



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

# NEWSLETTER

FALL 2022



## Editor's Note



The new semester brought many exciting things to the College of Arts and Sciences at Georgia College & State University. In this issue of our newsletter, we explore everything from new buildings to innovations, new accolades and new faculty!

The Integrated Science Complex (ISC) is an incredible addition to our campus. Faculty from the Department of Chemistry, Physics, & Astronomy and the Department of Biological & Environmental Sciences have moved in to teach and conduct their research. Our faculty and students are doing incredible work there and we'll be benefitting from this state-of-the-art facility for years to come.

In this issue of our newsletter, we also showcase some of our innovative programs and initiatives. Make sure to take a look at our Global Foodways and Election Administration certificates, which will give our students the opportunity to shape and focus their academic programs and gain an advantage in the job market. See the latest update from the Digital Humanities Collaborative too, which works to rethink the ways in which the humanities can impact us all.

Here, we see the amazing things our students are doing! Make sure to read about their incredible experiences participating in internships and exchange programs that support their entry into the workforce. We also highlight several student honors and awards, including our first ever Goldwater Scholar! As always, our students are engaged in tremendous, impactful research both in and out of the classroom.

This semester we were thrilled to welcome 16 new faculty members to the college. Each person brings their own, unique perspectives, expertise and enthusiasm. They will help us continue to innovate and improve as we move into the future. We are so proud to be able to share all of these exciting things going on in the College of Arts and Sciences and we hope you enjoy the newsletter.

DR. WINSTON TRIPP

Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

## Dean's Message

I recently had the opportunity to attend, in successive weeks, the Department of Music's Annual Holiday Concert and the Department of Theatre and Dance's Nutcracker extravaganza, both held at beautiful Russell Auditorium.

Not only do these two events annually showcase the tremendously talented faculty and students at Georgia College & State University, but they also reveal that, contrary to the general narrative out there, today's students do have the ability to manage their schoolwork and their extracurricular activities—like playing in the orchestra or teaching dance to the many community members involved in this holiday tradition.

Productions like these and many others across the College of Arts and Sciences require a lot of work. And, from a look at the pages of this newsletter, our students at Georgia College are still up to the task.

The common narrative from the pages of the Chronicle of Higher Education and other media outlets is that today's college students are struggling to complete classes and, ultimately, their majors in the wake of the pandemic. There is some truth to this story.

We are seeing much higher use of the Counseling Services office on campus as the level of stress has increased its presence in the lives of our students. We did see our retention rate from first year to second year students dip a few points in 2021; however, it is still a figure that most public universities in the state would love to have (80.1%) and places us third out of 26 institutions in the USG. That said, we do want our students to take advantage of all of the support services we offer at Georgia College.

Therefore, even though various post-pandemic challenges are affecting Georgia College students, we still have a very strong undergraduate population with tremendous academic upside.

Across the college, students are still doing amazing things—whether it is research and presentations with faculty members, study abroad and study away trips across the globe or the state of Georgia, and internships that are leading to wonderful job offers. From using state-of-the-art technology to research mRNA in the Integrated Science Complex to learning how food, culture and history are entangled in our everyday lives, our faculty and students operate on the cutting edge of academic curricula.

And while some folks think a liberal arts college can't keep up with the fast-paced, real world, here in the College of Arts and Sciences at Georgia College, we're showing that some folks don't know what they're talking about.



DR. ERIC TENBUS

Dean, College of Arts and Sciences





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**ARTS AND SCIENCES  
FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER**

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▼Brittany Benner (left) and Dr. Arnab Sengupta (right) work together with three other students in Sengupta's lab.

# ISC in Action: facilitating research and driving student success



In “cookbook” labs, students conduct research with pre-determined outcomes. They follow step-by-step instructions to apply knowledge they’ve learned in class.

This method of learning is useful, but in Georgia College & State University’s new Integrated Science Complex (ISC), there’s no recipe for research.

Opened in February, the ISC gives students a modern, clean and bright place to conduct inquiry-based research. It brings faculty together on projects and is already driving student success in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

“Big things are taking place within the ISC, and this is one way we’re showing our commitment to investing in STEM at Georgia College,” said Dr. Eric Tenbus, dean of COAS.

The ISC’s floor-to-ceiling glass walls and windows, open labs and various study spaces exemplify collaboration, light and transparency. Often, students not majoring in a STEM field hang out on Georgia College’s new micro-campus.

Inside the ISC’s three floors of lab space, you can find students researching human genetics, millipede genome sequencing and agriculture in one of the complex’s rooftop gardens.

“We have been deliberate about easing programming into teaching labs at the ISC,” said Indiren Pillay, department

chair of Biological and Environmental Sciences. “Our freshmen are experiencing their first biology labs in this facility, and the ability to observe our undergraduate and graduate students conducting research is already serving to recruit future research students.”

“It’s great to see so many students—and not just science students—utilize the study space throughout the building,” he said.

On any given day, someone visiting the ISC will see students working in labs, meeting in huddle spaces, filling every inch of whiteboard space in meeting rooms or presenting in conference rooms.

For students and faculty, this investment in facilities signifies Georgia College’s belief that their research matters.

“You get a feeling of importance—that what I do is important because of the investment into it,” said Dr. Arnab Sengupta, assistant professor of cell and molecular biology. “Here we observe, troubleshoot, collaborate and learn to communicate science. We’re helping science continue breaking barriers between fields.”

That investment takes the form of state-of-the-art cell culture facilities, a scanning electron microscope, a confocal microscopy facility for using lasers within cells and devices like the Agilent 4200 TapeStation—an automated device to separate DNA, RNA or protein molecules for measuring molecule quality.

“GC Journeys actively supported our efforts to acquire this instrument, in addition to providing research support to my students in a transformative experience course,” Sengupta said.

This equipment sets the facility up to perform Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS)—reading the building-blocks of DNA in proper order—in the future. Currently, it is used to prepare and assess samples that will be sent to the University of Georgia for NGS.

“I showed my parents the lab and what we’re doing, and they were taken aback,” said Alexandra Furney, junior biology major. “I had never known GCSU as science-y, but we’re building a statement that research is important and we’re moving forward that way.”

That interdisciplinary research takes many forms.

Sengupta and Dr. Bruce Snyder, associate professor of biology, had never worked together in research. But a student brought their worlds of ecology and cell biology together.

Millipedes are crucial to the ecosystems in which they exist. As decomposers, they break down fallen debris and return nutrients to the soil to be used by other native species.

After working in both of Snyder’s and Sengupta’s labs, Elena Cruz, senior biology major and pre-med student, started a project to map the genome of *Cherokia georgiana*—a millipede species common to Georgia and other Appalachian states.

In doing so, she joined the two faculty in research they may not have begun otherwise.

“She brought our labs together in a big project for a Georgia species of millipede not studied before,” Sengupta said. “That’s what’s nice about these students—they’re self-driven—you only show them the ropes and their motivation drives them.”

“Students drive research here,” he said.

Both professors collaborate with Cruz: Snyder provides ecological expertise, and Sengupta assists with genomics and technology.

