

These are a sampling of research done by undergraduates at Georgia College. Students are forging the path in undergraduate research. During 2019-2020, more than 2,300 Georgia College students participated in undergraduate research.

“What’s really interesting about undergraduate research at Georgia College, maybe opposed to other schools, is that at Georgia College it started out as a completely faculty-driven initiative,” said Dr. Jordan Cofer, associate provost for Transformative Learning Experiences. “Basically, these faculty recognize that there was already a lot of undergraduate research happening and they wanted to figure out what was the best way to capitalize on that and organize it.”



Dr. Doreen Sams, faculty coordinator for Mentored Undergraduate Research & Creative Endeavors (MURACE), was one faculty member who initiated undergraduate research at Georgia College. Sams was part of that faculty circle in 2011 that got together to research, plan, and write a proposal to submit to the Provost's Office that outlined the importance of undergraduate research. That group was granted \$100,000 to support student research and conference travel. That funding has continued. In the past eight years, MURACE has financially supported more than 2,500 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."

Since then, undergraduate research has continued to expand and garner national recognition. The university was recently named a finalist for the Council on Undergraduate Research Campus-Wide Award for Undergraduate Research Accomplishments (AURA). 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.

"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," Cofer said.

Along with being named a finalist by CUR, a recent study also showed how GC measures up to other universities when it comes to offering experiences for students to become problem solvers, leaders, and put their ideas into action.

"The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a national survey which is administered by almost every college and university in the United States," said Cofer. "It's designed to collect data from first-year and senior students to report the quality of the undergraduate experience to faculty, administrators, researchers, and others."

The survey compares students from across the country based on several pillars. Georgia College first-year students showed no significant difference when compared to other universities. However, Georgia College seniors exceeded national peers in a variety of categories including "Collaborative Learning," "Student-Faculty Interaction," "Supportive Environment," "Reflective & Integrated Learning," and "Discussions with Diverse Others."

One reason undergraduate research has become more important than ever is because of its status as one of five transformative experiences that students can complete as part of the GC Journey Program. The GC



Journeys Program encourages students to take advantage of five inside- and outside-the-classroom transformative experiences during their time at Georgia College. Cofer said the GC Journeys Program, combined with the university's liberal arts mission, sets the university up to offer a unique, interdisciplinary approach to undergraduate research.

One example of this is the research of Laura Swarner, who double majored in theatre and English, and was named a semi-finalist for the 2020 Fulbright Scholarship. Her dramaturgical research and set design on theatre's fall 2019 production of "Ballet Russes" helped

garner her the attention. She also took first place at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, a nine-region competition held in South Carolina.

"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."

Georgia College also offers extensive opportunities for students to get involved.

One of these is the student organization Undergraduate Research Circle.

This semester, the group organized a Research Roundtable that allowed students to talk to faculty about their research and be exposed to many disciplines at once.

"The idea is that it would be connecting students who are interested in doing research with faculty who are doing projects. So the setup was kind of a speed dating model where they go from table to table and the faculty do a three-minute pitch about a research project," Cofer said.

Another opportunity the university provides is Posters at the Capitol, created in 2018, where students from across the state of Georgia share their research at the Georgia State Capitol. Cofer remarked that last year, the university had six students accepted, which represented majors from chemistry, music therapy, physics, and psychology. They were six of 54 students from 15 colleges and universities statewide. The annual event recently went virtual for their third year.

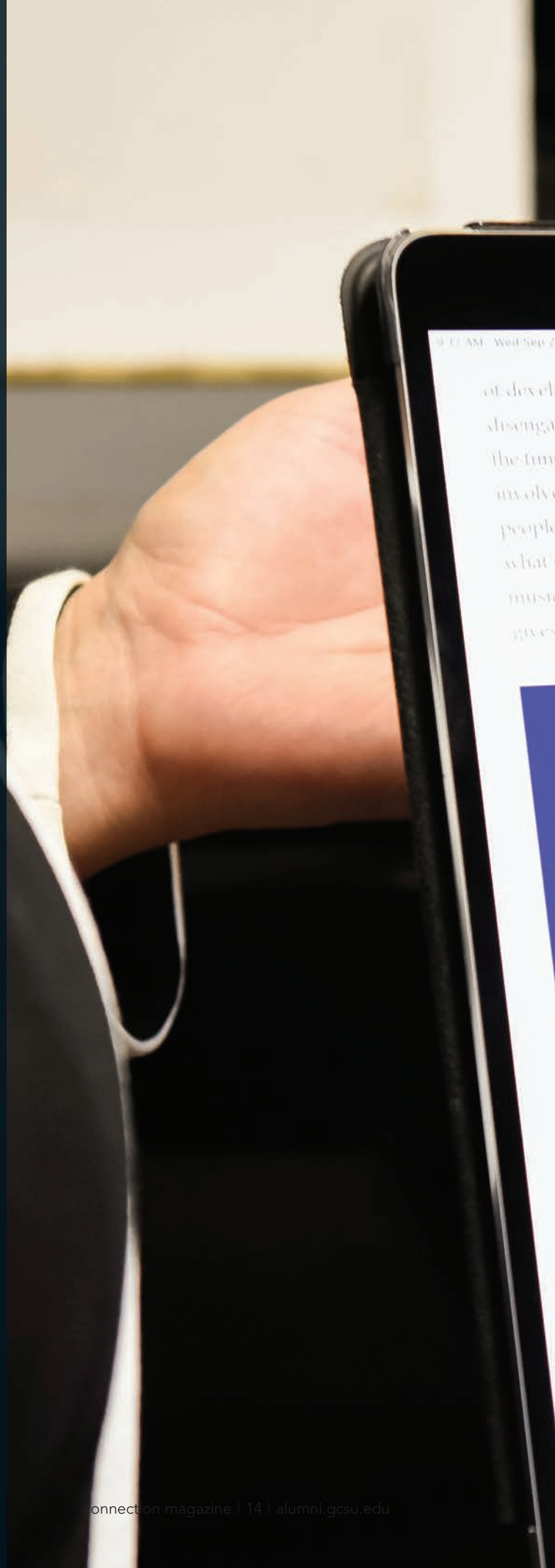
"Students get to present for state senators, state representatives, lobbyists, and any of the public that might be there that day," Cofer said. "When a student gets accepted, it has to be an outstanding project. It's a student that is polished and has done multiple presentations."

