

GEORGIA COLLEGE

CONNECTION

THE MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS | FALL 2021



CONTENTS

FALL 2021 | CONNECTION



Features

4

Up Front

10

Cover Story

16

Presidential
Announcement

18

Feature Story

20

Athletics

24

Alumni Profile

26

Student Profile

28

Faculty Profile

32

Homecoming
Weekend
Save-the-Date
and Class Notes

35

Deceased List

WELCOME

Class of 2025

See more Class of 2025 photos on page 14.



CONNECTION

Fall 2021

Vol. XVI, No. 1

Copyright 2021.

All rights reserved.

Published by

University Communications.

231 W. Hancock St.

Milledgeville, GA 31061

President

Cathy Cox

Associate Vice President for

Strategic Communications

Omar Odeh

Editor/Director of Marketing and Publications

Victoria Fowler, '12

Writers

Margaret Brown, '19

Brittany Johnson, '15

Kristen Maddox, '21

Anna Gay Leavitt

Cindy O'Donnell

Al Weston

Design

Brooks Hinton

Bailey Wilson, '12

Photography

Michael Gillett, '15, '20

Brooks Hanson, '19

Brittany Johnson, '15

Anna Gay Leavitt

Aubrie L. Sofala, '12, '16

Cyaira Vest

Please send

change of address

and class notes to:

University Advancement

Campus Box 96

Milledgeville, GA 31061

connection@gcsu.edu

No person shall, on the grounds
of race, color, sex, sexual
orientation, religion, national
origin, age, disability, veteran
status, or genetic information
be excluded from employment
or participation in, be denied
the benefits of, or otherwise
be subjected to discrimination,
under any program or activity
conducted by Georgia College.



Space Pioneers:

Astronomy professor and students create stellar map

A Georgia College professor and students created a “first-of-its-kind” map showing exactly where neutron stars and black holes are born and how far they’ve traveled.

“This type of research is typically done at Harvard or UC Berkeley. So,” Astrophysicist Dr. Arash Bodaghee said, “it’s kind of surprising to see Georgia College students taking the lead. That’s because I brought some of this data with me from my Ph.D. 20 years ago, and we’ve been updating it ever since.”

Since 2014, four Georgia College students have helped Bodaghee chart neutron stars within the Small Magellanic Cloud. It’s a companion galaxy bound to the Milky Way by gravitational pull. The group just published their map and a research paper on the speed of neutron stars in that galaxy.

The next step is to update a map of the Milky Way that Bodaghee created in 2012.

Bodaghee has worked with senior Cody Cox, who switched majors from computer science to physics with a minor in mathematics — and his technological know-how has proved invaluable.

An expert in C++ computer language, Cox quickly learned a more complicated programming language called MATLAB. He’s written a few thousand lines of MATLAB code that extracts data on the distance of neutron stars and black holes from published catalogs, then computes the information onto a graph. He also wrote another few thousand lines of code that can update stellar maps — pinpointing where these heavenly bodies have moved.

“In a nutshell,” Bodaghee said, “you’re looking at the most accurate map of high-mass X-ray binaries ever made. Crazy to think it was produced here at Georgia College, and that nobody else anywhere has anything close to it.”

During his senior year, Cox will finish the Milky Way map. Once done, the two maps can be overlaid to show similarities and differences in neutron stars and black holes.

“Before I got into college,” he said, “I didn’t know I’d be doing this kind of work. It’s given me an appreciation of all the work that goes into astronomy. People just think of it as looking into a telescope and seeing pretty pictures. But there’s so much more that goes into it. I have a lot of respect for the people who do this full time. It’s incredible.”



Public health major helps address food disparities in Baldwin County

The rural Coopers community of Baldwin County sits outside the city limits of Milledgeville. Although it's only about seven miles on the southside of town, it's in a desert of its own.

A food desert that is.

Through her internship, recent graduate Christina Taylor, '21, spent the summer mapping access to food in the county and found some areas face little access to food, especially healthy food.

"My research is around physical food environments in Baldwin County and rural, underserved communities," she said. "In Baldwin County, we went around and mapped every establishment that sells food, regardless of whether it's healthy or not healthy."

Working with Dr. Damian Francis in Georgia College's Center for Health and Social Issues, Taylor mapped more than 200 establishments from restaurants to grocery stores and convenience stores, gas stations, pharmacies, and even coffee shops.

She found the Coopers community only had access to one gas station — which sells mostly unhealthy foods — leaving the folks living there in a food desert.



"A food desert has limited options, especially to healthy foods," said Taylor.

"We're also look at things like limitations to access transportation," she said. "If people can't drive and the stores don't sell healthy foods, then people who live on the other side of the county have to go all the way to Walmart or Piggly Wiggly to have access."

Once she completes her work mapping the food locations, the findings will be shared with the county government to help create strategies to not only address issues in improving access but also to improve dietary health and the overall health of the community.



Virtual exhibit explores history of Central State Hospital

The Ina Dillard Russell Library has partnered with the Georgia Public Library Service

(GPLS) to create a digital exhibit exploring the history of nursing at Central State Hospital (CSH) in Milledgeville.

The project is part of a GPLS Digital Exhibits pilot program designed to build capacity for public libraries through digitized cultural materials available on the Digital Library of Georgia (DLG).

Over the hospital's nearly 180-year history, the group looked at many topics and issues that could be examined. It turned out the most viewed item on the DLG in 2019 was the record book of the CSH School of Nursing.

"We felt building off of that public interest provided us with a good starting point," Evan Leavitt, manager of facilities operations and planning said. "Once I began my research, I quickly learned that you could not talk about the school of nursing alone. There was a need to contextualize nursing at CSH within the evolution of nurse training in the United States."

The exhibit highlights the work of African American nurses like Ruth Hartley Mosley and Ludie Clay Andrews. Hartley Mosley was the first African American head nurse of a patient ward at CSH, and went on to become a civil rights activist and philanthropist. Clay Andrews, a Milledgeville native and Georgia's first Black registered nurse, organized the Municipal Training School for Colored Nurses.

The exhibit can be viewed online at <https://bit.ly/3mdhHfR>.

Limitless opportunities for the Georgia College community to experience the world



Border-Free GC leverages the global reach of technology to put the world at the fingertips of students, faculty, and staff. With endless possibilities, they can engage with individuals across the globe, without the barriers associated with physical travel.

The International Education Center (IEC) teamed with GC faculty and universities and other entities worldwide to create border-free study abroad programs, classrooms, and academic programming, plus student development, staff, and professional development.

Border-Free GC is a powerful concept, with “border” understood here not only in the sense of a boundary separating geographical entities, but also in the sense of a barrier to be surpassed or, ideally, eliminated.

“Border-Free GC is designed to provide access to

international experiences and opportunities to all, and especially to those who can benefit most,” said Dr. James Callaghan, senior international officer, assistant vice-president for international education, and director of the International Education Center.

“Access is freed from barriers of all sorts whether actual — such as financial, disabilities/physical mobility, or time and responsibility constraints — or perceived,” he said.

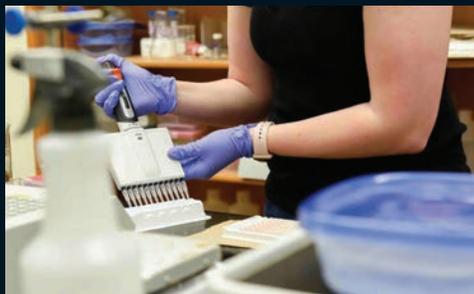
“Additionally, as a framework for internationalization embracing fully six categories of participation, and not just study abroad — and which makes it, therefore, utterly unique to my knowledge — it makes the goal of every GC student having an international experience before they graduate fully achievable.”