“Out of 12,000 millipede species worldwide, only around five have their genomes completely mapped,” Cruz said. “It’s great to be involved in such a niche area of study. I’m hoping to attend grad school here to continue the project after I graduate.”

“These experiences let you find your niche and learn your research interests,” she said.

But that isn’t all she’s working on.

In Sengupta’s lab, Cruz collaborates with Furney, and two other

junior and senior biology majors—Brittany Benner and Jin Yeong Kim—to conduct research on specific genes. They’re working with live cell cultures, deciphering how RNA molecules fold, decoding the mechanisms of RNA structure and working on gene projects related to cancer cells.

“You don’t see many women in biology, but we’re an all-girl lab,” Kim said. “We’re all undergraduate science majors. We’re young, girls and we’re changing the narrative.”

Benner’s gene is FGF2, or basic fibroblast growth factor. It controls cell growth and death and is an important gene in cancer research. Her gene was shorter than normal, with the DNA unusually shorter than the RNA.

On top of that, the RNA would not unfold—which is atypical.

After significant trial and error, she managed to get the RNA unfolded and continued researching the gene.

“Research makes students think analytically and teaches them that 90% of effort is hitting brick walls and gearing up to try again with new variables,” Sengupta said. “This is a process that makes them smarter researchers.”

“We’re nurturing the liberal arts and giving student researchers a shot at leadership,” he said.


That’s exactly the kind of inquiry-based technique they like in the ISC: meaningful and high-quality, undergraduate and graduate research.

Furney, when not in an ISC lab, collaborates with researchers at Emory University.

“We want everyone to know that our quality of research is just as good as a larger university,” she said. “It’s useful, meaningful and specific.”

When visiting the ISC, you’re just as likely to see someone doing lab work as reading in the sun or scribbling French over entire whiteboards. That’s what epitomizes the ISC, Sengupta said, it’s providing a space for the intersectionality of the arts and sciences.

In other words, the ISC is open to everyone, and anyone is welcome to witness science on display.

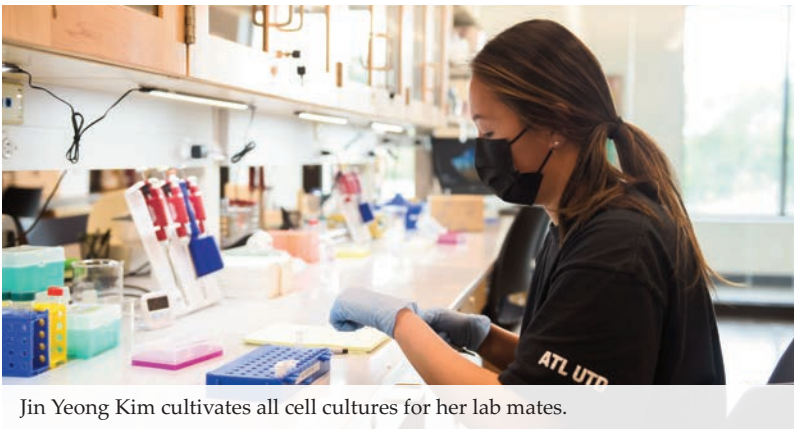
“Our experiences here are giving us a good foundation for our careers,” Kim said. “Our success is already showing the benefit of investing in science and technology at Georgia College.” 

“I HAD NEVER KNOWN GCSU AS SCIENCE-Y,  
BUT WE’RE BUILDING A STATEMENT THAT  
RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT AND WE’RE  
MOVING FORWARD THAT WAY.”





Students work to extract genetic material from common snacks.



Jin Yeong Kim cultivates all cell cultures for her lab mates.



One of Elena Cruz' millipedes.



Brittany Benner working in Sengupta's lab.



In their classes, ISC students get access to state-of-the-art facilities and equipment.

# GEORGIA COLLEGE'S GLOBAL FOODWAYS STUDIES CERTIFICATE A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Got a hankering for black-eyed peas, deviled eggs with sweet pickle relish or maybe a hot tamale? How about a fried green tomato to go with that grade you're earning?

Georgia College's Global Foodways Studies certificate program blends history, culture and tradition with cooking encounters and fieldtrips sprinkled in. Add internships, study away and study abroad to the mix—and the mouthwatering result is a bona fide, multi-disciplinary program that combines facts with fun and fills the tummy.

It's also the first certificate program of its kind in the state university system.

"People just like food. This is a good way to present material to students that's a little more 'stick to your ribs,' something they can walk away from without forgetting," said Dr. Craig Pascoe, professor of history.

Based on Pascoe's popular "Southern Foodways

and Traditions" course—the new program opens the door to a global fiesta of food. It also gives faculty new ways to teach history, sociology, anthropology and pretty much any subject you can think of, even beer.

This fall, an updated cooking kitchen in Chappell Hall is being used for culinary demonstrations and presentations from guest speakers and chefs. New courses explore the history of American and Meso-American cuisine. In the future, classes will also include East Asian and Jewish foods, BBQ pit masters and how race and barbecue shaped the American South. There'll be courses on Mexican foodways, celebration meals of the Nuevo South and nutrition.

"Food is instilled in the American mind. It stirs public excitement," Pascoe said. "We're teaching people about culture, about histories of peoples around the world, and we're using food to cement that in people's minds."

Pascoe's first class served up country ham and biscuits. This fascinated, at the time, junior history major Elijah Lopez, who's from Manhattan in New York City. He decided to take two foodways classes this semester, after learning about the certificate program from his advisor.

"She knew I was a Northerner, so I would enjoy seeing a different aspect," he said.

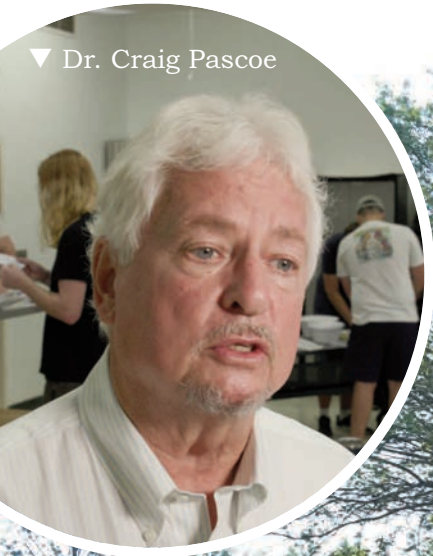
Lopez had never eaten salty southern ham. In the North, he said people prefer ham sweetened with maple, honey or brown sugar glazes. Instead of eating pork shoulder, rice and beans or oatmeal for breakfast, as his family enjoys, Lopez noticed Southerners like their grits.

"I'm enjoying this class and, of course, we get to eat," Lopez said. "I never thought of food as bonding people through history. Wings used to be eaten by relatively low-income families, and now they're revolutionizing the South, and everyone adores them."





▼ Dr. Craig Pascoe



▲ Comfort Farms



"I'm learning so much more than what I expected," he said. "It definitely gets you more engaged. A lot of people get dried out from the boring-ness of history books. That's why we have classes like this."