The university also launched a national undergraduate research journal in spring 2020. The first volume of which is set to be published in winter 2021. Sams has also helped write a handbook for mentoring undergraduate research students, which is used across the world.

"The amount of undergraduate research happening at Georgia College is unprecedented," said Cofer. "Not a lot of colleges have had 23 years of an undergraduate research conference. We're really ahead of the mark there. We are far above anything I've seen."

Cofer said the benefits of research go far beyond that one project. Instead, it gives students a sense of resilience and grit, while also teaching them critical thinking skills.

"You have this tangible project at the end of the research that you can present to people. But you don't just have that research knowledge, you now have the resilience of going through those steps," said Cofer. "That's what is going to set you apart. That's what's going to make our students stand out."



developed it with this larger question of "How do we tackle political engagement?" This is something I know a lot of people have on their minds all time in politics, like "How do we engage voters?" "How do we get them involved in this political process?" And for me, I'm sort of thinking about the people that I know who aren't super engaged in politics, who don't really tune into what's happening day-to-day. What are some things that they care about? And so music just happened to be one that I also cared a lot about, and I think that just gives me a nice avenue in thinking of ways to engage voters.



2020 Tune-In

So the reason I did a game was because I knew that I could create a platform where everyone could go check out what each candidate is playing on the campaign trail. But I also felt like that would solely be informational. I didn't think it would necessarily draw people in who don't normally look for that kind of thing. So I was thinking if it were more like, I almost want to say, like a glorified BuzzFeed quiz, then I thought maybe that can help bring in different people who maybe would just be curious. Like, okay. "Which candidate do I most relate with? Maybe I don't align



New CTL director uses ‘tutor’s intuition’ to ease Georgia College through pandemic change

When the university and universities all over the world were grappling with closures and the rapid switch to online teaching — when everyone was reeling from constant change, fear, and the threat of chaos — Jim Berger’s phone rang.

People needed answers. They looked to him and his team at Georgia College’s Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) for decisions that would ultimately impact every faculty member and student on campus.

It had to be done right. And it had to be done fast.

“A lot of it for me was trial and error — a lot of sleepless nights, a lot of pressure,” Berger said. “I am grateful for the respect that the institution afforded us and the patience they had with us as we worked to figure these things out. It was very much a team effort. Everybody showed a level of patience and a willingness to try things out.”

Berger had only been director of CTL since summer 2019. His staff was busy launching their spring programming when pandemic struck. Those programs had to be laid aside to make room for new plans — unprecedented plans without blueprints for what needed to be done.

The short of it is Berger didn’t know what needed to be done. And herein lies the real beginning of his story — and how he effectively guided the university to online success.

It all started in high school algebra. The girl who sat in front of Berger paid him two dollars an hour to explain the complex equations of letters, numbers, and symbols.

Oddly enough, Berger later dropped out of college. When facing unemployment and financial need, he accepted a position tutoring a student at the University of Georgia (UGA). Realizing he had a knack for this sort of thing — he went back to school, launched a tutoring business, and continued coaching students throughout his undergraduate and graduate years, all the way to getting his doctorate in adult education in 2001.

He started by charging the going rate: \$10 an hour. But demand was crazy. Berger tutored 50 to 70 hours a week, from morning to midnight. To lessen the load, he charged more: \$15 an hour, then \$20. But he “couldn’t beat them off with a stick.”

Students just kept on coming. Word of mouth had spread. If you need help, see Jim Berger.

"I hung a flier saying I can tutor in these 22 different courses — arrogance beyond all bounds — but it blossomed for me," Berger said. "One of the things I realized was that faculty weren't always aware of how best to teach their students. Students would come in and say the instructor's been working on this for three days, and I still don't get it."

"Yet, in 20 minutes," he said, "I could understand what the problem was and get them through it and take them to the point where they could solve the problems by themselves."

When asked the secret to this achievement, Berger shrugged and called it "tutor's intuition." This is the quality that also proved useful during the pandemic. Part of it is recognizing that people learn in different ways — some need drawings and graphic images, others benefit more by verbal or written instruction.

Tutoring, like training faculty to teach online, ultimately focuses on the student. It's a process of listening to questions, watching the steps taken to solve a problem, seeing where the student hesitates, and trying to figure out where the blockage is — but "always with a great deal of respect for the learner and what they're going through," Berger remarked.

"I learned early on to pay attention to people, the way they sit, the way they act, their facial expressions, the words they use, the words they don't use, and why they use those words and the emotional content behind that," he said.

These qualities benefit Berger at CTL, as well. The Center's purpose is to help instructors identify new and exciting ways to teach, including the use of technology and digital content. This is why the administration relied so heavily on Berger's office when COVID hit. CTL oversees the learning management system for faculty.

Berger had previously taught online in the adult education program at Western Kentucky University. At UGA, he did his dissertation on using the internet for coursework. Even so — just as the entire university looked to him for answers — he was unsure of all the steps to take.

Technology had changed.

"Part of the difficulty was, before COVID, we were such a face-to-face environment at the center," he said. "We didn't really understand the technology for changing to online content. We were like: 'How do we do that?'"

Berger and his team were asking themselves the same questions faculty would soon be asking and, ultimately, students too.

The CTL staff of six scrambled to hold "fake sessions" online and practice with each other. What if they made a mistake by

pressing this key? Oops. Don't do that. How do we set up online gradebooks or create assignments and discussion boards? How will faculty connect with their students remotely, handle office hours, create WebEx and Zoom invites?

By asking these big questions first, CTL laid a solid foundation. Then, they set up webinar workshops and one-on-one sessions with faculty. About 117 participated in mock classroom demonstrations and 168 viewed 'how-to' videos CTL created. Videos give step-by-step instructions on holding discussions in Zoom breakout rooms, connecting iPads to computer screens, polling students, and other topics. There are tips on creating active online classrooms and teambuilding activities, as well.

"Faculty have really stepped up and adapted to this new environment and the needs of the students," Berger said. "So, as much as it would be nice for me or our office to take credit, you have to leave credit at the faculty's feet. They really are the ones who are on the front lines, facing these issues and coming up with creative and engaging ways to reach their students in a totally unprecedented time."

When classes moved to modified face-to-face instruction in the fall, CTL experimented by training faculty members in a classroom setting with other faculty joining in online. CTL staff emphasized the need to look directly into cameras and speak into mics, so students at home understand what's going on. The use of Power Points and lists are important for keeping the class up-to-speed. Faculty communicate frequently with students by phone, texts, and emails, providing a weekly rundown of what's expected.