Although he had been working towards border-free since the 1990s, what crystalized the full concept for Callaghan was the period in 2020 when the pandemic was putting a crushing grip on things, forcing study abroad programs to shut down.

Border-free opportunities are available not only to students and faculty, but are also made accessible to staff and the wider regional and global community through conferences, workshops, symposia, and more.

Learn more at gcsu.edu/international/border-free.

Summer REUs: Six science students get research internships



Six students — four biology majors, a physics major, and chemistry major — took part in REUs (Research Experiences for Undergraduates) at a variety of

schools in the United States and abroad. During the summer of 2021, they worked with laser optics, synthetic and molecular biology, cell signaling pathways, and biomedical techniques.

“REUs increase the chances of our students getting accepted to graduate programs and winning highly-competitive scholarships and awards which, in turn, helps us to maintain our status as a leader in undergraduate research and provider of high-quality undergraduate education,” said Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge, assistant professor of physics.

Students who participated in 2021 REUs through the National Science Foundation are:

- **Evan Dunnam** — a sophomore majoring in physics. He did a virtual REU with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) in the area of theoretical physics and materials research.
- **Nicholas Campbell** — a senior majoring in chemistry. His REU was in-person at the University of Kansas and mixed biochemistry with chemistry.
- **Chase Lueder** — a senior majoring in biology with a minor in chemistry. He attended an in-person biomedical REU at Augusta University, called the Star Program.
- **Peter Opara-Nadi** — a senior majoring in biology with a minor in chemistry. He participated virtually in synthetic biological research program at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.
- **Molly Bullington** — a senior biology major with minors in chemistry and environmental science. Her REU in molecular biology was virtual with the University of Saskatchewan-Saskatoon in Canada.
- **Lucy Beck** — a senior biology major with a minor in chemistry. She took part in a virtual internship at Liang Lab at the Emory University School of Medicine.



Georgia College professor and student name new species of amphipod

Scuds are bottom dwellers at the bottom of the food chain. They suck up nutrients in the muddy depths of lakes, rivers, streams, marshes, and oceans — only to become food for larger aquatic invertebrates and fish.

About 10,000 different species of these shrimplike creatures are known to exist.

Now one more's been added to the list.

Georgia College Assistant Professor of Biology Dr. Kristine White and junior environmental science major Sally Sir of Duluth, Georgia, have discovered an amphipod never before identified by anyone else. They found it in a collection of about 7,000 amphipods White collected in the mid-2000s as

a post-doctoral student in Okinawa, Japan.

They dissected their little ivory-colored scud — about 4 mm in size (imagine a stack of four dimes). They took 3D images of it with a DSLR camera on a stacked imaging system. They described and drew it. Most importantly, they gave it a name and sent the information off to the international journal, *Zootaxa*, where several peer reviewers will determine once-and-for-all whether it's a new species.

"I'm very excited," White said. "I was even more excited to have a student here to work on it. It was a group effort. We both decided together that this was a new species."

‘Thunder Learns to Read:’ Education students’ new tools to teach reading

Georgia College junior education majors spent several sessions during their spring 2021 semester working on-site at Lakeview Academy in Baldwin County giving students additional guidance and encouragement as they honed their reading skills.

“We are actually putting into practice the different tips and skills that we’ve learned through our classes,” said early childhood education major Erin Malone. “I think it helped that we were with the students only in the spring because we had a toolbox of all the things that we needed to know be a lot more impactful.”

As part of their college course Literacy Assessment and Instruction: Dyslexia and Diverse Reading Profiles, teaching candidates tutored Kindergarten through second-grade students (K-2).

“We revised our literacy coursework for early childhood and for special education as a part of a pilot in the state,” said Dr. Linda Bradley, professor of literacy education. “We developed a three-

Music therapy students practice the sound of healing

It’s perfect harmony — the song of an experienced professional who passes what he knows to undergraduate students who, in turn, pass their new skills on to others.

Together, they use music to calm, soothe, and entertain the elderly at Carlyle Place in Macon, Georgia, helping them recollect forgotten words and memories. Each student benefits from a mentor’s experience but also from the knowledge passed down from other interns.

“There aren’t many internship programs around the country, especially in the southeastern region. I felt passionately about creating more opportunities for students,” said Johnathan Moon, who got his degree in music therapy at Georgia College in 2015 with a minor in math, and who’s now pursuing a master’s in music therapy.



course restructured plan that emphasizes hands-on implementation with students in schools. Spring 2021 is the first offering of this course linking assessment and interventions on-site with groups of K-2 students.”

Overcoming the challenges of the pandemic and working with school and county leadership, Bradley connected her students with 106 younger children to work on the fundamentals of reading.

In honor of their hard work and the end of the school year, the children received a special reward during their last scheduled tutoring session — a book of their very own to take home written by Bradley and featuring Georgia College’s mascot Thunder the Bobcat.



As an undergraduate, Moon completed his own internships at Carlyle. He worked there two years after graduation, then moved to a job at The Glen at Lake Oconee before returning to Carlyle Place in 2020 as music therapist and outreach coordinator.

This summer, Moon supervised three Georgia College music majors at the retirement community. While the first part of the internship was “mostly watching,” Moon encourages trainees to lead group sessions as soon as they can.

Marketing research students help elderly, disabled, and veteran homeowners in Atlanta



It happens across America as cities grow. Developers swoop in to buy property held by families for generations, at times only offering the current residents a small portion of the value of their home and land. Some residents take the offer, not knowing the real value of what they have and their limited housing options after the sale.

Seven marketing students and their professors partnered with an Atlanta nonprofit over the summer to help highlight the problem and bring solutions for low-income residents.

"We have been working with HouseProud Atlanta, a nonprofit organization that works with under-resourced families in metro Atlanta," said Dr. Mary Rickard, assistant professor. "They specifically work closely with seniors, veterans, and disabled Atlantans."

Marketing professors Rickard and Dr. Dee Sams, along with

geography professor Dr. Doug Oetter, led students as they worked with HouseProud.

The team analyzed real estate details in under-resourced Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU) using tax records, deed information, Geographic Information System Mapping (GIS), and business analyst software. The goal was to provide residents with findings from the data to help them make informed decisions.

"A lot of homeowners are approached by developers, and they're offered a cash price, which is generally very low based on what the evaluation price or appraised price would be," said Rickard.

Now with access to additional sources of valuable information provided by this Georgia College team, HouseProud will be able to provide additional resources to residents.

Celebrating 25 years of liberal arts excellence



Georgia College's roots run deep in providing a top-quality education to students. Over the years, the university has changed in many ways, but that dedication remains constant.

In 1996, the Georgia Board of Regents designated Georgia College as the state's public liberal arts university. We celebrate 25 years of this designation and showcase how the liberal arts comes to life on campus today.

Students learn to think critically and broadly about issues. They learn to be effective communicators and work with diverse groups of people in teams. Ambiguity and challenges don't intimidate them. Instead, they're adaptable and resilient when problems arise — all skills taught and championed through the liberal arts.

"Those skills are very relevant. In fact, I would argue that they're probably even more relevant now than back in 1996 when we received the designation," said Dr. Costas Spirou, provost and vice president for academic affairs. "The call from business and corporate leaders has also been stronger as survey after survey reveals they are seeking employees who possess those skills."

Professors build their courses to incorporate not just textbook definitions and PowerPoint lectures. They bring concepts to life through interactive learning, group projects, and challenging students to think independently through their studies.

"Our university community is committed to thinking about the liberal arts and sciences in innovative ways, and one of those outcomes is GC Journeys," said Spirou.