To get a certificate, students take Global Foodways Studies courses and complete a capstone experience like an internship or study abroad. Students go on fieldtrips to businesses like Old Clinton BBQ in Gray, the Waffle House, farms and food banks. Next semester, the "Exploring the Ethnic South through Food" course will offer a spring break trip to Savannah and Sapelo Island where students will explore coastal Geechee food traditions like shrimp and okra, low country boils and other ethnic cuisines.

Students also get experience in managing food events. Over Labor Day weekend, about 30 students helped organize and run the first annual "Queue for the Few" at Comfort Farms in Milledgeville. Students sold tickets, served barbecue and cleaned up—things people in the restaurant business need to know how to do, Pascoe said. They also helped judge the competition and tabulate scores.

In November, Pascoe's class will host a 'Pop-Up Restaurant' at Chappell Hall. Satterfield's BBQ in Macon will serve its specialty dish for the campus and local community. Students will sell tickets, set up, serve and clean. Also in November, there'll be a reception for the Global Foodways Studies program. Students will be involved in planning the menu. They'll manage all aspects of the event from cooking and greeting guests to serving and cleaning up.

Functions like these give students "a sense of what it's like to run a food-focused event," Pascoe said. Experts expect jobs in the restaurant sector to grow 12 percent by 2026, he added.

"The certificate is a way to get hands-on, realistic experience," Pascoe said. "We're mindful of the fact this is a new world we live in. We're not just here to teach academics. We're here to prepare people for jobs, and I think this certificate does just that."

Junior history major Claire Remley was the first to sign up for a foodways certificate. She'd like to get a doctorate in history and become a professor.

"I've always been interested in the study of societies and cultures," Remley said. "I think this class is such a great opportunity, and it's not just for history majors. It's something everybody could take to learn that history isn't just confined to a textbook. History is in the pizza that you're eating. History is in that fried chicken, the soul food that you're getting, and it's an opportunity to learn history from a different perspective."

Dr. James "Trae" Welborn, associate professor of history, teaches the introductory course for Global Foodways Studies. He began the semester with a lesson on pre-modern pepper, and how it was "supplanted by the now ubiquitous black peppercorn" as an essential spice.

He moved on to legumes—like Mexican black beans, chickpeas for traditional Indian hummus and Mediterranean black-eyed peas—as global staples. Welborn will also focus on meals using underground vegetable "tubers," like pan-fried potatoes, that were a source of nutritional enrichment in impoverished areas. His students will consider

▼ Students made deviled eggs recently in Pascoe's Southern Foodways and Traditions class.



the production process and marketing campaigns of industrial food networks like Coca Cola, as well.

Like Pascoe—who worked in the industry doing everything from washing dishes to owning a restaurant—Welborn has restaurateurs in his lineage. In the 1940s, his great-grandmother owned and operated a restaurant in the South Carolina low country.

"The foodways program allowed me to merge my personal and professional interests in engaging and enlightening ways," Welborn said. "As a cultural historian of identity, emotion and morality, I find foodways is a natural focal point to better understand facets of past lives, societies and cultures."

In a class called "Sociology of Food and Agriculture, students visit the GC Garden on West Campus for lessons in growing lettuce, kale and carrots, as well as composting. Students are also learning the effects of capitalism, and how it influences what "ends up on their plates." Many farmers and farm workers receive low wages. Large corporations take over family farms, and industrial agricultural practices can hurt the environment.

"Reimagining how we produce and distribute our food must be a part of how we address climate change, as well as other social problems related to a capitalist food system," Godwin said.

Senior history major Parker Woods of St. Simons Island can attest to the impact of farm lessons such as these. She interned at Comfort Farms last spring—doing inventory, stocking shelves and completing orders for meat and vegetables. She enjoyed meeting the veterans who shop there and hearing their stories.

"I like the story food can tell, and I think it plays a large part in history and culture," Woods said. "I sold people meat every week. I learned how people prepare cuts I'd never even considered trying, like beef tongue. I watched animals be slaughtered, butchered and prepared. I literally witnessed farm-to-table." 📺



# Department of History and Geography assistant professor brings Mongolian research to GCSU

Dr. Ashleigh Ikemoto, assistant professor of Asian history in the Department of History and Geography, recently returned from a month-long research trip to Mongolia.

There, she studied anthropological fieldwork techniques, modern Mongolian history and the impact of mining on contemporary rural life. The work was facilitated and sponsored by the American Council for Mongolian Studies Field School and the Henry Luce Foundation.

The trip began in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar, founded by Buddhist monks in 1639 and established as the capital of the former Communist state in 1924. Soviet influence is still apparent in the gray apartment buildings and ornate government offices, but the city today is vibrant and bustling, with over 1.6 million people—half the population of the entire country.

In the course of the field school, Dr. Ikemoto met with officials from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Tibetan Buddhist lamas, faculty members at the National University of Mongolia's

School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and traditional Mongolian shamans.

After the meetings in Ulaanbaatar ended, the field school moved to the countryside, slept in gers (yurts) and ate alongside local nomadic families. Dr. Ikemoto and her colleagues visited the Soviet mining town of Erdenet, hiked along the border with Siberia and interviewed nomadic herders about their views on the environmental impact of mining.

In her downtime, she rode horses and camels, tried airag (fermented, alcoholic horse milk), assisted in butchering slaughtered sheep and visited a sacred mountain.

Dr. Ikemoto plans to use the time spent in Mongolia for the benefit of Georgia College & State University students. In the coming semesters, she will be building a new course on the history of Mongolia, and integrating her knowledge into existing classes. 📍



Statue of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (85 feet tall) at Gandantegchinlen Monastery



A traditional Mongolian lunch of tea, sheep entrails, and bread



Gers in northern Mongolia

# Digital Humanities Collaborative Update



[www.gcsu.edu/dhc](http://www.gcsu.edu/dhc)

The Digital Humanities Collaborative (DHC) is entering its second year with exciting plans in store.

The collaborative supports the use of digital tools when investigating topics in the humanities, and provides free and open-source, digital resources.

Students and their faculty mentors will be eligible for awards and recognition again this year for digital humanities scholarships presented at Research Day on March 29.

We look forward to presentations of research later this year from the inaugural digital humanities faculty fellowship recipients: Craig Pascoe, James Hill "Trae" Welborn and Ruben Yepes. The DHC will also host presentations from Doug Oetter on making digital story maps, and from Juli Gittinger on Digital Ethnography.

A useful starting place for learning more about digital humanities is the newly expanded DHC website with an updated guide to free tools and resources. Faculty should be sure to designate their digital humanities activities with the attributions recently added in Watermark (Digital Measures) in the areas of teaching, research, service, and professional development. 🏠

## Now offering Election Administration Certificates

Every election in the United States requires thousands of election officials and poll workers to ensure this critical public service.

State and local governments provide the official training and certification for these election administrators, but Georgia College and State University's Department of Government and Sociology is now the only academic institution in the state of Georgia to offer undergraduate and graduate certificates in election administration.

The undergraduate certificate in election administration offers a selection of courses that examine the constitutional, legal, political and administrative environment of American elections. In addition, the certificate includes a transformative learning experience that requires students to take part in administering elections through internships with local or state governments.

