

Georgia College joins international alliance of research teams

Georgia College has joined a prestigious international consortium of VIPs.

By its acronym, you might think its members are "very important people." And, well, they are.

They're faculty and students who formed research teams across all disciplines. Now, they've been united in an organization and website called Vertically Integrated Projects (VIP) Program—a model for experiential learning.

Joining the consortium puts Georgia College's name on the world stage. It adds new emphasis on undergraduate and graduate research and helps students improve their communication, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Research will be far encompassing to include design, entrepreneurship and community service.

"This is about making a bridge and enabling collaborations among departments and disciplines. This makes sense at a liberal arts university," said Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge, associate professor of physics and director of the new VIP program.

So far, six departments have registered research teams to be part of VIP: biology; English; music; chemistry, physics and astronomy; psychological science; and economics and finance.

The original VIP program started in 2001 at Perdue University, then centralized at Georgia Institute of Technology (GA Tech) in 2009. More than 45 universities worldwide are part of the consortium, which won the 2019 ABET Innovation Award for spreading this approach to "engineering" education—recognized as transformational.

Most universities involved with VIP do engineering research. Georgia College is among the first to join as a liberal arts institution—and therein lies a chance to "shine," Mahabaduge said.

"We as a designated liberal arts institution bring our own flavor," he said. "Now, let's bring it together and give it more purpose and intention. Be something new, but not necessarily entirely new. Let's take advantage of what's already happening,



Student conducts research.

give it more structure and do things in a more uniform way."

Like GC Journeys—which brought successful concepts already being done together in a new form—VIP takes ongoing projects and brings it together into one program. This makes it easier for students from all majors to find and participate in ongoing research. For example, a communication student who's interested in renewable energy can work with the GC Solar VIP team to create a marketing plan for their products.

Much of the research in Georgia College's VIP program is ongoing. For example, Dr. Tsu-Ming Chiang's social emotional learning project in local elementary schools has been around more than 20 years. Another is Dr. Dana Gorzelany-Mostak's Trax on the Trail, a website for studying presidential campaign music since 2015. Her team is gearing up for the 2024 election season and will unveil a new website in November.

"One of the most difficult parts of conducting a research project with students is that they come and go each semester," Gorzelany-Mostak said.

"The VIP structure makes it possible for students to work on a project over a sustained period of time. Tracking a campaign soundscape across various web-based platforms," she said, "is detailed and time-consuming work. I welcome the opportunity to train students who can stay on the project for an entire electoral cycle and develop their own research projects on this topic."

English is another example. Dr. Jennifer Flaherty is partnering with a professor at Weber State University with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Their research delves into Shakespearean adaptations in education. Students will organize findings onto a website for teachers.

"The VIP program is a great opportunity for students of all levels to collaborate on research projects with faculty and other students in different areas of study," Flaherty said. "Because English is a flexible major that allows students to be successful in a number of different professions and areas of study, I hope more English students and faculty will be involved in the VIP program going forward."

Georgia College's VIP program also received a \$25,000 grant from Georgia Research Alliance. It helped get the website up and running and provides seed funds for VIP teams.

This fall, students will be able to earn academic credit by joining VIP and participating in a long-term, project-based learning course. Teams may include 15 to 20 students. Faculty may not be able to give one-on-one guidance to all members of a research group, Mahabaduge said. But upperclassmen will give personal attention and training to younger students who, in turn, will train and mentor others. Being able to interpret and teach complex material is a valuable skill.

VIP is a chance for different disciplines to research together—a hallmark opportunity for Georgia College as the state's designated public liberal arts institution.

Women's Leadership Conference embraces social change leadership

The Women's Leadership Conference is March 25 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Peabody Auditorium at Georgia College. The theme is "Navigating the Road to Resiliency." It's open to alumni, students, faculty, staff and members of the Middle Georgia community.



"We're focusing on the 'navigating' part of the theme, so people will walk away from this conference having concrete ideas of something they can implement tomorrow, in a week or next year," said Ashley Copeland, assistant director of Leadership Programs and conference co-coordinator. "They will also continue building on these ideas and tapping into the network that they've made from this conference."

As a hybrid model—offered in person and virtually—this year's conference could capture more participants. The annual conference averages over 100 participants.

"If participants can't make it in person, they still have an option to engage with the conference, build networks and relationships," Copeland said.

The Women's Leadership Conference will begin with discussions on leading change.

"That's because our conference is rooted in the social change model of leadership theory," said Dr. Jennifer Graham, director of the Women's Center and co-coordinator of the conference.

Breakout sessions will last 50 minutes. They will include an interactive workshop, a presenter panel with discussion or 15-minute "Ted Talk" presentations.