The co-curricular opportunities complement the classroom experience as all students are encouraged to participate in study abroad, undergraduate research, community-based engaged learning, leadership development, and internships. Each is a component of the GC Journeys Program.

The recently launched Border-Free GC also aims to make international experiences more accessible.

"The liberal arts is really about the ability or the willingness to engage beyond defined structures," said Spirou "I think that the Border-Free approach drops those boundaries, expands opportunities, and allows students who otherwise would not have been able to view or engage, to now be able to do that."

Integrated Science Complex promotes transparency and teamwork



Georgia College's Integrated Science Complex (ISC) is not everyone's idea of a traditional lab — where doors are shut, and people isolate in their own workspaces guarding projects from prying eyes.

The university's new science building is about the concepts associated with openness. Light. Transparency. Shared lab spaces. Collaboration.

And glass. Lots of glass.

"This building was designed to be science on display," said Dr. Indiren Pillay, chair of Biological and Environmental Sciences. "There is a paradigm shift in people's schools of thought. I grew up in the era when everybody had their own lab with the doors closed, and they seldom shared resources. But that's not the way science really works. Shared resources make a lot of sense. It creates a collaborative nature and, if nothing else, science should be collaborative."

"The efficiency will be unmatched," he said. "The building epitomizes a sea-of-change in the way we think as scientists at Georgia College. This building is a monument to that."

As dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Eric Tenbus said he discourages territoriality. The science complex promotes an environment for shared ideas — perfectly aligning, he said, with Georgia College's liberal arts mission and spotlight on undergraduate research.

As much as science will be on display in the new building, art will be too. The first art exhibit will be part of the collection of Jim and Karen Fleece.

"With the art that will hang on the walls, and the science activity that'll be on display, the ISC is the perfect embodiment of the College of Arts and Sciences' mission, scope, and collaborative spirit. We cannot wait to move in and get started," Tenbus said.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held in late September. Full occupancy will begin January 2022, and the building will not just be for science faculty and students — the ISC will be accessible to the entire campus and surrounding community.

Visitors first notice the ISC's architectural design — striking for its wide expanse of floor-to-ceiling glass. This glass is throughout the inside, as well. 'On display' means exactly that: a continuous exhibition and demonstration of science.

Everywhere guests look, they'll see directly into the heart of academia and witness science-in-action.

A wall of windows wraps around laboratories on each floor, allowing people to walk the hallway perimeters and peer in. They'll see experiments in-progress, professors working alongside students, problems being solved, labs being cleaned. They'll see flasks bubbling in chemistry, beakers of liquids, petri dishes of bacteria, students at microscopes, groups gathered around dry erase boards filled with equations, and botanists sifting soils and seeds.

"People are not going to look in the windows and see white coats all starched and clean," Pillay said. "It's going to be messy. It's going to be real. It's going to be science."

"We want to inspire our students to look differently at science. We want to inspire our community to look differently at science," he said. "We want to encourage more kids to get into science for the right reasons."

Dr. Kenneth Saladin, distinguished professor emeritus of biology, was instrumental in moving the sciences in this direction. Years ago, Saladin devised a premed program at Georgia College. Using his own resources, he mentored biology students with an interest in medicine.

As retirement loomed, Saladin ensured his work would endure by donating a generous gift. It funded the Endowed William Harvey Chair in Biomedical Science position, held by Dr. Ashok Hegde since 2016. Hegde continued and fine-tuned Saladin's premed mentorship program. To date, every Georgia College student who applied to medical school has gained admission.

"The professorship is unique. It's the only one in Georgia," Pillay said. "We've had quite a bit of success with it. It's been a good recruiting tool, getting premed students to come to Georgia College, and it's been a good method of developing these types of cohorts within the department."

Recently, Saladin donated \$1 million to further support mentored student research in biology and environmental sciences. He created a matching scholarship program for biology majors. His donations go beyond science to impact honors students, as well.

“Dr. Saladin's amazing generosity will support both undergraduate and graduate research within the department,” Pillay said. “This consistent means of support helps us purchase research supplies and instrumentation for students, as well as provide travel support for professional journal publications and conferences, so students can disseminate their work.”

Other major milestones also contributed to the construction of the ISC.

A recent grant from the National Science Foundation helps underrepresented and disadvantaged students pursue majors in chemistry and physics. The purchase of important advanced equipment, like the scanning electron microscope, was another breakthrough.

To put it plainly: The \$22.1 million complex is the product of forward thinking.

Former University President Dr. Steve Dorman noticed congestion at Herty Hall and pushed for new construction. Johnny Grant, former director of economic development and external relations, put together a proposal for the University System Board of Regents in 2016, calling for the construction of 43,000 new square feet where the ISC is today, across from Herty Hall on Montgomery Street.

Herty was built in 1954 and underwent several renovations, the last one in 2011. But the sciences continued to flourish, rapidly outgrowing improvements. Bio-science majors had increased 107 percent in 12 years, Grant reported, and 86 percent of all students took courses in Herty. By 2016, the number of nursing students being taught at Herty was at an all-time high. Lack of storage space was a concern. Halls were used for class presentations and as study space for students.

In short, Herty was bursting at the seams.

Most chemistry and biology teaching and research labs will now be at ISC. Both departments will remain at Herty, as well, for class lectures and a few teaching labs. Physics and astronomy have moved to Beeson Hall.

This immediately frees up space.

But the ISC was also developed for the future. Everywhere, there are signs of originality, creativity, and flexibility. Project Manager Mark Bowen said planners kept some aspects of the new building — like certain moveable lab tables — flexible to accommodate new visions and projects. He's excited about innovative touches like sliding dry erase boards that move to reveal touchscreen TV monitors and hidden shelves.

Another resourceful space is the Linear Equipment Room (LER). It's a wide hallway in the middle of each floor that opens to multiple labs along both sides. All scientific equipment will be stored in these LERs: refrigerators, freezers, equipment to identify the structure of organic molecules, imaging and microscopy suites, water purification systems, incubators, sterilization equipment, and spinning centrifuges.

No longer will chemistry be on one floor and biology another. The sciences will be across the hall and next door to each other — sharing tools and ideas and problem-solving together.

“One of two things is going to happen,” Pillay said, jokingly. “Either there'll be knock-down, drag-out fights or they're gonna love each other. I'm betting on the second.”

Not many universities have this concept of a linear inside hall and windows that let people see the science within. It's different from the old academic approach — but exactly like real-world workspaces students will encounter in graduate school. Authentic scientific laboratories are like this, as well.

The new science complex seems to have it all.

In addition to spiffy new labs and equipment halls, students will lounge on comfy couches in spacious, windowed alcoves. Faculty will have their first break room

with an amazing view. Even landscaping is utilized. There'll be a pollinator garden for butterflies and bees; an ecosystem of shrubs and trees used in experimentation; and a cement bioswale that retains water and becomes a manmade pond in the rain. On a third-floor balcony, flats will be used for botanic research.

Ultimately, the new Integrated Science Complex shouts the university's brand to "Think Independently. Lead Creatively."

"We know employers want students who've had high-impact experiences in their educational journeys," Tenbus said, "and undergraduate research activities with faculty are some of the most impactful experiences a student can get. We are hiring the best professors we can recruit, and they come here with the expectation to continue their research and work with excellent students."

"Thus, we embrace the teacher-scholar model at Georgia College, which," he said, "the new science complex puts on full display."



WELCOME TO THE CLASS OF 2025







Georgia College

Welcomes New President

The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (USG) recently named Cathy Cox president of Georgia College & State University. She assumed her new role Oct. 1, 2021.