The graduate certificate in election administration includes a selection of courses that contribute to the professionalization of current and prospective election administrators. These courses address the institutional, legal, and political issues surrounding election administration. In addition, the graduate certificate provides a transformative learning experience through internships or scholarly research in election administration.

Through these two certificate programs, the Department of Government and Sociology aims to encourage more students to pursue public service careers in election administration and to provide professional development opportunities for professionals who are currently serving in the field of election administration. 🏠





# Coverdell Scholar draws attention to 19th Amendment and civil discourse



▲ Dr. Victoria Gordon

After 15 years in public administration and 16 years teaching the subject—Dr. Victoria Gordon retired. But she wasn't idle long.

Gordon turned quickly around and applied for the chance to be Georgia College & State University's 2022 Paul D. Coverdell Visiting Scholar. It was the perfect opportunity to focus on her favorite teaching subject, "Women in Politics," a topic she only taught five years before retiring.

In those years, she helped spearhead Western Kentucky University's 100th celebration of

the 19th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which gave women the right to vote. That celebration deepened her interest.

"That, in turn, led me to wanting to continue to focus on the importance of the 19th Amendment in my teaching and service responsibilities," Gordon said, "and it's a nice tie-in to my Coverdell Visiting Scholar duties this semester at Georgia College."

"Everybody has been so wonderful to work with here," she said. "Everyone I've reached out to for help has been more than generous with their time, because this is not a one-woman show."

Her passion for women's rights was evident early in the semester. Gordon and Women's Studies Professor Dr. Sabrina Hom took a group of students to a Milledgeville City Council meeting to hear the mayor proclaim the importance of the 19th Amendment.

Although the vote was won in 1920—Gordon's students today are still fascinated and proud.

"That excitement was real and put textbook material into practice for them," she said. "The students saw their government taking action and affirming the importance of women. I wish I could bottle that excitement. They may not recall the fight to vote or directly identify with it— but they can learn how exciting it is to exercise their right to vote."

Recently, Gordon moderated a panel discussion in Magnolia Ballroom, featuring women who served in public office.

Sponsored by Georgia College's Department of Philosophy, Religion & Liberal Studies, the panel featured Mary Parham-Copelan, first woman mayor of Milledgeville; university president and former Georgia Secretary of State Cathy Cox; and Skye Gess, Baldwin County Solicitor General.

Throughout her different events, Gordon is focusing on the theme of civil discourse. She can't explain why or when political discussions became so divided and full of rancor in America. But Gordon suspects one answer may be social media. Hiding behind anonymity makes some people more brazen and offensive, she said.

Gordon's trying to understand the issue better, as she moves through her semester as the Coverdell Visiting Scholar. She's researching organizations and approaches that will help campuses and communities promote healthy conversations about politics. Gordon hopes to form an initial faculty focus group to prepare others how to engage in difficult topics.

"First, the history of women in politics, or the lack thereof, makes it of interest to me," Gordon said. "Second, the tortuous journey to the vote for women was just fascinating to me. Finally, teaching a subject matter gives you a whole other vantage point when you delve into a subject." 🎧

▼ Gordon, left, with GCSU President Cathy Cox and Baldwin County Solicitor General Skye Gess for a panel discussion on women in politics.



▼ Students listen to a recent panel discussion moderated by Gordon.





# THE COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

## NEW FACULTY BIOS

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### CHEMISTRY, PHYSICS, AND ASTRONOMY



**Name:** Sayo "Fakay" O. Fakayode

**Education:** Ph.D., Analytical Chemistry, Baylor University Waco, TX

**Interesting Fact(s):** Fakay likes jogging and going for walks. He enjoys a good cup of coffee, nature in the park, rivers and listening to good music, especially jazz.

**Research Area(s):** Analytical, Bioanalytical, Environmental, Forensic, Natural Products, Pharmaceutical and Drug Discovery, Chemometrics, Experimental Design, and STEAM Education.

**What are you bringing to GCSU?** Leadership Experience, interdisciplinary research experience, active learning pedagogy, student and faculty mentoring experience, community engagement and outreach.



**Name:** Sujan Bastola

**Education:** Ph.D., Physics, Missouri S&T

**Interesting Fact(s):** Dr. Bastola enjoys playing soccer.

**Research Area(s):** Dr. Bastola's major research interest is focused on coherence and interference effects in atomic collisions. He explores the concept of the dual nature of quantum particles to study the complex interaction between tiny particles like atoms, electrons, molecules, etc.

**What are you bringing to GCSU?** Hands-on, experimental experiences in quantum mechanics.



# COMMUNICATION AND RHETORIC



**Name:** Molly Wilkins

**Interesting Fact(s):** From Macon, Georgia, she's run her own social media site for years and helps a sorority at Mercer University.



**Name:** Colin Whitworth

**Education:** University of South Florida

**Research Area(s):** Performance Studies



**Name:** Nathan Bedsole

**Education:** University of Nebraska-Omaha

**Interesting Fact(s):** Rhetoric fan who loves exploring conspiracy theories, even if he doesn't promote them himself.

## PERSONNEL CHANGES

**Chad Whittle**  
Assistant Professor

**Mike Crews**  
Assistant Professor

## NEW DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

**Podcast Club:**  
Sponsored by Chad Whittle. They work with various departments on campus to help with their podcasts, and give/get tips on creating their own podcasts.

**Debate and Forensics Team:**  
GCSU has had a team several times in the past. We're restarting it this year, under the direction of Nathan Bedsole. Students will be competing in a variety of individual events.

# GOVERNMENT AND SOCIOLOGY



**Name:** Max Harleman

**Education:** Ph.D., Administration and Public Policy, University of Pittsburgh

**Interesting Facts(s):** Dr. Harleman is a native of the Lehigh Valley in eastern Pennsylvania. After a brief career in market research, he joined the United States Peace Corps as a first step towards transitioning his career towards public service. He served in Grenada, where he worked with an agricultural development organization to improve the income earning potential of farmers, fisherfolk and rural cooperatives.

**Research Area(s):** Energy and Environmental Policy, Public Infrastructure Development, Environmental Justice and Human Health, Quantitative Research Methods.

**What are you bringing to GCSU?** Dr. Harleman is excited to help develop students' hard skills, including research design and presentation, data analysis, and the use of statistical and geospatial software.



**Name:** Matt Sanchez

**Education:** ABD, Georgia State University; MS, Kennesaw State University

**Interesting Fact(s):** Sanchez' first time on an airplane was to present at an American Society of Criminology conference.

**Research Area(s):** Sociology of law, Police use of force, Community corrections

**What are you bringing to GCSU?** The unique perspective of having been an undergraduate student in the very department in which he is now a faculty member.

## MUSIC



**Name:** Gabrielle Banzon, MA, LPMT, MT-BC

**Education:** BMT, Georgia College & State University; MA, Texas Woman's University

**Interesting Facts(s):** Banzon has been to 6 continents and interviewed Ben Folds—musician, composer and first artistic advisor to the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.—on her podcast.