Berger feels the CTL team reacted to issues as they happened, providing "just in time" information. Now, one-page instruction sheets and videos are centrally located on GeorgiaView, where faculty and students can go for quick reference.

By late fall, the number of requests for help had "decreased dramatically." In addition, few students have called in for help — which shows Berger the lessons CTL provided faculty were effective. He's modest about this success, however, and is quick to say all departments on campus pulled together to get the job done.

"It was very much a multi-team effort," Berger said. "I don't want it to sound like the university approached me at my door, and I shepherded this great massive ship. I didn't. I worked with others, and we came up with solutions and addressed those issues that were coming up."

"This was a lot of communication amongst us all," he added. "The institution really came forward and did it. The success really does lie at the institution's feet."



Andrew Deneen



Anresa Davis



Briana Nowak



Anne Spillers

FIVE INDIVIDUALS **RECOGNIZED** DURING VIRTUAL **ALUMNI WEEK**

Five individuals were honored in a virtual Alumni Awards Ceremony during Alumni Week, held the first week in November. They were recognized for their achievements, perseverance, and service to their community.



Dr. Christopher Reeves

Anne Tuck Spillers, '70

Anne Tuck Spillers, '70, was granted the Alumni Heritage Award, given to an alumna who in four or more decades of service has demonstrated ideals that best exemplify the traditions and heritage of the university. Spillers exhibited those principles in her service to the community and her alma mater.

While attending Georgia College, she served as the co-chair of the Honor Council and member of the College Government Association (CGA). She was recognized in the prestigious 1970 Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities.

"By serving on the Honor Council, I learned how to communicate with peers effectively and gained experience in listening to others and showing empathy," Spillers said. "CGA taught me about commitment, being a team player, communicating with others, and providing direction."

After graduating from Georgia College, Spillers was a teacher and librarian for the Newton County Board of Education. She also served in many community volunteer leadership positions, including as librarian

for the Trentham Library, First Baptist Church, Covington, and First Baptist Academy; co-chair of the Palmer-Stone Elementary Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Accreditation Review Committee; and president of the local chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa Sorority for Women Educators. She was also recognized as Teacher of the Year in 1992.

"My greatest leadership role has been as a teacher, and my greatest sphere of influence has been on my students' education and self-esteem," Spillers said. "Often, I've been thrust into leadership positions where there's a need or where others think I should or could do the job. In any case, I have a dedication to the task I believe was enhanced by my Georgia College experiences by what I've learned as a student and participating in campus organizations. I am forever grateful."

Andrew Deneen, '10

Andrew Deneen, '10, received the Outstanding Recent Alumni Award, which is bestowed to Georgia College alumni who have graduated within the past 10 years, achieved notable recognition in a professional or business career, and show promise for continued success.

Less than 10 years since receiving his undergraduate degree at Georgia College, Deneen earned a law degree and been appointed by the governor as one of the youngest assistant state attorneys in Florida's history. He's also become a husband and father and a member of the Georgia College Alumni Board of Directors. He's even completed an Iron Man Triathlon.

"When I arrived at Georgia College, I doubt I was a good public speaker," Deneen said. "I certainly wasn't a confident one. I took a public speaking course there. In my writing courses, I was challenged to read my own words to the class and was pushed to take leadership positions in extracurricular activities. If Georgia College hadn't prepared me to stand up and speak for my position, I wouldn't have the confidence to be a trial attorney."

His former boss used to challenge employees to never end a workday without being able to say they've accomplished at least one thing to make their community better or to positively impact at least one life.

"That's a pretty good rule to live by in public service," he said. "I hope every day I've done at least one thing to make my family and colleagues proud."

Briana Nowak, '12

Briana Nowak, '12, was given the Ethel Rae Mozo-Stewart Community Service Award. Established in memory of an alumna from the class of '46, this honor is granted to graduates, associates, and honorary alumni for their spirit of volunteerism. Candidates are considered for their history of exemplary service, resulting in visible improvements within their community.

Nowak spent the better part of the past five years working, living, and traveling abroad. Her global education exposed her to new people, languages, cultures, and ways of life. She's enjoyed teaching in Madagascar and India. Nowak's also designed and led a girl's camp for students from rural villages, where she taught them leadership and life skills and the importance of education.

"Through my courses, I learned how to think critically and strategically," Nowak said. "I also learned leadership and relationship management skills through my involvement in extracurriculars. My professors and classmates inspired me and served as role models and mentors. I apply all these skills in my profession today."

Her most inspirational learning experiences took place while serving as an agriculture and community development volunteer in the Peace Corps in Madagascar, where she developed a passion for community development and food sustainability practices. Nowak worked alongside farmers in rice fields and partnered with various Malagasy nonprofit organizations and focused on food insecurity issues to health education.

"Prior to Georgia College, I had little sense of who I was, what type of career I wanted to pursue, and what I was passionate about," said Nowak. "My studies and volunteer experiences at Georgia College exposed me to a myriad of options and opportunities. I became passionate about human rights. Georgia College gave me the confidence to pursue the Peace Corps."

Dr. Christopher Reeves, '96

Dr. Christopher Reeves, '96, was presented with the Alumni Achievement Award, which is given to graduates who've excelled in a professional field, having attained the prominence and/or had a positive effect on the state, region, or national level. He has been a doctor of podiatric medicine (DPM) serving as a fellow with the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS) and the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery for 16 years. He was a past president of the ACFAS, director of surgery for Upperline Health, faculty member for Advent East Surgical Residency program, and research director for Advent East Surgical Residency program.

Reeves learned how to be selfless and work towards a common goal from playing baseball at Georgia College. He was a member of the 1995 NCAA Division II College World Series Baseball Team, finishing as runner up and second in the nation. He applies these principles to his profession.

"When a ball is hit and there is play in the infield, the player making the play has no hesitation — he knows his teammate is exactly where he should be when he turns to throw it, because they've practiced this thousands of times," he said. "The operating room really isn't any different. In surgery, every person on that team must function or the team doesn't succeed. From the anesthesia provider, surgical tech, nursing staff, and residents/fellows — everyone has role, and it has to work flawlessly and it does."

Baseball also taught him what it takes to be a preeminent provider for his patients.