"Georgia College & State University has long played a special role within USG as the state's public liberal arts college, and it is gaining a new leader who inherently understands how important that mission is both for students and the state," USG Acting Chancellor Teresa MacCartney said. "Cathy Cox has deep experience in liberal arts education, and a passion to help Georgia College succeed. I congratulate her on her new role."

"I am excited to welcome Cathy Cox into the USG family, and know Georgia College will only keep rising among the ranks of the nation's best public liberal arts institutions," Board of Regents Chairman Sachin Shailendra said. "On behalf of the Board of Regents, I look forward to working with her."

As the 21st president of Young Harris College, a private liberal arts college in the north Georgia mountains, Cox led its transition from a two-year college to a four-year institution and oversaw unprecedented growth. Prior to assuming the Young Harris presidency, Cox served two terms as Georgia's secretary of state, and was the first woman in the state's history to be elected to the post, first in 1998 and again in 2002. In the spring of 2007, she held the Carl E. Sanders Political Leadership Chair at the University of Georgia School of Law.

"Thank you to the Board and Acting Chancellor MacCartney for this tremendous opportunity," Cox said. "I am excited to work with an already amazing faculty and staff as we enhance Georgia College as a destination for students seeking a preeminent liberal arts education."

About Cathy Cox

A native of Bainbridge, Georgia, Cox worked as a newspaper reporter for three years before entering law school, working for The Times in Gainesville, Georgia, and The Post-Searchlight in Bainbridge. She earned a degree in journalism, summa cum laude, from the University of Georgia and is a 2013 inductee to the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication's Grady Fellowship. Cox also holds an associate's degree in agriculture from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Georgia.

Cox was a magna cum laude graduate of Mercer Law School, where she was editor-in-chief of the Mercer Law Review. She practiced law full-time for 10 years in Atlanta and Bainbridge following her graduation. She has remained an active member of the State Bar of Georgia.

Cox served two terms in the Georgia House of Representatives and two terms as Georgia's secretary of state. In the spring of 2007, she held the Carl E. Sanders Political Leadership Chair at the University of Georgia School of Law. Later that year she became the 21st president of Young Harris College where she served for 10 years. She was named dean of Mercer University School of Law in 2017.

Among her many accolades are the 2011 Traditions of Excellence Award for General Practice by the State Bar's General Practice and Trial Section and the 2020 Outstanding Woman Lawyer by the Middle Georgia chapter of the Georgia Association of Women Lawyers.

Cox is a graduate of Leadership Georgia and the recipient of Leadership Georgia's prestigious J.W. Fanning Award for progressive leadership and service. She serves on a number of philanthropic and civic organizations and boards and is married to Attorney Mark Dehler.

Look for a special feature on President Cox in the next issue of Connection magazine (Winter 2022), where we will share more about her first months as president and future plans for the university.



Record grant year: National Science Foundation grant helps low-income students pursue college

Marrissa Vasquez didn't believe she'd make it to college. The financial burden was just too great for her family. Thanks to a large grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), however, Vasquez is now one of five students awarded a scholarship from the S-STEM program for low-income students at Georgia College.

"The scholarship lifted a weight off my shoulders," Vasquez said. "I saw how college lifts you out of those circumstances, and I want to inspire people like me that they can do it too."

Vasquez's cohort is one effect of a tale of triumph and cooperation — the end-result of incremental gains in grant funding for the university. The NSF award was one of many grants that helped Georgia College reach a record-setting fund of \$4 million in 2020.

The windfall marks a 5.9 percent increase in funds from the previous year, and a 73 percent increase in grant money since 2018.

"In some ways, it's not very surprising, because we have seen a progressive development over time," said Dr. Costas Spirou, provost and vice president for academic affairs. "It's very exciting, and a testament to the work of our faculty at the university."

New faculty awarded grants for the first time, incoming faculty with research grant experience, and successful recompetes for existing grants contributed to the

unprecedented year according to Donna Douglas, interim director of grants and sponsored projects.

As part of the record year, the Department of Chemistry, Physics, and Astronomy was awarded the largest NSF grant in Georgia College history at \$650,000. The grant covers a five-year period, during which low-income students can receive up to \$8,000 per year over four years as part of an S-STEM program. Selected students will participate in activities centered on scholarship and retention, as part of a cohort designed to attract more students to the STEM field.

More scholarship awards are anticipated now that the program has been established. The students are from various cities across Georgia, whose economic status made attaining higher education logistically challenging or impossible, but did not dampen their enthusiasm for the scientific field.

"I think it is a great thing," said Dr. Peter Rosado Flores, associate professor of chemistry and co-principal investigator of the grant. "It will hopefully give us an opportunity to recruit more students to diversify our student population, and offer more opportunities to students."

Dr. Chavonda Mills, former chair of chemistry, physics, and astronomy, began the grant process two years ago. Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge, associate professor of physics, is now principal investigator of the grant and S-STEM program.

"The main goal of this grant is helping highly-motivated, low-

income students,” Mahabaduge said. “For chemistry and physics, most of higher education is seeing student admission going in a downward trend, and this scholarship will help Georgia College stand out.”

After being notified of their award late in the program recruitment season, the department was able to secure five students. The students accepted into the program will have access to seminars, targeted mentoring, undergraduate research opportunities, unique internships, and financial assistance.

“We already have two female students, which is a very underrepresented group in STEM fields,” said Dr. Rui Kang, professor in secondary education and co-principal investigator of the grant. “The students are really thinking outside of the box. I feel like this young generation of scientists will have social consciousness — they’re very aware and well-rounded.”

Vasquez is one female S-STEM student. The NSF grant allowed her to pursue her dream of majoring in physics. She hopes to pursue a career in education.

“My science teachers got me through high school,” Vasquez said, “They were my most open, excited, and challenging teachers — I want to follow in their footsteps and bring more students to the field.”

Like Vasquez, Richard Jenkins of Forsyth, Georgia, wasn’t sure he could afford college. Becoming a university student would’ve meant multiple jobs, tight budgeting, and less time for study.

“I knew college would be a lot of random, small costs, like textbooks and fees,” he said. “The \$8,000 will help with tuition, so I can focus on undergraduate research and my classes. It’s going to be a financial load off of me.”

He’s dedicated to learning chemistry and biology, motivated by his love for the subject and his mother’s rare skin disease. He considers himself lucky to be in the S-STEM program at Georgia College, as the scholarship and cohort opened a realm of research opportunities that would otherwise have been out of his reach.

And Hasari Bermudez-Soto, who immigrated to the U.S. from Costa Rica when he was three, will be able to follow his dream of pursuing electrical engineering without excessive loans.

“I’m trying to work harder to hopefully get a good career to provide for my family and help those back home should the need arise,” he said. “I’m grateful, my family has taught me to work hard, and I don’t want to let them down. I want to make them proud.”



ATHLETICS





One would be hard-pressed to find someone more fit to work in the field of prosthetics and orthotics than Georgia College Softball alumna Cassidy Rice. With a friendly personality that fills up a room and a hard-nosed demeanor ready to problem-solve at a moment's notice, Rice was the consummate teammate for Bobcat Softball. Rice saw her role on the GC Softball team vary year by year, and whether she was called on to pitch, play first base, hit, or anything else, she was ready and willing to do her part for the Bobcats. This adaptability is valuable in her current field, where patient needs can not only vary each day, but vary from one hour to the next.

After graduating Georgia College in 2017, Rice was accepted to Northwestern University's Master of Orthotics and Prosthetics program, and she began those studies two months later. The first six months were online, allowing Rice to briefly move back home to Du Quoin, Illinois, to spend valuable time with her mother and brother. After hammering out the initial science courses online, she moved to downtown Chicago to Northwestern's campus in December 2017.

During the master's program, Rice worked at five different clinical sites in inner-city and suburban Chicago, getting to learn about the field in different types of offices and different types of locations.