**Research Area(s):** Therapeutic Songwriting, Music Technology and Sociocultural Perspectives

**What are you bringing to GCSU?** Banzon brings insights from her seven years practicing from a community and relationship-based clinical approach, with an emphasis on music technology and cultural sensitivity.

*"As an alumnus, I am happy to be back and hope to contribute to the growth of the program and these students. Go Bobcats!"*



**Name:** Gregory Wascoe

**Education:** MM, University of North Texas; BM, University of Texas at Arlington

**Interesting Fact(s):** Prior to joining the faculty at Georgia College & State University, he lived in Mississippi where he taught at Mississippi State University for three years and eleven years at Jones College. He is also father to three children: Sam (20), Zach (19) and Evelyn (12).

**Research Area(s):** Active Performer in Opera, Classical Singing and Musical Theater

**What are you bringing to GCSU?** A wealth of diverse teaching and performing experience both nationally and internationally.

*"I collaborated on a new composition piece titled 'True Bliss' with text by Biological and Environmental Science faculty member, Ashhok Hegde, and music by faculty member David H. Johnson, on the Jazz Band Concert directed by Cliff Towner on November 3 and 4, 2022."*



**Name:** Robert Allen Stewart

**Education:** Ph.D., Music Education, Florida State University; MM, Music Therapy, Florida State University; BS, Music, Florida Southern College

**Interesting Facts(s):** Dr. Stewart played in the FSU Mas N' Steel Caribbean Steel Drum band and opened for George Clinton (FSU Rainbow Concert - 2016); related to Aaron Burr. Classically trained guitarist; studied under Mark Switzer, Bruce Holzman, and Silviu Ciulei. Recently married this summer and performing with the GC Faculty Jazz Combo.

**Research Area(s):** The music education of music therapists, particularly in the areas of guitar and music technology

**What are you bringing to GCSU?** Trained in providing music therapy to premature infants (NICU certified).

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## ENGLISH



**Name:** Sidonia Serafini

**Education:** Ph.D., English, University of Georgia

**Interesting Facts(s):** Dr. Serafini's childhood was spent growing up in a small cabin in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. She visits every chance she gets, especially in the fall when the apple trees around the cabin bear fruit.

**Research Area(s):** Early African-American literature, multiethnic American women's writing and periodical studies.

**What are you bringing to GCSU?** Sidonia brings with her an extensive background in public history and humanities

projects. She has curated large scale museum exhibits for the University of Georgia (UGA) Special Collections Library and a digital exhibition for the Digital Library of Georgia and the New Georgia Encyclopedia.

She also serves as Co-Director of a website that examines the imprint of Black activism in the US and the UK, past and present. Black Activism: A Transatlantic Legacy, a website that examines the imprint of Black activism in the US and the UK, past and present.



## PSYCHOLOGY



**Name:** Taylor Elsey

**Education:** Ph.D., Developmental Psychology, University of Kentucky; Teaching post-Doctoral scholar, University of Kentucky

**Interesting Fact(s):** Off campus, Dr. Elsey is an avid traveler (be on the lookout for future study abroad programs), a foodie and a lake go-er.

**What are you bringing to GCSU?** Dr. Elsey brings a fascinating new research program and expertise in

sleep, romantic relationships, and their intersection, that will attract many undergraduate students to her special topics courses and future undergraduate research lab.

She has also been active in SoTL research, investigating professor empathy for students.

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## THEATRE AND DANCE



**Name:** Jeremy Lee Cudd

**Education:** MFA, Acting, Penn State; BA, English Literature and minor in Theatre, Georgia State University

**What are you bringing to GCSU?** Cudd brings a strong background in performing Shakespeare and on-camera acting to our program.

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## WORLD LANGUAGES AND CULTURES



**Name:** Diana Díaz Gómez

**Education:** Arizona State University

**Interesting Fact(s):** As an amateur cook and food scholar, Gómez actively seeks opportunities inside and outside of the classroom to teach culture through food consumption. In her language, literature, and film course, she invites students to work in interdisciplinary clusters to bring different perspectives and approaches to the study of cultural topics and contemporary problems.

**Research Area(s):** Research interests lie at the intersections of Food Studies and Hispanophone literary and visual studies.

**What are you bringing to GCSU?** At all levels of the curriculum, Gómez enjoys using technology in the classroom, from the gamification of vocabulary, grammar and cultural topics to the use of social media spaces to practice reading and writing in Spanish.



**Name:** Moussa Seck

**Education:** Northwestern University; International studies program undergraduate research mentor

**Interesting Fact(s):** A specialist in Francophone migration literatures, Seck's endeavors to develop in students strong critical thinking skills and a broad understanding of Africa and the world. Seck has cultivated international and interdisciplinary networks with scholars, curators, artists, and activists.

**Research Area(s):** His interest in postcolonial museological practices has led to an ongoing collaboration with the Musée des civilisations noires (Museum of Black Civilizations) in Dakar, Senegal.

**What are you bringing to GCSU?** Seck's interest in postcolonial museological practices has led to an ongoing collaboration with the Musée des civilisations noires (Museum of Black Civilizations) in Dakar, Senegal.



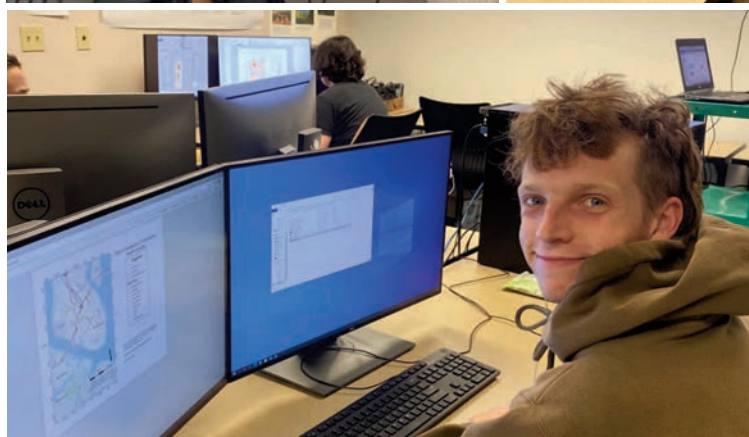
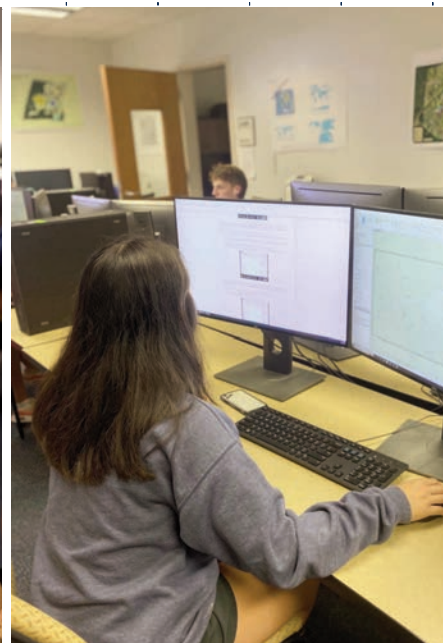
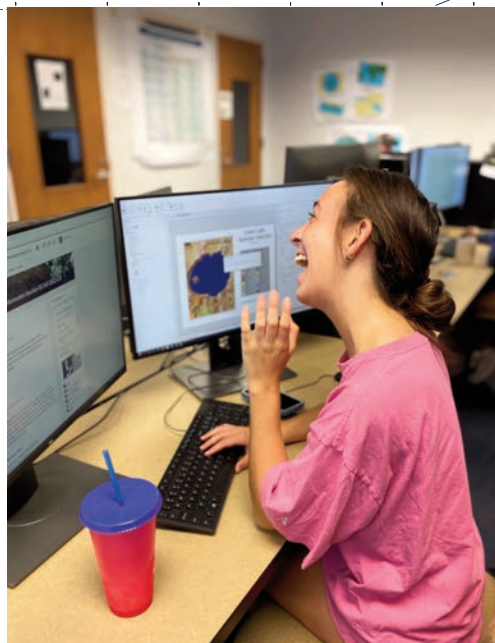
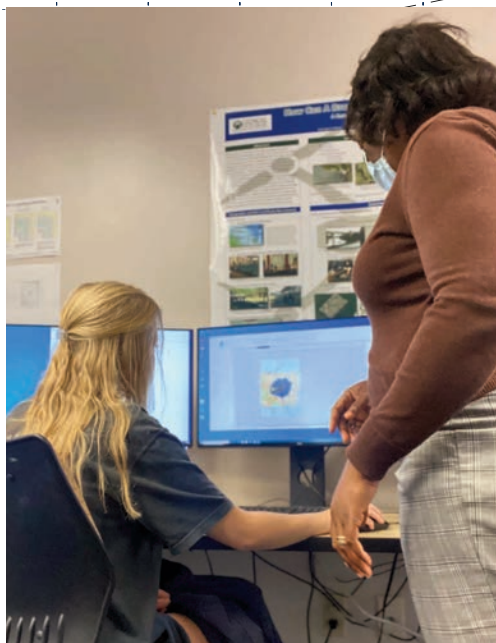
**Name:** Edgar Ulloa