"The breakout sessions give attendees an opportunity to dive a bit deeper into the concepts," Graham said. "We ask presenters to bring something tangible with their presentation, so participants can walk away with something they can immediately apply to their life."

The first Women's Leadership Conference was primarily for students. It was held in the early 2000s and hosted by the Women's Center, when Graham worked alone to put it on. However, due to lack of funds, she was unable to host it again until four years ago.

The conference is the result of collaborative planning between four Georgia College offices—the Women's Center, Leadership Programs, University Advancement and the College of Business—as well as community members.

"That's very much in the spirit of what we hope people take away from the conference is collaboration, networking, building relationships with people who are different from themselves and who do different things," Copeland said. "That's important, because when we come together, we can do amazing things."

Learn more about the conference at gcsu.edu/leadership/womens-leadership-conference.

5th Annual State K-5 Science Fair Thursday



Nearly 300 elementary school children from across Georgia will compete and show what they've learned at the State K-5 Science Fair Thursday, March 10, in Georgia College's Centennial Center.

More than 200 displays will explore fingerprint patterns, best material for turbine blades, tower and bridge stability, alternative energy sources and artificial intelligence. These are just a few topics being investigated by young scientists from all regions of the state, including Central Georgia, Savannah, Valdosta and Atlanta.

"It is important for young learners to establish a solid foundation in math and science. Participating in a science fair is a great way for kids to explore their world and how things

work," said Dr. Catrena Lisse, director of the university's Science Education Center. "Kids who participate in science fairs at an early age," she said, "will learn skills that can be used for problem solving and critical thinking throughout their lifetime."

More than 100 faculty, staff and students, along with members of the Milledgeville community, will serve as judges and volunteers. Team-building competitions, such as the zip-line challenge, paper-table building and the ever-popular parachute design challenge will be offered in the afternoon. These—along with the annual STEM Marketplace and hands-on activities—allow young students to learn more about science, technology, engineering and mathematics while participating at the fair.

"The students are always so proud of themselves," said Ginny Gray, a teacher from Lakeview Primary in Milledgeville. "The science fair is a great way for students to show off their work, build confidence in what they're doing and share their accomplishments with others. It's a great experience for everyone."

This will be a hybrid event to accommodate teachers and students who can't travel due to illness or COVID restrictions. Twenty projects will be virtual. The rest will be displayed at Centennial Center, starting with set-up at 7:30 a.m. Young scientists will be on hand to describe their projects when the fair opens to the public at 1:30 p.m.

The Award ceremony will be at 4 p.m. in the Centennial Center and is open to the public. The ceremony will be livestreamed on the Education Center's Facebook page, @gcsceuedu, and recorded for later viewing.

"I hope the community will join us to see everything these young scientists accomplished over the past year," Lisse said. "They are our future!"

Did you know?

On the strength of a 21-7 record, the Georgia College Men's Basketball team has taken an at-large bid to the NCAA Southeast Regional, the organization announced Sunday night. The Bobcats take the No. 6-seed and will open with No. 3-seed Lincoln Memorial University (25-4), members of the South Atlantic Conference (SAC) Saturday, March 12 at Augusta University. The Bobcats will make an appearance in the NCAA Regional bracket for the first time since the 2009-10 season. Stay tuned to GCBobcats.com for game time and ticketing announcements.



What's going on in Bobcat Territory?

Visit frontpage.gcsu.edu/calendar

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>8</p> <p>4 p.m. - GC Softball vs Shorter.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>8:45 a.m.-2 p.m. - The John H. Lounsbury College of Education will host Future Georgia Educators (FGE) Day. Nearly 200 high school students from all across Georgia will be on campus to learn about the university, get a glimpse of the teaching profession from professors and teacher candidates, hear from the 2022 Georgia Teacher of the Year and visit a college fair.</p> <p>6 p.m. - Andalusia: The Home of Flannery O'Connor welcomes Colin Cutler to Milledgeville. He will perform his new album "Peacock Feathers," a concept album inspired by Flannery O'Connor's short stories</p>	<p>10</p> <p>7:30 p.m. - Georgia College presents "A Little Big Band Music" in Russell Auditorium. Dr. Chris Enghauser directs this jazz concert that spans 100 years of shuffle, upbeat and Latin swing from great bands like Neal Hefti, Count Basie and Benny Goodman.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>5 p.m. - GC Softball vs Young Harris.</p> <p>6 p.m. - GC Baseball vs Lander.</p> <p>7:30 p.m. - Georgia College presents "A Little Big Band Music" in Russell Auditorium. Dr. Chris Enghauser directs this jazz concert that spans 100 years of shuffle, upbeat and Latin swing from great bands like Neal Hefti, Count Basie and Benny Goodman.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Noon - GC Softball vs Young Harris.</p> <p>1 p.m. - GC Baseball Doubleheader vs Lander.</p>