

Georgia College celebrates the Class of 2022 with commencement this weekend

More than 1,630 students are eligible to receive undergraduate and graduate degrees next Friday and Saturday, May 6-7, at Centennial Center.

Doors open at 5 p.m. Friday for the graduate ceremony with the processional beginning at 6:45 p.m. Tickets are required, and a reception will follow on Centennial Lawn.

Two undergraduate commencements will be Saturday. For students in the College of Arts and Sciences and College of Education, doors open at 7 a.m. with the processional at 8:45 a.m. For students in the Colleges of Business and Health Sciences, doors open at noon with the processional at 1:45 p.m. Tickets are required for both. Receptions will follow on Centennial Lawn.

Although they're not getting degrees—a goldendoodle and a golden retriever will walk at graduation, both sporting their own commencement caps.

The medical alert dogs, 'Mo' and 'Artemis,' will assist their students—nursing major Samantha Summerville of Flowery Branch, Georgia, and psychology major Mackenzie Van Boxel of McDonough—during commencement ceremonies.

The retriever, Artemis, will be in the first Saturday ceremony. The goldendoodle, Mo, will be in the second Saturday commencement. The dogs are necessary because Summerville has Type 1 diabetes and Van Boxel has narcolepsy and panic attacks. Van Boxel often falls asleep in reaction to high emotions, stress or exhaustion. Artemis is a calming influence and wakes her when needed.

Summerville had grown too accustomed to electronic alarms and failed to wake when her blood sugar became dangerously low. To assist her with this, Summerville brought Mo to campus freshman year. When he senses low blood sugar levels, the curly-haired pup puts a paw on Summerville's leg and stares at her intently.

Summerville and Van Boxel are just an example of the many fascinating students graduating this spring at Georgia College.

The 2022 Class has 20 valedictorians graduating with a perfect 4.0 GPA.

Three graduates are 2022 semi-finalists for Fulbright U.S. Student Scholarships, awaiting to hear if they receive finalist status. Annabelle Erb of Johns Creek will receive an early childhood education degree; Anagha Ramakrishnan of Marietta will get a degree in mass communication; and Maya Whipple of Gordon will get a degree in studio art. If they become Fulbright finalists, they'll get English Teaching Assistantships with Erb going to South Korea, Ramakrishnan to Greece and Whipple to Argentina.

This year's undergraduates completed 44,527 courses throughout their tenure here. More than 280 students were in fraternities and sororities, and 145 participated in intensive leadership experiences.

More students from the Class of 2022:

- Katey Jones of Conyers and Heather Laflam of Danielsville, Georgia, are the first to graduate from Georgia College's nurse-midwifery master's program—the only program of its kind in Georgia. This degree will help educate more nurse-midwives in Georgia, which nationally ranks 49th in maternal mortality.

- Jhalen Billingslea of Decatur will graduate with a degree in geography and minor in urban studies. During his internship with Baldwin County Public Administration, Billingslea created an interactive web map of all country roads. He plans to get a job in Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

- Torrianna Harris of Forsyth will graduate with a degree in music. She was choir director of Voices of Joy Gospel Choir and a member of the Black Student Association. This fall, Harris will teach music classes at Waynesboro Primary School.

- Chason Thompson of Roswell will graduate with a degree in criminal justice and minors in French and outdoor education. Thompson facilitated a 4-H event for kids nationwide and mentored two middle school students through Georgia College's Communities in Schools program. He'd like to be a police officer in Gwinnett County.

- Lukas Zavrel of the Czech Republic will graduate with a degree in management and minor in logistics with a concentration in human resources. He played on the Georgia College tennis varsity team and hopes to work in human resources when he returns home.

- Ellen Yeudall of Evans, Georgia, will get a degree in English with a concentration in literature and minor in theatre. Yeudall was named by the University System of Georgia as Georgia College's 2022 Academic Recognition Day representative. She will pursue a master's degree.

- Alex Powers of Savannah will graduate with a degree in psychology. Powers was mentored by a member of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce board of directors. He hopes to begin his career with TradePort Logistics LLC in their human resources department.

- Jonathan O'Brien of Atlanta will graduate with a degree in mass communication with a minor in rhetoric. As a freshman, O'Brien rose to news director of Georgia College's radio station. He'll do news for WDUN in Gainesville, Georgia, after graduation.

- Michala Hill of Douglasville will get a degree in accounting. She fell in love with dance when student teaching dance to elementary school children. She's been hired as a dance instructor for grades 3-5 in Baldwin County.

Other graduates include 60 athletes and 10 self-reported veterans, active duty and military reservists. Nineteen international students will also walk at graduation from countries like Mexico, Peru, Czech Republic, India, Vietnam, United Kingdom, Germany and Indonesia.

The top five majors this year are marketing, management, psychology, mass communication and exercise science. The top five minors are Spanish, marketing, chemistry, psychology and criminal justice.