**Education:** Georgetown University

**Interesting Fact(s):** A practicing bilingual poet with an MFA in creative writing in Spanish (NYU), Ulloa guides his students in multi-genre, media-rich explorations of the language and cultural practices of the Hispanophone world.

**Research Area(s):** Ulloa's research focuses on cultural projections of the Chinese enclave in postrevolutionary Mexico and the depictions of

narcotics in Mexican Cinema. In particular, he identifies what he calls "Narco-Orientalism" in Mexican cinematic representations of early drug trafficking and analyzes the foundational role that the negatively stereotyped figure of the Chinese immigrant plays in these representations.



◀Dr. Omolola Ologunorisa, lecturer of geography, and her students in the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) lab. She guides her students in a lab on how to produce a good map.

The Introduction to GIS course introduces students to the basic types of geographic data and their analysis. The course focuses on the acquisition, display and query of digital data using GIS in real-world applications. 📍





▼ Wesley DeMontigny presenting at the MURACE Student Research Conference.

## Goldwater Scholarship awarded to Georgia College student for the first time

Junior biology major Wesley DeMontigny was awarded the Goldwater Scholarship in March—a first for Georgia College.

For general research in the natural sciences, mathematics and engineering, the scholarship identifies future researchers and is the most prestigious of its kind.

“The Goldwater Scholarship is the nation’s foremost award for undergraduates studying the natural sciences, mathematics, and engineering,” said Anna Whiteside, assistant director of the Honors College and coordinator for the National Scholarships Office. “To earn this award, recipients must have an extensive research experience in addition to an excellent academic record. Wesley worked very hard on putting this application together, and we are so proud of him.”

The scholarship will provide DeMontigny with \$7,500 toward his senior year and hold tremendous power on his curriculum vitae.

“I woke up that morning, knowing the Goldwater would be announced at noon,” he said, “and I was so lightheaded, I thought I would pass out. When I knew I got it, I wasn’t as elated as I thought I’d be—all of a sudden, I realized how much

weight had been on my shoulders, and I just felt relaxed.”

His research centers on environmental microbiology. DeMontigny secured the scholarship with an essay about a project he did. It explored bacteria that engulf themselves in crystals and the potential applications of that ability.

“I’m interested in using genetic engineering for potential environmental remediation for industrial uses,” he said. “Microbes are fascinating in that they are everywhere, they’ve been around for an extremely long time, and they are the reason we have almost every resource we need to survive.”

While growing up in Marietta, Georgia, DeMontigny had a natural talent for science. He taught himself to code in middle school and was a programmer for a healthcare company in high school. Yet, DeMontigny entered college expecting to practice law.

“As I was getting less interested in law, I learned I was very good at understanding cellular biology,” he said. “Natural laws are a fascinating topic. They are descriptive, rather than prescriptive. So, we aren’t telling nature what to do, we’re describing it. We’re saying ‘This is what it is.’”

Georgia College’s liberal arts approach made his journey possible, he said. If DeMontigny hadn’t been required to take biology, he may not be where he is today.

“If I was in a class of 100 people, getting the professor’s time would be more difficult,” DeMontigny said. “Easily communicating with my professors has been a big deal for both the scholarship and my development as a student.”

Getting the scholarship doesn’t mean DeMontigny is finished. The relief that came with securing the award only lasted four days. After he graduates in the fall, DeMontigny will take an eight-month hiatus, before applying straight into a Ph.D. program.

After that, he plans to go where the graduate experience takes him.

“One of the things I like about the career of a researcher is asking your own questions,” DeMontigny said. “You can ask your own questions and pursue them whether or not someone’s going to pay you to pursue them. I like the freedom to be creative.” 🎧

# Class of 2022:

## Outstanding student receives medallion for two colleges



▲ Savannah Taylor

Before commencement every year, each college of the university selects an outstanding student to receive a medallion commemorating their undergraduate achievement.

This year, Savannah Taylor, senior economics and world languages and cultures double-major, won two.

The College of Business and Technology (COBT) and

College of Arts and Sciences (COAS) both awarded Taylor 2022 Outstanding Student Awards. She received the COAS medallion for the best student in Humanities and Social Sciences. She was also named Georgia College and State University's (GCSU) Newman Civic Fellow earlier in the year.

"There are so many people I wish I could thank," she said. "The list is so long, because it took an army to get me here. I'm blown away. I would not in a million years have thought this is where I would have ended up—I'm very thankful for it."

Medallion recipients are selected based on a mixture of academic achievement, campus and community involvement and additional undergraduate criteria. They are presented with the medallion at each colleges' awards ceremony and recognized at their graduation.

Outstanding students are selected from each major and chosen to represent the college. For COAS, Taylor was the Humanities and Social Sciences division recipient.

Taylor is now the public policy and research manager at the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. In this role, she is immersed in

policy, working to introduce Georgia businesses to sustainable practices.

She works with Chris Clark, president and CEO of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, an alumnus and speaker at spring graduation.

"A lot of people get scared when they hear sustainability," Taylor said. "We want to rework that in people's heads to show them how it will be good for their business and good for their people. As long as I'm doing what I'm interested in and working for groups that I care about, I'll be happy."