Rice then chose a two-year residency — one year on orthotics, one on prosthetics — at Southern Ortho Care in Knoxville, Tennessee.

"Every day is different," said Rice. "A work day goes from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. I start with making sure all of the prosthetics and orthotics are ready and have come back from the lab for patients that day. I work with such a wide range of patients; anything from orthotic devices — knee braces, hip braces — to a wide range of prosthetic patients, as well as amputations due to diabetes, trauma, or other causes. Every hour or half hour brings a new patient with a new set of needs."

Rice finished her residency Jan. 1 and has continued to work while waiting to pass boards to become a certified practitioner.

She says her goal is to "work somewhere that I feel like it's not just a job every day. I want to feel like I have a family here, with a wide variety of patients."

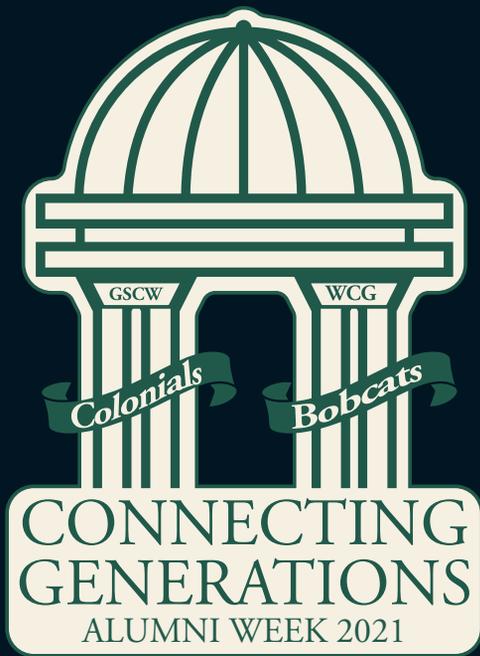
While she's excited about the possibility of working with clients from five-months-old to geriatric patients, an experience prior to her freshman year at GC gave her an interest in pediatric orthotics.

"I WAS A CAMP VOLUNTEER, AND SEEING THE DETERMINATION FROM THESE KIDS AND ADULTS WITH LIMB DEFICIENCIES REALLY INSPIRED ME."

"I volunteered in Southern Illinois for a camp called Nub Ability," said Rice. "Sam Kuhnert was a high school classmate born with congenital limb deficiency. He created a camp to teach kids with limb deficiencies how to play sports. The camp started with 10 people, and now has campers from all over the world."

"I was a camp volunteer, and seeing the determination from these kids and adults with limb deficiencies — including those with no legs or arms at all — it really inspired me. I didn't know that prosthetics was really a career until that point of my life," she said.

"It's so different," Rice revealed. "You don't hear about someone becoming a prosthetist every day. Every health field is of course important, but when I tell someone what I do, it always strikes up conversation. It's so fun to learn and teach people; every day I get to teach people how to walk again — it's life changing."



Join us for Georgia College

ALUMNI WEEK 2021

Nov. 1-6, 2021

Schedule of Events:

MONDAY, NOV. 1	<p>College of Health Sciences Virtual Hall of Fame Induction 1-2 p.m.</p>	<p>GC Rural Studies Institute Virtual Master Class: Heirs Property 5:30 -6:30 p.m.</p>
TUESDAY, NOV. 2	<p>College of Business Virtual Hall of Fame Induction 1-2p.m.</p>	<p>GC MALE Connection Virtual Alumni Panel 5-6 p.m.</p>
WEDNESDAY, NOV. 3	<p>Women's Giving Circle Luncheon (Virtual and In-Person) Noon-2 p.m.</p>	<p>GC Rural Studies Institute Virtual Master Class: Genealogy 3:30-4:30 p.m.</p>
THURSDAY, NOV. 4	<p>Peabody Reunion Luncheon 2021 (In-Person) Noon-1:30 p.m.</p>	<p>Atkinson Open House 3 p.m.</p> <p>Jazz Band Concert and Reception (In-Person) 6-9 p.m.</p>
FRIDAY, NOV. 5	<p>College Alumni Awards Luncheon (In-Person) Noon-2 p.m.</p> <p>African American Male Initiative (AAMI) 10-Year Anniversary Celebration 2:30-3:30 p.m.</p> <p>GC Athletics Hall of Fame Inductee Social (In-Person) 5-6 p.m.</p>	<p>A Night Under the Stars: United as One (In-Person) 6:30-9 p.m.</p> <p>*There will not be in-person registration this year. Please RSVP online by Oct. 14.</p> <p>GC Science Education Center Star Party Begins at sunset</p>
SATURDAY, NOV. 6	<p>Andalusia and Old Governor's Mansion Tours 10 a.m.-4 p.m.</p> <p>STEM Showcase (Front Campus) 10 a.m.</p>	<p>All Classes Picnic (In-Person) Noon-1:30 p.m.</p> <p>Sallie Ellis Davis House Tour 1-4 p.m.</p> <p>NASA Presenter 2 p.m.</p> <p>Humber-White House Open House 2 p.m.</p> <p>Alumni Awards and Dinner and Athletics Hall of Fame (In-Person) 6:30-9 p.m.</p>



For more information and to register for events, please visit:
alumni.gcsu.edu/alumniweek2021



Founder of Georgia College's premed program made lasting impact on alumni

Dr. Kenneth Saladin is the epitome of selflessness. Since 1977, he's put Georgia College students first, helping them excel with the best possible learning experience. The distinguished professor emeritus created and taught the premedical mentorship program. He also created an endowed speaker series and a chair for premed students, and provided several scholarships. Saladin's the university's largest individual donor, supporting science and honors students.

His goodness has encouraged many Georgia College students to pursue their dreams in the biology, medical, and dental fields. Whether it's the persistent coaching they received in class or mentoring after graduation, the impression he made on them continues to this day.

Dr. John "Jay" Harrington, '79, has been a doctor of dental surgery (DDS) for 37 years. He recalls when Saladin first came to Georgia

College. Harrington was amazed at how much time and effort Saladin put into his students, so they could have the best learning experience possible.



He was not an easy professor. Dr. Saladin demanded a certain amount out of us, but he challenged us to be the best we could be.

"He was an incredible professor, because he put in tremendous amounts of time, preparing for his courses," Harrington said. "He worked until the early hours of the morning. That came through, because his classes were

some of the best, most extremely organized classes I ever took."

It was Saladin's selfless nature to put his students' educational needs first.

"Dr. Saladin was hands-on in the lab, because some of the labs were a bit more involved and difficult," Harrington said. "He didn't just put that responsibility on a teaching assistant. It was nice to have him there, so we could ask questions."

"He was not an easy professor," Harrington said. "Dr.

Saladin demanded a certain amount out of us, but he challenged us to be the best we could be."

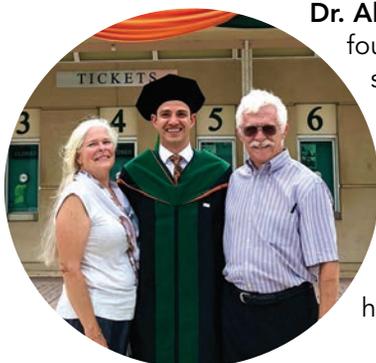
In doing so, Saladin prepared students for their careers and was a role model to many of them, including Harrington.



"Seeing how hard he worked to deliver lessons to his students was the same kind of preparation I hoped I could do as a future practitioner for my patients," Harrington said. "I work hard, keep up with things, and deliver the best care I can."

He's thankful for these lifelong lessons he experienced from Saladin.