"My patients inspire me every day," he said. "They come to me asking for help to get them back to the things they love. They trust me. I have to bring my best every day. My teammates expected that."

The most gratifying aspect for Reeves about serving as the immediate past president of the ACFAS was the people. This includes the friendships and collegial relationships he made from across the country.

"Everyone works for the common goal of the profession and collaborates born out of healthy disagreement or differing of opinions to reach a decision on the best way to move forward," he said. "Being president was a true honor and a privilege. But, the work prior to that year, the relationships, and just trying to make a difference were the most rewarding."

Anresa Davis, '75

The Alumni Service Award was presented to Anresa Davis, '75. The honor recognizes graduates who have rendered the greatest service in recent years to the university and the Alumni Association.

Davis is a member of the Georgia College Foundation Board of Trustees and College of Health Sciences Leadership Board. She also served on the Alumni Board of Directors as the Scholarship Committee chair. For over 40 years, Davis has dedicated her time, talent, and resources to ensure future generations enjoy the same opportunities to succeed as she did.

For 25 years, she served as a registered nurse in the surgical intensive care unit and the emergency department. Davis then moved into counseling older adults at Park Springs, a life care community.

She fondly recalls that Professor Emerita Catherine Summerlin's balanced discipline with compassion while demonstrating excellence and patience. The most valuable lesson Davis learned from her was shared on the first day of nursing class with Summerlin.

"From this day forward, you will treat everyone in your care as you would your mother," Summerlin said.

"Her codes of conduct and dress seemed a bit extreme at the time, however Miss Summerlin held herself to the same standard," said Davis. "It was a life-changing example."

Today, Davis also has the students' best interest at heart.

"Our students are intentional and focused," she said. "Serving on the boards and the Board of Trustees has shown me what it takes to reach our current and future students and help them pursue their goals."

ATHLETICS





Georgia College Athletics is thrilled to announce our new athletics campaign, **Together We Will**. This new campaign is designed to raise critical scholarship support for our student-athletes, increase annual gifts, endow coaching positions, and ensure we sustain high-caliber facilities for our Division II athletics program and continue to foster university pride and comradery.

Over the next three years, our goal is to start 15 new endowed scholarships, 10 new annual scholarships, one endowed coaching position, and continue providing top-notch facilities for our student-athletes.

Each and every donor to GC Athletics will be part of our **Together We Will Campaign**, participating in at least one of the four priorities.

Student-athletes are attracted to Georgia College because of what our university represents — the opportunity for an outstanding collegiate experience that impacts them athletically, academically, and socially for the rest of their lives. You give that gift of opportunity for our student-athletes to attend a wonderful university, to compete in amazing facilities, and to play for dedicated coaches at a competitive level in all 11 of our varsity sports.

- **Together We Will overcome adversity.**
- **Together We Will raise funds in support of today's student-athletes.**
- **Together We Will invest in future student-athletes.**
- **Together We Will enable our teams to reach and exceed their goals.**
- **Together We Will build Champions for Life.**

For annual support of our Athletics Program, please visit our giving platform, alumni.gcsu.edu/bobcats, to support and celebrate GC Athletics, while providing financial support for all 11 NCAA Division II sports.

For scholarship support and questions, please contact Caroline Attaway at caroline.attaway@gcsu.edu or 478-445-1186 for more information.

Gifts of any size make a difference to our student-athletes. Help us spread the news on social media, using hashtag **#TWW**.

FOUR PRIORITIES

ENDOWED AND ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Our goal is to start 15 new endowed scholarships and 10 new annual scholarships.

- In the PBC, Georgia College stands in the last slot for scholarships granted with 29.2 available scholarships. Flagler stands in first with 61.93. As a thank you and based off the gift size, there will be naming opportunities.

ANNUAL GIFTS

Our goal is to receive gifts from 200 donors during our first Annual Week of Giving for Athletics. The first event was held Dec. 7-11, 2020, where we hosted a competitive week of giving amongst the 11 varsity sports. The event was hosted on CrowdThunder.

- Georgia College Foundation will match 10,000 to GC Athletics if we reach 200 donors.
- Every dollar of every gift goes directly to the team/program of the donor's choice.

ENDOWED COACHING POSITIONS

The goal of an endowed coaching position is to ensure success continues for Georgia College student-athletes past, present, and future. An endowed coaching position supplies GC with a perpetual source of income that provides the resources needed to attract and retain our coaches. A donor electing to provide an endowed gift is making a commitment to leave a lasting legacy for Georgia College Athletics.

FACILITIES

Gifts will secure the ability of GC to attract the best student-athletes to Milledgeville, and to give them the facilities they need to succeed.

- Best-in-class competition and training facilities recruit top student-athletes and deliver an unrivaled game day experience for our fans.

Wendell Staton



GC Director of Athletics

“WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE INVESTMENT IN OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES. OUR GOAL IS TO PROVIDE A STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE THAT IS UNIQUE, DIFFERENT, AND APPEALING, AND THEIR SUPPORT PROVIDES THE CRITICAL MARGIN OF EXCELLENCE. THIS EXPERIENCE HELPS PROVIDE THEM FOR THE NEXT PHASE AS WE GRADUATE CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE.”

Wesley Simpson



- Junior Guard GC Men's Basketball
- Co-Director of Athletic Affairs for the Student Government Association
- Member of the Finance Committee for the Board of Trustees

“THESE ROLES ALLOW ME TO PRACTICE AND FURTHER DEVELOP MY SKILLS AS A LEADER, WHICH WILL ONLY HELP ME TO LEAD MY TEAM TO REACH HIGHER GOALS EACH YEAR. ALSO, HAVING THE ABILITY TO POSITIVELY AFFECT THE LIVES OF STUDENTS THROUGH BILLS, MOTIONS, AND PROJECTS GIVES ME A SENSE OF PURPOSE ON CAMPUS. I CAN GIVE MY INPUT NOT ONLY AS AN ATHLETE BUT AS A STUDENT TO BOARDS THAT MAY NOT KNOW WHAT WE REALLY THINK OR NEED, AND THAT HELPS THEM MAKE DECISIONS THAT WILL TRULY BENEFIT THE STUDENT BODY.”