The possibility of earning a sustainability certificate is one factor that drew Taylor to Georgia College. While here, she's been a part of the Gardening Club, served as the West Campus Garden manager, crafted and maintained educational outreach and created a garden-bed rental program.

She also had a hand in Georgia College's compost production program, which has continued since Taylor's graduation.

"To be truly sustainable, you are doing what's best for the planet, what's best for people and, ideally, you don't want to go bankrupt doing it," she said. "Economics is a part of sustainability. For me, economics is a lot of critical thinking, problem solving and strategy. It plays into everything—I love it."

Taylor grew up in Stone Mountain, Georgia, with family in Michigan. Her family was always outdoors, and their penchant for kayaking, hiking and enjoying outdoor spaces inspired her interest in conserving natural environments and sustainability.

"My professors had a lot of comments about why I got the award—some from freshmen year," she said. "I was impressed and touched they remembered those things about me. When I enrolled as undeclared, it was probably the best decision I could have ever made." 📍





▲McQuinn at the site of her internship.

►Rachel McQuinn works at the Bradley Center's Intake Center.

## Summer internship reveals new career possibilities

Georgia College senior psychology major Rachel McQuinn opened her mind to new career possibilities she never considered before. At her summer internship, she cared for patients at the Bradley Center's Intake Center of St. Francis Hospital—a psychiatric residency in Columbus, Georgia.

"When I chose this internship, I felt like it was going to be a part of psychology that I never let myself explore," she said. "I thought I would personally carry people's struggles home with me, but that's not the case."

McQuinn never considered therapy and clinical psychology as potential career paths until now.

"I know when our patients leave here, we've helped them all we can," she said. "It's an opportunity for me to explore these fields as a possible career."

McQuinn didn't waste any time landing her internship. She started interning at the Bradley Center the Monday after she completed spring semester. Her internship counts as two classes or six credit hours in psychology.

"I had to start pretty quickly, so I could get the 240 hours I need during the summer," McQuinn said.

The Bradley Center is a crisis stabilization facility used to treat individuals of all ages who have active addictions and/or mental health issues. McQuinn chose this internship so she could work more closely with patients and learn how to help them.

Her duties include taking patients' vital signs to ensure they're stable enough to be admitted, observing intake assessments and reviewing intake referrals to place patients with behavioral health issues at other facilities. McQuinn prepares the faxed referrals to be presented and attends the meetings in which the referrals are reviewed and discussed.

Her favorite part of her internship is knowing that every patient can receive help to make changes in their lives.

"I've never considered a clinical route before now," McQuinn said. "This experience made me rethink my entire career path, because I love it so much. It's such a unique opportunity that it's really opened my eyes to what I could truly get out of a psychology bachelor's degree, master's degree in clinical or behavioral psychology and possibly a doctorate."

The patients who impact her the most at the Bradley Center are children and teenagers. "Every patient is important to me, and I fight

for everyone I have," she said. "But the kids and teenagers have touched my heart the most. I feel like if you can intervene early on, then later, they have the tools they need to be more equipped to handle crisis, stress or anxiety in their lives."

McQuinn has thought about becoming a child and family psychiatrist. But, for now, she remains flexible about her career path. What she knows for sure is she wants to help people.

With her internship more than half over, McQuinn especially enjoys learning something new every day.

"I am very grateful to The Bradley Center of St. Francis for this amazing opportunity. It's been extremely rewarding," she said. "I love that when I leave every day, I know we've helped every person who has come through the door. Even if a patient doesn't meet the inpatient criteria, they're either given outpatient care or referred to a therapist. So, each person who enters our facility will leave with some guidance." 🎧



# EVERY DROP WE DRINK

Environmental science major interns at  
Macon Water Authority

**M**ost people turn on faucets without much thought about how the water gets there.

Until this summer, Avery Lundy of Jones County, Georgia was one of them.

“We’re dealing with people’s livelihoods and the fact everybody who turns on their tap is affected by what we do here,” Lundy said, standing before a series of computer command screens that would make NASA Mission Control envious.

From there, he can watch the entire process: from water collected in the Ocmulgee River to its filtration at the Amerson Water Treatment Plant. That’s where Lundy is finishing up a summer internship for the Macon Water Authority, which won an award in 2008 for the best tasting water in the country.

Six weeks ago, all the science and supervision required for drinking water was a bit overwhelming for him. Today, Lundy takes visitors around like an expert—pointing to advanced equipment; dangerous chemicals; enormous pipes; pumps and pools—as if he was born for the job.

Chuck Mixon, assistant plant manager, thinks Lundy’s ready, too. When a job becomes available, he said, the recent environmental science graduate is top on his list to hire inside.

“I’ve been here 20 years in April,” Mixon said, “and I’ve seen a lot of interns come and go. Some good, some bad. Avery stacks up in the top 1%. He’s always asking questions; he’s always working.”

Mixon said he looks for an intern who’s inquisitive, interested and enjoys the work. Anyone can learn to change valves or do paperwork, he said. Mixon likes interns who are hands-on and part of the team.

In the future, Mixon would like more interns from Georgia College. He’ll expect to see in them the same work ethic he found in Lundy.



▲Lundy with the Macon Water Authority.





**I DEFINITELY THINK I PUT MY BEST FOOT FORWARD BY DOING AN INTERNSHIP. NOT ONLY DOES IT GIVE ME KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS, BUT IT GIVES ME WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE WITH COWORKERS AND MANAGEMENT**

- AVERY LUNDY

”

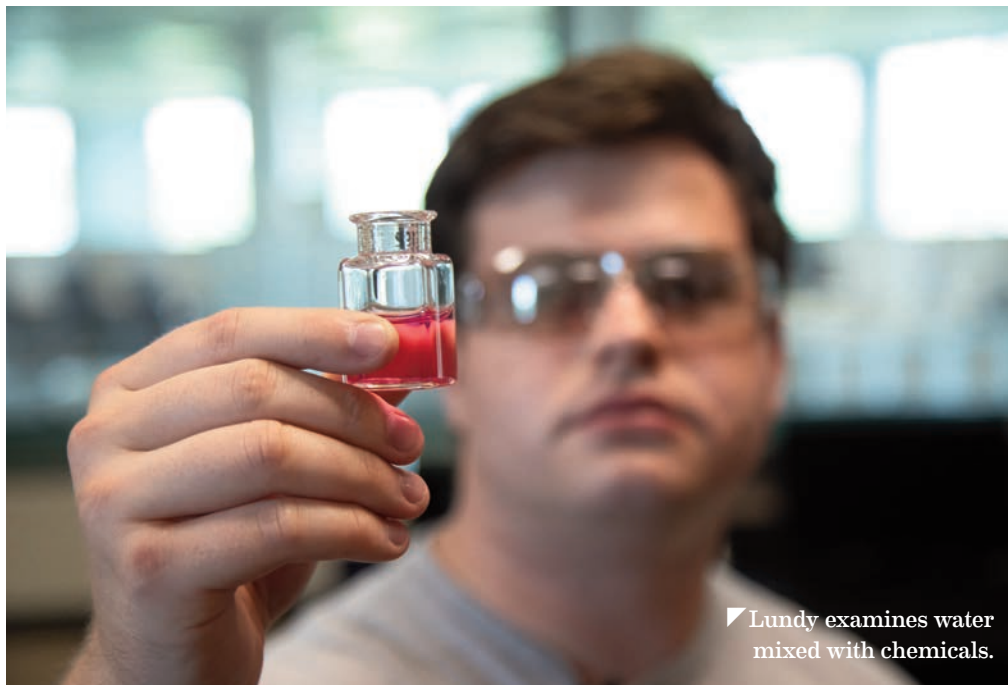
“He’s basically become an all-round water treatment operator, and that’s what I’m looking for,” Mixon said. “He would be great for the Macon Water Authority and for the water industry in general. We need young talent, and Avery could fill a huge hole.”