"We all get challenged in life. We want to take those challenges and turn them into the best situations, because that's going to carry us forward," Harrington said. "If Dr. Saladin's former students are fortunate to stay on that career path, they'll come out one day on the other end to be dental and medical professionals."



Dr. Ahmed Al-Bayati, '12, is a fourth-year resident in plastic surgery at the University of Kentucky. After his sixth year, he'll follow a year-long fellowship, then become a practicing physician specializing in complex, trauma-related hand surgery.

Saladin walked Al-Bayati, who's from Baghdad, Iraq, through the medical school application process.

"I knew nothing about how to apply for medical school in the U.S.," he said. "I learned the process from him."

Al-Bayati was part of Saladin's premed mentorship program, which mentally prepared him for the challenges he'd face in becoming a doctor.

"Dr. Saladin instilled that a medical career is demanding, challenging, and requires our dedication, time, and attention," Al-Bayati said. "When I'm at the hospital for 30 hours at a time, I think back to what he said, and it's not different from what he predicted it to be."

Saladin also emphasized curiosity and self-driven learning, which prepared Al-Bayati for his career.

"The thing I liked most about Dr. Saladin was his direct line of communication with me," he said. "He was brutally honest."

Al-Bayati wants the best for his patients. Like Saladin, he communicates what he expects from them to achieve for a positive outcome. Al-Bayati also applies the shared-responsibility concept to his patients that he learned from Saladin.

"I do my absolute best, but the patients have to do their part of the work, as well," he said. "It's a great open-communication method that provides direct feedback to my patients without being rude or unrealistic."

Saladin and his wife, Diane, attended Al-Bayati's graduation from Medical School at the University of Miami in May 2019. He was grateful to have Saladin there to personally invest in his success and well-being.

"He's a genuinely good person who's so dedicated to not only helping his students, but helping this world be a better place," Al-Bayati said. "I so admire him for that."

Fourth-year medical student at the Medical College of Georgia (MCG), **Heather Frazier, '17**, is pursuing internal medicine. She feels she's ahead of her peers, because of Saladin.



"Through the premed mentorship, Dr. Saladin improved my ability to collaborate and communicate with others — skills which are not easily learned during the first two years of medical school, since you are also learning immense amounts of information," she said. "It's like trying to drink water from a fire hydrant."

Although Frazier started off as a kinesiology major, Saladin encouraged her to pursue medicine based on her enthusiasm and academic dedication in his classes.

"He offered me a position as a supplemental instructor for his anatomy and physiology class, which was my first experience teaching," she said. "This role sparked a passion for education, and I became dedicated to improving my teaching skills and sharing knowledge with others."

She was also an anatomy teaching assistant for allied health sciences and is a tutor for her junior colleagues in anatomy, histology, and clinical sciences at MCG.

Frazier feels that her career path would be vastly different if she hadn't met Saladin.

"Dr. Saladin instilled in me an admiration for teaching," Frazier said. "His encouragement helped to develop my teaching skills, which, in turn, have allowed me to communicate with patients better. I'm grateful for his mentorship and guidance, which have extended long past my time at Georgia College."

STUDENT PROFILE



New SGA president looks to increase diversity, champion student services

This year's Student Government Association (SGA) president lives and breathes Georgia College. He's been involved in several organizations from Young Democrats to the Omicron Delta Kappa Leadership Honor Society as well as held senate posts on SGA throughout his college career.

The presidency didn't fall into his lap. His engagement with the campus community opened the door for him to run for the post, and since then, he hasn't looked back.

"My favorite thing is getting to help people and making people who feel like they don't have a voice realize, yes, you can just pop into my office and let me know what's on your mind," Robertson said.

A self-identified nonfiction and sci-fi nerd, Robertson's key interest in the political sphere began in childhood. As his parents listened to the news, he tuned in. "The West Wing," a political drama series, he said, helped pique that interest.

"My parents say they pay attention because it's important, not because they enjoy it," Robertson said. "I pay attention because it's important, and I enjoy it."

While these topics have always interested him, he was spurred to action by frustrations over the modern political environment and a desire to help students.

In addition to leading students by example of reason, respect, and responsibility, Robertson plans to use his platform to champion services to students and bring greater diversity to the organization and university.

"Sometimes we'll have leftover resources at the end of the semester," he said. "It's always a bit frustrating because I know there's a student group that could use this. And yet, we are not inundated with the requests that I know are out there."

He didn't get here on his own, he said. His predecessor, Nathan Graham, serves as a sounding board for the new president. And Dr. Gennady Rudkevich, assistant professor of political science, has opened Robertson's eyes to the world of international relations.

"He's allowed me to think very critically about a lot of the issues that I enjoy, and sort of evaluate to a deeper level when I read something," Robertson said. "To look at something and go, 'is that really what's happening?'"



Outside of his political interests, he appreciates academia and the challenges that come with complex topics and murky answers.

"I get this fun title of president, but at the end of the day, I'm still a student," Robertson said. "My passion lies in politics, and I love student government, but I also love the academic world we're in as well."

For the immediate future, however, he knows his number one priority is his fellow students.

"My door is always open," Robertson said. "The only bad communication is no communication, so if you have an issue on campus, you can come in. We may or may not be able to do something about it, but at the very least I can point you in the right direction."

Dr. Christine Mutiti:

Ecology expert, botanist, and enemy of invasive species

There's a small vegetable garden in Dr. Christine Mutiti's backyard. That's not unusual for someone who's dedicated her entire life to environmental science.

But it's another section of her yard that Mutiti likes to talk about — the creeping, seemingly indestructible spread of bamboo that keeps advancing like a frontline of soldiers.

"The bamboo is like a forest, it grows so big and so tall," she said. "You can cut one down and 20 more sprout up in its place. It just keeps on spreading."

Invasive species, like bamboo, are a hot topic of research for Mutiti. She's been concerned about the environment since specializing in agriculture as an undergraduate at the University of Nairobi in her home country, Kenya.

From there, she went to the University of Cambridge in England to study the environment from a geographical perspective. She also met and married her husband at Cambridge, Dr. Samuel Mutiti, hydrologist and professor of geology at Georgia College.

The couple moved to Miami University in Ohio, where Mutiti got another master's in environmental science and a Ph.D. in botany. Then, she followed her husband to Georgia College, where he'd begun teaching. Instead of returning to their own countries — Sam's from Zambia — the couple decided to stay and raise their daughter Samantha in the United States. She's now a junior at Georgia Tech, studying biomedical engineering.

The Mutiti's are both popular educators. Although she says her work's not as interesting as Sam's — Mutiti's being modest. Sam studies water issues and takes students to Zambia to study environmental pollution associated with mining. As an associate professor of environmental science, Mutiti guides her students in researching habitats like grasslands, forests, and wetlands.

They also investigate things like compost and invasive species.

Kudzu is a vine that was brought to the U.S. originally to help control soil erosion. One student conducted a study at the Oconee River Greenway in Milledgeville. She studied how soil characteristics change when kudzu is repeatedly removed. "Constant vigilance" and digging up roots keeps the vine at bay, she discovered.

Another student studied the Chinese privet. This white-flowered shrub has become a problem in Central Georgia and much of the Southeast. Yet, it's sold in garden shops as an ornamental. Mutiti hopes to collect enough evidence to get privet listed as a "noxious weed." This will prevent shops from selling privet and encourage homeowners to remove the shrub from local gardens.

Currently, privet is "spreading fast and choking out trees" at the greenway, Mutiti said. Her student compared the amount of privet and different native trees at the recreational walkway to areas without privet.

"Because they sprout quickly, they get so big, and they don't mind shade," she said, "they keep growing and







getting bigger. They're competing with native trees for resources in the soil, and they're preventing native seedlings from establishing and getting sunlight. If the older trees die, there'll only be privet left."