Stan Wilson



- Class of 1977
- Foundation Trustee
- Co-Founder of the Stanford Wilson Endowed Athletics Scholarship

“I RECOGNIZE THAT STUDENT-ATHLETES ARE LEADERS ON OUR CAMPUS AND BECOME WELL-ROUNDED GRADUATES WHO ARE AMBASSADORS FOR GEORGIA COLLEGE. I ALSO KNOW THAT TEAM SPORTS ARE A SIGNIFICANT PART OF OUR INSTITUTION AND CAN IMPACT EVERY STUDENT'S OVERALL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE. STUDENT ATHLETES AT GEORGIA COLLEGE ARE TRULY STUDENTS WHO ARE INVOLVED IN THE UNIVERSITY. AT GEORGIA COLLEGE, STUDENT-ATHLETES FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS LEARN THE QUALITIES OF DEDICATION, DISCIPLINE, HARD WORK, TIME-MANAGEMENT, AND TEAMWORK TO ACHIEVE A COMMON GOAL.”

The Researchers:

Alumni dive into industry through way of research

By the time Anastasia Kerr-German was a senior in 2014, she had already presented independent research at various conferences, delved into the rigor that goes into designing a research study, and worked with three different Georgia College faculty in their research labs.

“All my professors that I worked with brought something different to the table,” she said. “That was the beauty of Georgia College for me because you get to work with multiple faculty and its very collaborative. My ideas of what I wanted to do with my life sort of evolved based on conversations I had with them individually.”

Kerr-German worked with Drs. Whitney Heppner, J. Noland White, and Tsu-Ming Chiang in the Department of Psychology while she was a student. It was those experiences in faculty research labs that led her to pursue research in her own career — and she’s not alone.

“Well, first I didn’t even know that I’d have the opportunity here,” said Marissa Mayfield, ’18, ’20, who recently graduated in December with her master’s in biology from Georgia College. When Mayfield was an undergraduate environmental science major, she too experienced taking the reins in a research lab, which invigorated her to explore research further.

“I didn’t know what I wanted to research. At first, I just thought it was a cool path to test out,” she said. “Working with other students and faculty on research helped me figure out this was something that I loved doing.”

Mayfield researched environmental remediation while an undergraduate. She looked at environments that have been polluted and through varying environmental analysis, she determined the most affordable and efficient way to fix that area. An interest in remediation and rehabilitation eventually landed her a National Science Foundation grant last year. The grant was to research the remedial properties of Moringa trees, whose roots and shoots absorb water and nutrients from the soil as well as heavy metals.

Like Mayfield, Audrey Waits, ’17, was a graduate student studying biology at Georgia College. Her research at the university focused on the discovery of new bacteriophages, which are viruses that infect bacteria. Waits garnered a Fulbright Scholarship in 2017 to study in Finland. She conducted research with the Thule Institute at the University of Oulu. She studied Arctic health and studied how climatic factors (temperature, precipitation, etc.) affects infectious diseases for both humans and animals in the Arctic.

As part of her Fulbright experience, Waits attended workshops and seminars, and conducted a systematic literature review — these are the same experiences that now guide her as a faculty member in biochemistry and molecular medicine at the University of Oulu. She’s also a Ph.D. student at the university, where she’s studying endometrial glands and their 3D structure in relation to hormones, genetic modifications, and early pregnancy (mainly in mice).

“This research will help in understanding how endometrial gland structure affects implantation and could aid in timing embryo transfers for in vitro fertilization (IVF),” Waits said.

“My Fulbright experience was truly a life-changing experience for me, in the best possible way,” Waits said. “I met my husband during my Fulbright experience and now we live in Oulu where I am a Ph.D. student. My Fulbright experience definitely shaped my career and future in research.”

Kerr-German went on to study at the University of Tennessee where she got her master’s in experimental psychology and graduated in 2019 with a doctorate in research and experimental psychology and neuroscience. She now leads the Brain, Executive Function, and Attention Research (B.E.A.R) Lab at

Boys Town National Research Hospital. One major goal of the lab is to understand how children's brains process the information in the world around them and what individual factors might lead to different developmental trajectories and long-term outcomes.

At the core of what these graduates do is a focus on community and translating this experience in research to serve others. For Mayfield, it's about helping communities and wildlife have a chance to thrive.

"Being a researcher is important because it's all about what you're able to contribute to science," said Mayfield. "I get to find ways to help people, to clean whole environments and give organisms back their habitats so they won't go extinct."

Kerr-German said it comes down to the lives she's able to impact — it's a lesson that's stayed with her since her time at Georgia College in Dr. Chiang's research lab, where she examined factors contributing to development of young children's social and emotional competence.

"Because we were all paired with individual children, we were able to see that child grow over the course of a year or however long you're in the lab. You get to see how these interventions affected them, you get to look at the statistics and see if it actually worked," she said. "To me, that's the coolest part. It's that translational piece that I sought when I went on to get my graduate degree — and eventually what I sought when I was looking for a career in research."



STUDENT PROFILE



Repeating history:

STUDENT'S LOVE OF HISTORY ENSURES ACCURACY OF THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

When watching a production, a vital source — the dramaturg — is often overlooked. It's the person who researches the history of the roles and setting, adapts the scripts, and consults with everyone involved, so the production is on point. Senior Sachen Pillay is an integral member of Georgia College's production team.

The double history and liberal studies major and theatre minor did such a thorough job as a dramaturg for his research on his first production, "Ballet Russes," that he placed first in the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in South Carolina last February. Pillay also entered his research in Georgia College's Research Symposium last April, which got published.

"Ballet Russes" is about an enigmatic theatre ballet company that revolutionized the way theatre and ballet were done during the Russian Revolution.

As part of his independent study with Theatre Chair Dr. Karen Berman, Pillay studied the history of the characters and time period for the production. He formulated a 15-page thesis of "Ballet Russes" that argued the research to form its foundation.

Dramaturgs, like Pillay, are used in new play development, when the writers are trying to determine what they're going to say, the evolution of characters, and how they'll be characterized. They also interpret what the text is trying to relay on an academic or literary level and convey this to the production team.

"We contextualize the history of the play for the artists involved in the project," Pillay said. "Dramaturgs are there to essentially ask the right questions and get people to think."

Dramaturgs can also be a confidante for the artists, because often times working in theatre is an emotional process. At times, from the producers to the cast, they become emotionally vested in the production and get lost in their sentiments. So, they need guidance from the dramaturg to regain their focus on the reality of the production.