Keynote speakers at all commencements will talk about the importance of serving others.

Dr. Lionel Brown, superintendent of Peach County Schools, is the graduate commencement speaker Friday night. Chris Clark, president and CEO of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, will speak at both undergraduate ceremonies on Saturday.

Congratulations to the class of 2022! We look forward to seeing the great things will do.



Jhalen Billingslea



Katey Jones of Conyers and Heather Laflam (right)



Lukas Zavrel



Samantha Summerville and Mo

Rec Sports celebrates this year's participants



Georgia College's Rec Sport athletes celebrated the close of a huge year with a cookout and ceremony last week.

"We wanted to celebrate the hard work and dedication of our students," said Drew Bruton, associate director of Wellness and Recreation. "Most of these students had their year cut short a couple of years ago and last year did not get to participate in a traditional setting due to COVID. Because of that, we wanted to make sure they knew we appreciated their effort throughout the school year with a celebration."

Both club and intramural sports teams and individual players were recognized for their outstanding efforts this year. Many teams finished the season ranked in the region and some even placed nationally.

GC's Club Baseball team currently ranks 5th in the nation. The Bass Fishing team is 16th and the Clay Target Team qualified for the national tournament.

Men's Ultimate Frisbee finished third in the region and tennis was fourth.

Men's and Women's Lacrosse and Wakeboarding were added this year as club sports.

Club Sports are registered student organizations (RSO's) that compete against other universities around the country in recreational activities.

For intramurals, more than 2,000 students participated in more

than 4,000 games this year.

"An interesting fact for Georgia College, we have a 50% split rate of females versus males who participate in intramurals," Bruton said. "The national average is about 93% male."

The Women's Flag Football team was state champions and finished third in the National Flag Football Tournament.

Men's Flag Football was also state champions and placed second at the National Flag Football Tournament.

The Men's Basketball team finished second in the region, while the women's team placed fourth.

Several students were recognized for their individual accomplishments in Rec Sports:

- Female Club Athlete of the Year - Olivia Dumas - Club Tennis
- Male Club Athlete of the Year - Noah Campbell - Bass Fishing
- Club Sports Team of the Year - Bass Fishing
- Meggie Hudson - All-State MVP - Intramural Women's Flag Football
- DeLayne Rotolo - All-State Player - Intramural Women's Flag Football
- Ann Jones - All-American Flag Football Player - Top 7 player in the country
- Brice Davis - All-State MVP - Intramural Men's Flag Football
- Josh Hammond - All-State Player - Intramural Men's Flag Football
- Brice Davis - All-American Flag Football Player - Top 7 player in the country
- Josh Hammond - All-American Flag Football Player - Top 7 player in the country
- Austin Sloan - All-Region Team - Intramural Men's Basketball
- Jackson Baylark - All-Region Team - Intramural Men's Basketball
- DeLayne Rotolo - All-Region Team - Intramural Women's Basketball
- Claire Messer - Freshman Female Athlete of the Year
- Eli Fritchman - Freshman Male Athlete of the Year
- DeLayne Rotolo - Female Athlete of the Year
- Brice Davis - Male Athlete of the Year
- Future Parents - Intramural Team of the Year

Nursing student makes an impact

For many, college is about change. Class of 2022 graduate Rosemary Macuch epitomizes that.

She came to Georgia College with no clear plan or career path. Yet taking one course completely changed her trajectory.

"What influenced me most was my anatomy class with Dr. Kwan Christenson," Macuch said. "All of my friends told me not to take that class because it's really, hard, but I just loved it."

Until then Macuch says she'd never studied anything that could keep her interested, but she became fascinated with the human body and how it works. That fascination led her to nursing.

"It's definitely changed my life," she said. "I've never been a part of a program that has taken such wonderful care of its students and been so involved with our success."

As a member of Georgia College's nationally recognized nursing program, Macuch flourished.

She took on leadership roles in the Georgia College Association of Nursing Students and worked as a Supplemental Instructor (SI) and Supplemental Coach in the Learning Center—helping other students who may struggle in courses.

Her experiences inside and outside the classroom helped mold her into the person she is today. Nursing Lecturer and Clinical Coordinator Karen Schwartz noted that during her clinicals, patients responded to Macuch like she'd never seen before.

"In my obstetric clinical, Rosemary stood out as energetic and eager to serve and learn," Schwartz said. "When given the choice, patients vocally chose to have Rosemary at their side as they delivered their babies."

One patient's mother even asked to send a card to Macuch as a thank you for the kindness and care she provided.

"During my clinicals, I just loved it. It was such an incredible experience," she said. "I didn't realize how intimate and how wonderful those moments are. That's when I was like, 'This is something that I feel like I could really see myself doing.'"

Her clinical experience led her to her new job she'll start this summer as a labor and delivery nurse at Doctors Hospital in Augusta.