Mutiti's research is focused on understanding the ecological aspect of plants and what makes some invasive. Species like kudzu, Chinese privet, and bamboo are not invasive in their native countries. Those lands have natural enemies to keep them under control.

"In ecology, natural enemies are very important," Mutiti said. "We think of viruses and bacteria as bad but, from an ecological perspective, they keep things in balance."

Chinese privet may also contribute to climate change. Its leaves decompose faster than native leaves. They're "tastier" too for organisms in the soil that feed upon rot. Instead of staying longer in the soil as organic material — privet decays faster and releases more carbon dioxide into the air than native trees.

"Think of global warming. It's because of all the CO₂ in the air," Mutiti said. "Most of that comes from breakdown of organic material or burning fossil fuels. When organic material breaks down, that carbon goes back into the air. If you're not breaking it down, then the carbon stays in the soil. That's better."

Large amounts of data are needed to combat invasive species. This year, senior environmental science major Jarod Knight of Eatonton, Georgia, will use a quick methodology to analyze carbon in the soil of the greenway. A longer methodology was used in previous years. If quick analysis is as accurate, Knight will be able to collect additional data more quickly.

Another research topic this year is compost.

Senior environmental science major Cyaira Vest of Milledgeville, Georgia, is growing tomatoes in different treatments — garden soil, a commercial compost and

compost made at Georgia College. At first, garden soil plants grew faster. In time, however, the tomatoes in GC compost outperformed the others. This might be because the tomatoes were grown in pots. Vest is continuing her research to find out why.

Helping students find their interest is satisfying for Mutiti. She teaches a field botany class in the summer where students interact outside, collect data, and study plant distributions. Usually, the course sparks someone from each class to continue in botany. Students almost always write to Mutiti a year or two later, saying how much the course meant to them. Some become forest managers or field botanists.

"It feels good," Mutiti said. "All you need is one who gets it."

Wetland ecology is another hands-on class that students enjoy. They collect, dry, and sift soils, measuring textures. They look at diversity of plants in different habitats and examine various soil types, like sand and clay. They examine nutrients to determine why some plants thrive in these conditions and others don't.

Mutiti can't get enough of this work.

Early on as an educator, she learned that undergraduate college students did not have the same level of knowledge that she was accustomed to when working with Ph.D. students. They often come to class with no prior experience in environmental science. So, she moves with patience and by role modeling.

"You can actually see it as they start out as freshmen," Mutiti reflected. "You see them grow and become more responsible. It's always nice to see that transformation."



SAVE THE
Date!



GEORGIA COLLEGE *Homecoming 2022*

Feb. 25-26, 2022

If you'd like to plan an event to take place during Homecoming activities, please contact trejuan.johnson@gcsu.edu.

We look forward to seeing you back on campus!

Class Notes

1970s

Joyce Venable Hughes, '72, recently retired from teaching 48 years in the Georgia and Mississippi public school systems.

1990s

Puneet Puri, '96, works as a director of resourcing in Interra Information Technologies (InterraIT) based out of Noida Kolkata, India, San Jose, California, and Boston, Massachusetts.

2000s



Joseph Richards, '03, is a current Ph.D. student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Richards will perform his first one-person show, "Breaking up with Jesus," for four nights in December 2021. The show

focuses on the difficult journey of getting out of a toxic relationship with Jesus Christ. Grounded in small-town Georgia and blending comedy and tragedy, this is the story of how religion affects family, struggles with gender and sexuality, and issues of depression and anxiety.

William Hatcher, '03, '04, was promoted to professor and interim chair of social sciences at Augusta University in 2020.

Laura Lindenberger August, '03, is an inaugural Mellon Arts Practitioner fellow at the Yale Center for the study of Race, Indigeneity, and Transnational Migration.



Sarah Lipscomb Robertson, '04, '07, '18. After receiving a degree in business, Robertson knew she wanted to go back to school to work with youth. She received her master's degree in special education from Georgia College and worked with emotional behavioral students for 15 years. Then, Robertson went back to school to earn her master's degree in school counseling and currently works as a school counselor for Morgan Middle School in Madison, Georgia. She shares her educational journey with students to show it's never too late to find your true passion.

Ian McMullen, '06, who resides in Milledgeville, Georgia, started a new law practice — Foshee McMullen Law Group, LLC.

2010s

Stephanie Jergel Holtzapfel, '10, and Andrew Holtzapfel welcomed their second child Jan. 21, 2021, Brandt Holtzapfel. He joins his big sister Reagan.



Erica Danaj Lanham, '10, and **Tom Lanham, '10**, met at Georgia College in 2008 and married in 2011. They had their first daughter, Harper Alyse, in September 2016 and welcomed their second daughter, Fiona Grace, in

December 2020. Tom is a director of operations for an architectural firm, and Erica is a senior training coordinator for a nonprofit organization.



Marina Goddard, '11, '12, was named the 2021 Teacher of the Year for Roswell High School in Roswell, Georgia. She was also previously named the 2016 Teacher of the Year for Newton High School in Covington, Georgia. She thanks the College of Education at Georgia College and her student teaching experiences, especially at Baldwin High School with host teachers Crystal Burt and Debbie Wilbon, for providing her the tools to succeed in her teaching career.

Zach Mullins, '11, has been promoted to vice president for Channel Partnerships and Retail AdTech for Gamut by Cox Media Group (CMG). In his new role, Mullins will lead the company's strategic partnerships, as well as drive the innovation of the company's AdTech platforms. He has been with CMG for 10 years. It was his first job after graduating from Georgia College with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Business Management.

Robert Carswell, Jr., '12, and his wife, Lara Carswell, welcomed their son, Jack Kristofer Carswell, June 1, 2021. He joins older siblings: Charlotte, Leland, and Elizabeth.



Meredith Meaders Evans, '12, '13, teaches journalism and American literature at Northview High School (NHS) in Johns Creek, Georgia, where she received the prestigious Teacher of the Year Award for 2020-2021. Evans also advises on the national award-winning school publication — The Messenger — and works with Student Council, the Red Cross Club, and the Quill and Scroll National Journalism

Honor Society. Her focus is on improving the news outlets at NHS while training her staffers in new ways of writing, photography, and design. She enjoys spending time with her husband, all things tacos, and college football.



Gabriela Mobley Jackson, '13, and her husband Caleb, welcomed Nora June Jackson into the world March 21, 2021. The family resides in Covington, Georgia. Gabriela received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Georgia College and works at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.



Sarah Wierzbowski Kramer, '13 and **Michael Kramer, '12**, welcomed twins Charlie Manning and Cora Jane to their family May 13, 2021. The couple's first son Liam Walter is a big brother.



Jacob Hawkins, '14, and **Lenze Morris of Ozark, Alabama**, celebrated their engagement with a small group of family and friends June 16, 2021, in Birmingham, Alabama. The couple met in Washington, D.C., where they both worked in political communications. They are set to be married on New Year's Day 2022. The two will reside

in Smithville, Missouri, where Jacob currently serves as the executive director for Stanley M. Herzog Charitable Foundation.



Taylor Solomon, '14, married **Garrett MacFalda** May 2021. Taylor is working for Creative Community Services as a SOAR specialist. Creative Community Services is a therapeutic foster care agency in Norcross, Georgia.