"So, we're the literary manager, historian, and therapist. We can be a lot of things at once," Pillay said. "It just depends on what the situation calls for."

But it all starts with research. One moment he's delving into the history and writing, and the other half of his time is spent in the rehearsal space.

"I can actually roll up my sleeves and get to work in the Black Box Theatre," Pillay said. "I'm watching the actors do their work and conversing with the director about different possibilities. I get to see the art being made."

After Pillay wrote the thesis for "Ballet Russes," he made actors' packets, which entailed researching the biographies of all the actors in the play who are based off of real people. He also located and used archival film from the Russian Revolution period to create a realistic backdrop for the audience.

"Productions like this one open a dialogue," he said. "Everyone has a role to play. I think artists especially do, because they express the feelings, wills, and emotions of the community in which they live in. And to do my small part in supporting the program that supports those artists is important to me."

Pillay also shared his love of history in working with Dr. Bob Wilson, professor of history and university historian, in Special Collections transcribing primary sources and placing them into an archivable format for him to use in future chapters of his book on the history of Georgia College. Pillay scanned documents, detailing historical periods and events at the university.

"I learned interesting facts about Georgia College, like the evolution from an all-women's school to a liberal arts university," he said. "I made that interesting, historical connection as to how the university was affected by the shift in social demographics that were happening throughout the U.S. at that time. To see this in the college I attend is pretty fascinating."

Between his time as a dramaturg and transcribing for Wilson, Pillay refined his interdisciplinary skills while at Georgia College.

"I feel that my time at a liberal arts institution really prepared me for something like this," he said. "You're bringing in so many different skills — academically and emotionally — into one process. It's been very interesting."

FACULTY PROFILE



Marketing professor promotes undergrad research with hard-hitting reality

Senior McKenna Ambrose chose to major in marketing, knowing it'd be a challenge. But after her first class with Dr. Doreen Sams, she wanted to quit.

Ambrose called her mother about the course syllabus — so tough and demanding it made her “want to cry.” Her first quiz in that class “triggered a similar reaction.”

“Then I realized Dr. Sams was not only pushing us to do the best we could do but, also, she expected nothing less from us,” Ambrose said. “Professors like Dr. Sams are few and far between. She’s a very strict professor and, regardless of how hard it is to hear critical feedback, it’s what every student needs at some point in their education.”

For 15 years, Sams has taught numerous marketing topics at Georgia College including advertising and promotions, branding strategy, business ethics, consumer behavior, digital and marketing analysis, focus group research, and international marketing strategy. She also teaches courses for the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program and takes students abroad to Spain and Canada.

She jokes about the seriousness of teaching theory and application. The “best insult” Sams ever received was from an airline passenger who interrupted her conversation with a colleague by calling them “a bunch of academics,” who knew “all theory and no practice.” To which Sams replied, “Without theory there is only bad practice.”

When decisions aren’t built on solid research, results can be shaky. That’s why Sams assigns students rigorous research projects. It’s also why she was instrumental in starting MURACE, Georgia College’s “Mentored Undergraduate Research and Creative Endeavors” in 2012. Since then, MURACE has financially supported more than 2,500 students, helping them conduct research and pay travel expenses to conferences.

Sams began focusing on research as a doctoral student at the University of South Florida in 2003, where she taught marketing research and international marketing strategies. Before getting her Ph.D. in philosophy of business, she worked in various industries — aerospace, education, and legal — where statistics and research were crucial to success.

Research is not always a positive thing. Bad research hinders decision making. The best kind involves meticulous collection and analyzation of numerical and non-numerical data like text, videos, or audio. This type of research is vital in every aspect of promotion from advertising to sales, Sams said. She teaches these skills to students who, in turn, have conducted hundreds of research studies for real clients.

When Sams’ MBA students devised a new branding strategy for Robins Regional Chamber of Commerce, the president of that group remarked that the students “produced more and a higher quality than the lowest bidder” for the job — an estimated savings of \$80,000. Currently, Sams’s students are working on a series of



GURC
CATHERINE
Boyd
Georgia College &
State University
Posters at the
Georgia State Capitol
GURC

GURC
ASHLEY
Newkirk
Georgia College &
State University

social justice topics for Georgia College's Rural Studies Institute, focusing on the Southern Black Belt region. This research will take multiple semesters to complete, resulting in a social marketing plan to be presented at conferences and collaborative partnerships with NGOs (Non-Government Organizations).

The most interesting thing Ambrose learned from Sams is how to conduct and interpret research through a software called "SPSS Statistics."

"It upset me at first because I felt I wasn't ready, and she was expecting too much from us," Ambrose said. "It's made me want to apply to do more undergrad research, which isn't something I ever imagined I'd be doing."

Testimonies like these make Sams job rewarding. One of the first things she said her students will market is themselves to employers. They must leave college knowing how to create, communicate, and deliver value — life skills Sams enjoys teaching.

Last spring, due to COVID-19, Sams helped put the annual campus research conference online. This meant coaching students in how to work virtually and cope with change. Being an educator is special, she said, because it provides an "opportunity to transform lives by sharing knowledge and skills that shape future generations of lifelong learners."

Senior business administration major Christopher Nedza appreciates this "genuine interest" Sams shows for each student.

Nedza is living in France this semester and taking all his courses online. As a marketing minor, he appreciates Sams' class on writing surveys. Students are taught "strict guidelines to ensure the most gratifying responses," he said. Learning "vital concepts and theories of research and

how to analyze information critically" will be useful in his search for an internship after graduation.

"The exercises and assignments in class and a liberal arts education from Georgia College have helped me become a more critical thinker," Nedza said. "I feel that I have a much better understanding of current events and how to interpret information to make critical decisions."

“PROFESSORS LIKE DR. SAMS ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN.”

Like Nedza, Sams has also worked completely online since spring. The pandemic prevented her from teaching on campus this semester, and she misses the classroom which energizes her. Sams taught MBA courses online in the past, so pivoting to virtual settings and using technology wasn't difficult. But Zoom gets old, and there were bumps along the way. When one simulation failed to work, she had to create alternative assignments literally overnight.

Like her students, Sams picked up new skills too. She learned to operate special equipment that allows her to use four computer screens at once when teaching.

It can't replace the classroom, however.

"Would I like to be free to get out again? Definitely! Nevertheless," she said, "This too shall pass and community life will return — although it may be a bit different than before. We, as humans, have a great capacity to adapt to change."

