

Congratulations to Georgia College's Class of 2022



Lorena Aleman is from Lima, Peru. She majored in marketing. She embraced her time at Georgia College as a member of Phi Delta Theta Sorority, the Council of Student Ambassadors and serving as a tele-counselor. "The community is very welcoming. And I love the campus size. It's not super big or small, so I'm able to see my friends every day, but at the same time, meet new faces," she said. "I also like having a close relationship with my professors." She is going to work as a consultant with KPMG in Atlanta.



Management major Jason Silvey (right) is married with two children and has 20 years of work experience—he's also been selected as the Outstanding Management Major for the College of Business (COB). "I'm really excited and still in awe that I won outstanding management major, because I've seen quite a few people I thought were more deserving," Silvey said. His journey in college began in 1994. A few years later, that trajectory was cut short when Silvey withdrew. He'd always wanted to go back to school, and when he was laid off during the pandemic it became imperative. By this point, Silvey already had a family and lived in the North Atlanta area. But the 99-mile, one-way commute didn't stop him. And despite his unique obstacles, Silvey never faltered in his studies.



Torrianna Harris, a Forsyth, Georgia, native and music major discovered the Georgia College difference. "What I like most about this university is the freedom to be creative and expressive," she said. "There are no limitations on how you should act or what you should be like." Having access to a variety of classes, workshops and discussions allowed her to learn about different people, cultures and perspectives. She's also learned to think independently. "Because of this experience, I've found my own way of thinking," Harris said. "This allows me to be confident in the decisions that I make with my life." This fall, Harris will begin her career teaching general music classes at Waynesboro Primary School.



Kendall Stiles honored with the Giving Tree award

You may have read the book "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein as a child. It follows the life of a tree and a boy. As the boy grows, he takes more and more from the tree, yet the tree continues to willingly give.

The book has a much deeper meaning than just helping young children learn to read. It highlights the lasting impact those willing to "give" can have on others.

This book inspired an award at Georgia College by the same name. Since 1996, it's been given by the GIVE Center to a person who has left a lasting legacy of service at the university. A tree is also planted in their honor.

This year, the honoree's impact on Georgia College and the Milledgeville community can hardly be quantified.

"To me, the Giving Tree Award is one of the best awards we do," said Kendall Stiles. "It's a neat thing to have one now in honor of me."

Stiles founded the GIVE Center, which serves to connect students with service opportunities on campus and in the community, in 1997. She's worked with thousands of students over the years and left a mark in each person's heart. This year she was recognized with the Giving Tree award.

"Her support and encouragement have meant so much to me—as it has to so many of us through the years. Yet, Kendall's story of mentorship and friendship is not unique to me. It's just how Kendall is," Dr. Jennifer Graham, director of the Women's Center and interim chief diversity officer, said at the ceremony.

"So many of us who worked with Kendall through the GIVE Center have been blessed by this mentorship and friendship, and it didn't stop when we graduated, as evidenced by the fact that there are so many of us here today," Graham added.

About 20 alumni came back to Georgia College to honor Stiles. Each echoed Graham's sentiment about the impact Stiles had on their lives. "I never saw myself as a leader," said Sabrina Bryant, '19, "But she's been, frankly, like a mother to me while I was here—she's like family."

"Kendall really showed me how to give back to the people who pour into you," said Bianca Diaz, '17. "She also taught me how much a small impact can make and how that can motivate others around you to continue to make that impact."

"Really no other person thought that we could bring something like Campus Kitchen to Georgia College's campus. Kendall was



From left to right: Jennifer Graham, Barbara Coleman and Kendall Stiles.



the first person who thought we could," said Cameron Skinner, '18. "Even after that, as I stayed on as full-time staff after graduating, Kendall became one of my best friends, and she's always just been very supportive of any student endeavor ever possible."

Staff, faculty and community members also attended celebrating Stiles' impact throughout Milledgeville and beyond.

"It was good to see everybody and to see how things are going," Stiles said. "You know, having the alumni here, that was wonderful. That was so touching."

During the ceremony, Kristy Johnson, director of Student Activities & Organizations, read the book "The Giving Tree." Emily Jarvis, executive director of Student Engagement and director of Parent and Family Programs, gave a history of the award and spoke about the legacy Stiles has left after her recent retirement.

"Students who may never have the privilege of meeting Kendall will continue to benefit from her vision, her passion and her incredible spirit," Jarvis said. "She has made an indelible impact on Georgia College. She has shepherded 1000s of students through their journeys of service and servant leadership. She established the culture of giving back that distinguishes the Georgia College experience."

The tree planted was a Ginkgo, which was the same species as the one planted for the first Giving Tree ceremony in 1996. As the tree grows, so will the culture of giving at Georgia College—thanks to the strong foundation Stiles set in place.

"I can't wait to see her legacy continue to grow on campus and how Georgia College will continue to provide opportunities for students that are into service," Skinner said. "Hopefully, they continue to maximize the GIVE Center's potential."

Graham—who was also a Giving Tree award recipient as a student—said Stiles did more than just support students in their ideas. She offered space, organizational and project management skills and ways to hone their passions to help make the community better.

"We celebrate Kendall and all of the ways that she has contributed to this institution, to the greater Milledgeville community, to the GIVE Center and most importantly, to all of us," Graham said. "I can't think of a better way to recognize her legacy than through the Giving Tree Award."

The Graduate School provides opportunities for students to share research

Research is an integral component for graduate studies. Students in Georgia College's master's and doctoral programs receive many opportunities to connect with faculty and conduct hands-on, personalized research and creative endeavors in their area of study.

Georgia College offers 34 graduate programs to more than 1,200 students. From athletic training to education to criminal justice, research is a key component of each experience.

"Engaging in research at the graduate level gives students the opportunity to increase the depth of their knowledge in a specific area while advancing their critical thinking skills within a real-life situation," said Dr. Holley Roberts, associate vice president for academic affairs and director of The Graduate School.

The Graduate School provides several ways for students to share their research by presenting at conferences and at the Research Poster Showcase—where students can share their work with the campus community.

"Being able to present at conferences offers graduate students a variety of benefits. They can improve their communication, presentation and analytical skills; network with others within their discipline to expand their own knowledge; and have the opportunity to see themselves as professionals in their discipline," Roberts said. "So many of the graduate student research projects address issues and challenges that need solutions. Graduate students accept the challenge in these areas and seek research experiences that contribute to their fields."

It's not just about the knowledge gained from research but also the relationships built with faculty mentors.

"I'm directly advised by Dr. Katie Stumpf. She is an incredibly talented and resourceful scientist and ornithologist," said Christopher Horacek, a biology master's student. "Under her guidance, I've gained so many hands-on skills."

Horacek and Stumpf study birds and how their health can indicate environmental challenges.

Horacek recently presented this study at the Georgia Wildlife Society and the Georgia Academy of Sciences, where he won the best graduate presentation award.

The Graduate School provides research travel grants to graduate students to support costs associated with presenting their original scholarship at professional conferences. The program awards up to \$400 for expenses associated with conference fees, travel and accommodations.

For Horacek, he knows his experiences will help him in his future career working for a state wildlife resource agency.

"Being able to present my work and win awards is a validation of all the hard work that we put in. The conferences themselves, however, are really the reward," he said. "The most valuable thing is actually attending conferences because we can get valuable feedback on our research."