Kaleb Holbrook, '15, and **Chloe Beacham Holbrook, '16**, were married April 10, 2021. Kaleb and Chloe moved to Atlanta to pursue their careers after graduating from Georgia College. Chloe received her bachelor's degree in psychology at GC and is in her last year in the psychology Ph.D. program at Georgia

State University. Kaleb played baseball at GC and graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration. Kaleb is currently working on his master's degree in business administration (MBA) at Mississippi State University and is a renewable gas project manager for Southern Company Gas. Their wedding party included **Emily Hanniger, '15, Heather Prochaska, '16, Amanda Duncan, '16, and Jake Anthony, '15.**



Adam Crawford, '17, opened Cat Eye Creative Modern Art Gallery in downtown Atlanta in 2021. The gallery represents over 100 unique artists and designers from around the globe. From fine art curation and consulting to large-scale mural installations and artist residency programs, Cat Eye Creative brings art to the people.



Taylor Dillingham, '19, and Wesley Wommack, '19, are getting married November 2021. Wesley played baseball at Georgia College, and Taylor was in AOII and the nursing program.



Ashlee Vickers, '19, got engaged to Wesley Hatfield Aug. 22, 2020, in Macon, Georgia. The couple has been together since 2014. Even though Hatfield wasn't a student at Georgia College, he spent a lot of time in Milledgeville visiting Vickers. The couple has many happy memories there.

Vickers received her Georgia Real Estate License in April 2021 and is a realtor with Coldwell Banker Free Realty serving Macon, Warner Robins, and surrounding Middle Georgia areas.



Julia Melvin, '19, married **Austin McCool** July 10. The wedding party included **Arianna Baxter, '19, Beth Benson, '19, Ben Benson, '19, Emily Bullington, '19, Michael Campagna, '19, Mary Kate Conner, '19, Josh Durand, '19, Lori Fatzinger, '19, Caleb Melvin, '24, Steven Walters, '19, Olivia Wilson, '17, and Patrick Wilson, '17.**

2020s

Mackenzie "Kenzie" Bradley, '20, Rachel Fernandes, '20, Elizabeth Sheffield, '19, and Julia Whitten, '20, have been named staff members at the newly-formed Cloud Theatrics LLC, where they serve as head of stage management/

production associate, production manager, diversity officer, and marketing director, respectively. Cloud Theatrics by Digital Dramatics (www.cloudtheatrics.com) was founded as a way to adapt and reimagine theatre safely during Covid-19. They are committed to providing professional quality virtual theatre to a global audience by bringing directors, actors, and technicians together from around the world to explore and express their artistic ideas. They have produced shows such as, "The Red Line: An Anthology," which premiered June 5, 2021. It was Whitten's first full-length play, which she started writing while in Dr. Amy Pinney's solo performance class in 2018.



Ansley Latting, '20, married **Andrew "Hunter" Hudson, '21,** June 19, 2021 at Ashton Gardens in Atlanta.

"We are so excited to share our wedding with Georgia College," said Ansley. "We met there. Since then, GC has meant more to us. We are both so thankful for the clubs, campus ministries, and local places in Milledgeville that grew our relationship. We are also excited to

share our wedding photos with the campus and student body that brought us together."



Avery Walker, '20, married **Henry Jones, '20,** May 28, 2021, at Rocky's Lake Estate in Woodstock, Georgia. Their wedding party was comprised of Georgia College alumni, including **Anna Grace Arnall, '20, Abbey Fagan, '20, Katie Hanniger, '18, Jack McGarty, '20, Elli Truett, '19, and Alex Walker, '21.** The couple both graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Management Information Systems. They are forever grateful for Dr. Kevin Elder who was a dedicated professor, valuable friend, and mentor to them. The couple works in Atlanta and resides in Roswell, Georgia.



Logan Robitzch, '21, began dating Devin Sanford more than four years ago when they were in high school. The couple married May 9, 2021, surrounded by family and friends, most of which were fellow Georgia College students and alumni. Devin is working towards his management information systems degree with an anticipated graduation year of 2023.

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

In Memoriam

Nancy Swann Barker*	Nancy Langston Gray, '66
Madeline Goodwyn Bloodworth*	Edwina Williams Robinson, '67
Barbara Peavy Larson*	Lois Gibson Hammond, '68
Ellen Proper*	Elaine Briscoe Ford, '70
Anita Babb Raney*	Nancy Burton Thelen, '70
Vanne Dunn Wacaser*	John Brown, '71
Martha Lowe Martin, '38	Charlotte Barker Morrison, '72
Marjorie Wood Evans, '39	George Moss, '72
Nelle Davitte Law, '39	Roger Anderson, '73
Jane Simpson Beall, '40	Jimmy Kilpatrick, '73
JoDel Dodd Hill, '42	Sherri Polatty McDaniel, '75
Elizabeth Mayes Westbury, '42	Donald Bill, '76
Barbara Sibley McGavic, '46*	Edna Lavender Maxwell, '76
Betty Nelson Byerley, '49	Jennie Hardy Jensen, '78
Minnie Holloway Bishop, '50	Travis Pruett, '82
Betty Goodman Mock, '50	Alexis Brown, '87
Sarah Hay Morris, '50	Peggy Veal, '87
Martha Reid Beckham, '53*	Robert Driggers, '88
Della McKenzie Bailey, '54	Rubye Cox Pittman, '88
Norma McCorkle Reeves, '54	Carolyn Hudson Middleton, '89
Bernice Strickland Jordan, '59	Lee Tennille, '90
Myrtis Halstead Akins, '60	John Adams, '92
Frances Middleton Thomas, '61	Bruce Daniel, '92
Jean Zellner O'Neal, '62	John Palmer, '92
Dorothy Rogers Adair, '63	Mary Wheatley, '99
Martha Honeycutt Melvin, '63	Jonathan Davis, '04
Valma Pigford, '64	Amanda Hutcheson Hall, '02
Mary Nelson Myers, '65	Michael Farmer, '18
Dorris Paetzell Neligan, '65	

*Denotes alumni of Peabody School.

This list recognizes deceased alumni that the university has been made aware of as of Aug. 30, 2021.



University Communications
Campus Box 97
Milledgeville, GA 31061

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

gcsu.edu/alumni
facebook.com/georgiacollegealumni

Alumna supports students by “connecting what matters”



Lori Robinson, '05, '08, senior lecturer of biological science, knows the value of transformative learning. She teaches human anatomy and physiology at Georgia College, so she also knows what it's like to struggle through a tough class and come out on the other side of the experience transformed.

Now, Robinson empowers her students for success without undue stress.

Her career began at Georgia College as an adjunct faculty member. While Robinson was earning her master's degree in biology, she served as coordinator of the Learning Center. Then, Robinson became a full-time faculty member.

When taking an extremely difficult required class, Robinson struggled with what she labeled “post-traumatic semester disorder.” During her darkest hours, Robinson most desired encouragement — just a hint that things were going to be okay. However, she never received this from her professor, as he was busy writing a book and going through a personal struggle. This experience transformed her life.

“I learned the value of encouragement from that experience when I didn't get it,” Robinson said. “It was thought-provoking and

life-changing. This was the most powerful experience that changed the way I would teach and interact with my students for years to come.”

Students' emotional well-being and academic success are so important to Robinson that she offers a Connecting What Matters award to students who demonstrate transformative learning. The scholarship also rewards faculty whose personal and pedagogical approach to instruction has enriched and supported the learning environment.

Robinson's inspiration for this scholarship is Dr. Kenneth Saladin, distinguished professor emeritus, who had a long-lasting impact on her career and life and who she deems a transformative teacher. Saladin remains her colleague, mentor, and friend.

“When you encourage someone, you give them a springboard from which they can fly,” Robinson said. “I hope scholarship recipients will feel encouraged to continue pursuing their passion and dream.”

Learn how you can help ease the stress of finances for future students with a gift in your will. Contact Dan Lavery at 478-445-1236 or dan.lavery@gcsu.edu.