VIRTUAL

ALUMNI WEEK

Recap

Georgia College would like to thank everyone who attended Virtual Alumni Week events during Nov. 2 – 8, 2020. While our celebration was not the typical in-person experience due to COVID modifications, we were excited to have great attendance.

We welcomed:

2,500+
EVENT
INTERACTIONS

via Zoom, live streams on
social media, and YouTube

Your nominations are needed for
next year's Alumni Awards!

Nominations are due May 15, 2021.

For more information, please visit:
gcsu.edu/alumni/awards

Highlights include:

Honors Program 50th
Anniversary Commemoration
and celebration of the
Honors College

A Celebration of
our Alumni Awards
Recipients

Intergenerational
Roundtable

01

Class of 1970
50th Anniversary

02

Women's Giving
Circle meeting

03

04

A Walking Tour
of Historic Milledgeville

05

06

Power Hour

07

Thank you to everyone who helped make Alumni Week a success, and we look forward to seeing you again in-person in future years!

Class Notes

1990s

John “K” Hall, '90, '96, was selected as STAR Teacher for Brunswick High School during the 2019-2020 academic school year. The STAR Teacher is selected by the declared high school STAR student for having made the most significant contribution to the STAR student’s scholastic development in grades K-12. This is his fourth selection as STAR Teacher and his third in a row. Hall teaches AP physics, AP seminar, and honors physics. He also serves as chair of the Science Department. He and his wife, Shelly, reside in Brunswick, Georgia, with their son, Brett, who is a second-year student at the University of Georgia majoring in mechanical engineering.

gubernatorial transition team. Prior to that, he managed then Secretary of State Brian Kemp’s legislative and external affairs. Wilkinson also served in Gov. Nathan Deal’s administration, where he managed the local government relations program. He served as an official at the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, as well.

Emily “Birdie” Willis, '12, will soon release another graphic novel — the story of the life of environmental activist Rachel Carson — whose bestselling books ultimately helped prompt the creation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The story is accessible to readers of all ages. The graphic novel is published by BOOM Studios and debuts in March 2021.

2000s



Matthew “Matt” Davis, '02, '04 was recently elected as the vice president for the Southeastern Museums Conference (SEMC). The nonprofit professional membership organization is based on an association of museums, museum staff, independent professionals, and

corporate partners focusing on states throughout the southeastern United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. SEMC provides educational and professional development opportunities, improves the interchange and exchange of ideas, and develops collegiality throughout the field. Davis also serves as the director of Historic Museums at Georgia College in Milledgeville, Georgia.



Photo credit: Ann Uland

Michael Ziegler, '16, recently earned his Master of Science in Geological Sciences and Vertebrate Paleontology from the University of Florida. He was inspired by his time at Georgia College with Professors Dr. Al Mead, Dr. Sam Mutiti, Dr. Allison VandeVoort, and **Dr. David Patterson, '07**. Most of his research focused on better understanding the ancient environment and charismatic fossils (short-legged rhino, four-tusked elephants, giant river otter, and saber-toothed cat) of a five- to seven-million-year-old locality in Florida called Montbrook. Education and outreach were equally important and involved the use of 3D printed fossils in K-12 curriculum for local classrooms in the southeastern U.S. and even collaborations internationally with the Institute for the Study of Mongolian Dinosaurs. After earning a MSc, he moved to Germany to start his Ph.D. research with the Max Planck Institute focusing on understanding the relationship between early humans and megafauna on the South American landscape around 10,000 to 15,000 years ago.

2010s

Stuart Wilkinson, '11, joined McGuire Woods Consulting as vice president of its Atlanta office in October 2020. He came from the office of Gov. Brian Kemp, where he served as deputy director of external affairs, helping to create and advance the governor’s legislative agenda. In addition, Wilkinson served as deputy director of the



Jen Sokolow, '15, and Jack Langford, '17, met at Georgia College in 2015. The couple got married Oct. 24, 2020, at Four Oaks Manor in Buford, Georgia. The wedding party was comprised of **Jordan Hale, '12, Amber Akers Hunt, '17, Joseph Langford, '12, Megan Simons, '17, and Jordan Wagner, '18.**



Danielle Williams, '16, '18, married Terrell Davis, '16, '20, Aug. 22, 2020, at the Atrium in Norcross, Georgia. They met as first-year students at Georgia College through the GLIMPSE program in 2013. Danielle graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting and a Master of Accounting. She works as a senior tax accountant with a CPA firm. Terrell graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication and a Master of Public Administration. He works as a senior public relations specialist with the Gwinnett County Government. The couple resides in Duluth, Georgia.



Avery Walker, '20, and Henry Jones, '20, got engaged Nov. 6, 2020, in Boston, Massachusetts.



Afsana "Priya" Ahmed, '18, and Sanjay Patel, '17, '19, recently married. The couple met at Georgia College in 2015.

"Here we are five years later, both RNs in the middle of a pandemic — 2020 has been a crazy, but blessed year," said Priya. "Please stay safe out there, socially distance, and wear your masks."



Amber Myers Parrish, '17, '18, and Russ Parrish '13, '14 recently married surrounded by Georgia College alumni, friends, and family. Pictured left to right are **Sam Parrish, '18;** Tiffany Parrish, lecturer at Georgia College; Amber Parrish; Russ Parrish; and Dale Parrish.



Megan McLeod, '18, and Michael Thomason, '13, got married on March 7, 2020. "We thank Georgia College for all of the great memories and amazing education that we received," said Megan.

Please submit your news for Class Notes at:
gcsu.edu/alumni/notes

The following article was written by Leonard G. Stinson, '88, and it was contributed on behalf of the Georgia College African-American Alumni Council (AAAC) as an initiative to honor individuals who made a great impact on the Georgia College community. Dr. Hill received the 2019 AAAC Keepers of the Promise Award for her support of African-American students and students with disabilities. In 2020, the Dr. Helen Hill Scholarship was established in her honor and will support African-American male students who attend Georgia College. To learn more about the AAAC and their work or to become involved in the AAAC, please contact aaac@gcsu.edu. →

In Memoriam

Catherine Miller Dupree, '41	Shirley Thomas Thompson, '55
Camille May Lane, '43	Lillian Coombs Miller, '61
Billie Crumbley Johnstone, '44*	Evalyn Andrews Carter, '64
Anne Isbell Mathis, '44	Betty Wheelis Bishop, '67
Roslyn Bynum Strickland, '45	Ronald Parish, '78
Aileen Jackson Underwood, '46	Van Manolis, '80
Irma Wall Bishop, '49	Elizabeth Knepper-Muller, '82
Mary Hardison Buchler, '51	Carolyn McLeroy Harper, '84
Dolores Davis Dunham, '51	David Bohanan, '85
Dora Elliott Harris, '51	Virginia Hughes Wells, '85
Edith Langford Bennett, '52	Rebecca Barksdale Oliver, '86
Betty Leroy Langford, '52	Brandon Freeman, '10
Margaret Morrison, '54	Derek Dawkins, '12
Vennie Price Bishop, '55	Deborah Hicks Amason, '18
Jane Chakley Griffin, '55	Mitchell Pope, '20

*Denotes alumni of Peabody School.

This list recognizes deceased alumni that the university has been made aware of as of Dec. 3, 2020.



Dr. Helen Margueriete Hill: A Woman's Life of Service

(Feb. 16, 1923 - Nov. 21, 2020)

Many knew Dr. Hill as the little short white lady with the high-pitch squeaky voice who loved to talk. If you paid attention, she shared knowledge that only life lessons could reveal and wisdom that only the bruises of age could offer.

For her students, Dr. Hill was always willing to help and offer advice. When students approached her, whether in her office or walking on campus, Dr. Hill would simply smile and blink those perky eyes and say, "well, tell me..." I'm sure each of us can finish the sentence. She was determined to find out what our issues were or how she could help.

Did any of us ever stop to think, who is this little lady, where did she come from, or why is she so perky? Did anyone know that she was born in Pike County, Kentucky, to the loving parents, Arvle Thacker and Ellen Turner Thacker? Did anyone know she had a brother, James Arvle Thacker, and an adopted sister, Della Marie Johnson? Did we ever think about her attending high school dances or dressed beautifully at her senior prom before graduating from Pikeville Academy High School? We knew she had a doctorate, but did we know she earned her undergraduate degrees in mathematics and history from the University of Kentucky? Did we know she earned her master's in Student Personnel also from the University of Kentucky? Oh, and that doctorate degree, she earned it at Oklahoma State University while living in Oklahoma. If we had thought to ask, "What was her late husband's name?" She would have told us, Wallace Hill. She would have added that they were married in 1959, and she lost him in 1968. If we had asked Dr. Hill where she worked before coming to Georgia College, she would have responded in that squeaky voice, "Well, I decided to put my math degree to work by teaching high school trigonometry in Kentucky and West Virginia from the late 1940's to the early 1950's. After that, I went on to teach a few years at the University of

Florida in the 1950's. I taught at Oklahoma State University for about 10 years (1958-1968), where I served as dean of women. It seemed longer, but I was the director of counselors at Perdue University for two years. I moved on to teach at the University of Massachusetts for about nine years (1969-1978); I couldn't stand the cold weather any longer, so I came here in 1978." It is speculated that Dr. Hill retired from Georgia College in 2004. She was 81 years old. I bet I know what you are thinking now: "Wow, she was 81 years old!"

Now more is known about the short lady standing behind the podium as a lecturer and the witty lady seated behind the desk as a resource. Hopefully, she has taught us to look further than the podium, further than the desk to see her, the person. Dr. Hill was a daughter, a sister, an aunt, and, to Wallace, she was a devoted wife.

To students at Georgia College, she was a friend, a counselor, an advisor, and an ally. Yes, Dr. Hill was a powerful ally for students at Georgia College. She was a professor as well as a vital part of student services. Dr. Hill opened her door to all students, especially African-American students and students with disabilities. She was an advisor to individual students as well as student organizations. Dr. Hill often posed as an advocate for students by facilitating meetings to resolve issues between students and faculty. She forged relationships that served to protect the emotional and mental health of students. She fought to secure resources for students such as scholarships, work studies, and tutors. Dr. Hill routinely partnered with administrators to protect student rights. She was passionate about African-American students and students with disabilities having the resources to increase their chances of graduating.

Thank you for taking this journey called, A Woman's Life of Service. I hope it inspires us all to give more of ourselves and to expect less.

Farewell Dr. Hill, you will be missed.



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School of Nursing dean provides financial means for students



Georgia College's nursing programs rank in the top tier time and time again. But the programs wouldn't have existed without the help of Dr. Pamela Levi, first dean of the School of Nursing.

During her 17-year tenure, Levi improved and expanded the newly-accredited Bachelor of Science in Nursing program and transformed the Department of Nursing to the School of Nursing. It later became the School of Health Sciences and is now known as the College of Health Sciences.

This didn't come easy. Fundraising and pooling of resources took a great deal of time and effort.

In addition to the many programmatic initiatives and building renovations she led, Levi served the middle Georgia nursing community and added a charter for Theta Tau chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International — the international organization for nursing scholarship. She was chair of the Georgia Board of Nursing and elected by peers as president. Also, Levi and the nursing faculty established a successful international nursing student exchange in Australia and England.

Several nursing programs wouldn't exist without the strong foundation built by Levi, recipient of Georgia College's Hemphill-Sallstrom Faculty-Staff Honors Award, recognizing outstanding service by Georgia College faculty and staff.

"I have so many fond memories," she said. "You get a report back from

a national accrediting agency that's glowing, because your faculty has worked so hard. We'd stop and celebrate those great moments. And, the memories I remember with the most emotion are when the faculty came together to fix a problem or to support a student."

"I knew I was going to offer a gift halfway through my deanship, because I could see how much of a difference even a small scholarship could make to students," Levi said.

When she announced her retirement, the nursing faculty helped fund a scholarship in her name.

"That will always be the greatest honor I've ever received," she said. "Sometimes, scholarship recipients wrote a two-page thank you note describing how the money made such a difference in their lives."

That's when Levi decided to set aside funds that would go directly towards financially helping students.

She hopes students receiving her scholarship will enter the profession using critical thinking and leadership skills they were taught at Georgia College.

"I hope they will never forget that while nurses are integral members of a health care team, they are also independent, licensed professionals who are responsible for their own ethical and medical decision making," Levis said. "I think we live in a world where it's very important that nursing professionals advocate for their patients."

To learn how you can help students with a gift in your will, contact Dan Lavery at 478-445-1236 or dan.lavery@gcsu.edu.