Still, the job carries a lot of responsibility.

Lundy knows one wrong move could result in contamination or a violation. But he learned a valuable lesson the day he discovered a clogged pipe at the plant. After a coworker took him through the appropriate remediation steps—he learned he can handle it.

“I’ve been very fortunate to be given people who are willing to teach me and show me what this plant is all about and what goes on here,” Lundy said.

His first day on the job was “a mind-flood of information.” Lundy was surprised by the number of government rules regulating the water industry. As the weeks progressed, however, he realized Georgia College had prepared him well.



✓ Lundy examines water mixed with chemicals.

Originally, Lundy thought he might like to be a health inspector. But, after taking several hydrology classes with Dr. Samuel Mutiti, his interest turned to water.

Mutiti taught students about state standards and how to test water through class projects, like Georgia’s Adopt-A-Stream monitoring program. Lundy broadened his understanding of water issues in biology classes with Dr. Al Mead and in Dr. Bruce Snyder’s soil ecology course.

Georgia College’s liberal arts curriculum made Lundy a well-rounded student. The mathematical skills he learned have been especially useful at the water treatment plant.

He also appreciates the help he got at the Career Center, where his internship was approved, and paperwork finalized.

Internships give students a chance to solve real-life problems, strengthen analytical reasoning and work on vital projects in ways that are transformational, according to Brittany Archer, assistant director of employer relations and internships at Georgia College.

That has been the case with Lundy. He feels the experience makes him more employable.

“I definitely think I put my best foot forward by doing an internship,” he said. “Not only does it give me knowledge and skills, but it gives me workplace experience with coworkers and management.”

On a typical day, Lundy uses a computer software system to check water levels, water pressure and make sure all pipes are flowing. He tests water for chlorine every hour, makes reports and contacts maintenance if he sees a problem.

He’s constantly aware of the seriousness of the job, especially in the lab, where workers measure water quality. They test for bacteria, E. coli, minerals and metals. Naturally occurring minerals, like fluoride can, at high levels, be “very dangerous and dissolve concrete in a matter of minutes,” Lundy said.

Contaminants are collected at the bottom of giant pools. Clear water filters through layers of sand, rock and carbonated peat. Then it’s stored in 5-million-gallon holding tanks before distribution to homes and businesses throughout Macon.

It’s a process that fascinates Lundy and impresses upon him the significance of his job. By playing his part, he knows he’s contributing to a fundamental part of civil society.

“Like everyone,” Lundy said, “I took water for granted. Coming here has definitely opened my eyes to the importance of water and how much work it takes for us to turn on the tap.”

“This experience has been very educational,” he said. “From this career path, I can go just about everywhere in the country and find work, because everyone needs water.” 🌍

# Class of 2022:

## Student chosen for prestigious youth exchange program to Germany

A graduating mass communication major is the first Georgia College & State University student to be awarded a competitive young fellowship award through the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Senior Jenna Byrd of Alpharetta was named a fellow for the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) Program for Young Professionals. She will join a cohort of 75 other young graduates of all majors and disciplines from around the United States for a yearlong learning and working adventure in Germany.

"This is a very exciting program that is going to allow Jenna to have an immersive experience in Germany, where she'll put into practice skills she learned in her German classes at Georgia College, as well as in her mass comm classes," said Anna Whiteside, coordinator of the National Scholarships Office at Georgia College."

"It's a very competitive program, so it says a lot that Jenna was selected," she said.

The CBYX program is completely funded by the German Bundestag and U.S. State Department. Each year, 75 American and 75 German young professionals, age 18 ½ to 24, swap countries. Many live with host families for an authentic experience, immersed in a new culture, while taking language and university classes in their chosen fields. The program ends with a four-month-long paid internship abroad.

Byrd flies to Washington D.C. July 27 for a three-day orientation then to Germany on the 30th. The first two months are spent learning German—something that won't be as difficult for Byrd, since she took four years of German in high school and two in college. After language classes, she'll be assigned to a German university to learn more about mass communication and other related topics. Her time there will end with an internship.

"The entire program is formatted to make us young diplomats," Byrd said. "I've been in ambassador positions with other companies but being an ambassador for Congress is really exciting. I'm told a lot of alums from this program tend to work in international marketing or international relations. I wouldn't mind that at all. It piques my interest because I love traveling."

Byrd describes herself as an extrovert. It's an understatement to say she's been busy at Georgia College, putting her university years to good use.

Her resume is hard to fit on one page. Byrd worked with Bobcat Media Productions for three years. She's a member of Alpha Omicron Pi Fraternity, Order of Omega Honors Society, the American Marketing Association's GC chapter and the student chapter of the Broadcasting Education Association.

Byrd worked as director of public relations and vice president of the university's PRSSA organization (Public Relations Student Society of America). She is in the national communication association honor's society, Lambda Pi Eta, and found time to walk dogs at Baldwin County Animal Shelter. She also volunteers with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Big Brothers Big Sisters in Macon.

One summer, Byrd did an internship with a small coaching business, Mitchell+McClure in Atlanta. She did photography, graphic design and general planning for them. On campus, she promoted Guayaki Yerba Mate, a Brazilian tea, and worked with Amazon Prime Student.

Byrd gushes with thanks to all her professors, who prepared her for this next challenge in life. When she arrived, Byrd thought she'd immediately transfer to another school. But she's grown to love and appreciate the small-school atmosphere and deep connections she made here.



Her advice for incoming freshmen is to speak up in class and get involved in organizations. A lot of “amazing people come out of Georgia College,” she said, “and if you utilize your tools, you could be one of them.”

“When I first got here, I was extremely and deeply insecure,” Byrd said. “I had a ‘fake it ‘til you make it’ mindset. Eventually, I stopped faking it. I realized you can take pride in small accomplishments; you don’t have to be humble all the time; you can brag on yourself.”

“Being a young woman, I will never be quiet. I will always be talking and fighting for what’s important to me,” she said. “This little tightknit community really changed that for me, and I wouldn’t trade my experience for the world.”

Byrd particularly thanks Dr. Mikkel Christensen, assistant professor of strategic communication. Last May, she went on a study abroad trip with mass communication students and Christensen to his home country, Denmark. One of their excursions was to the National Danish Broadcasting Corporation, where Christensen used to work.

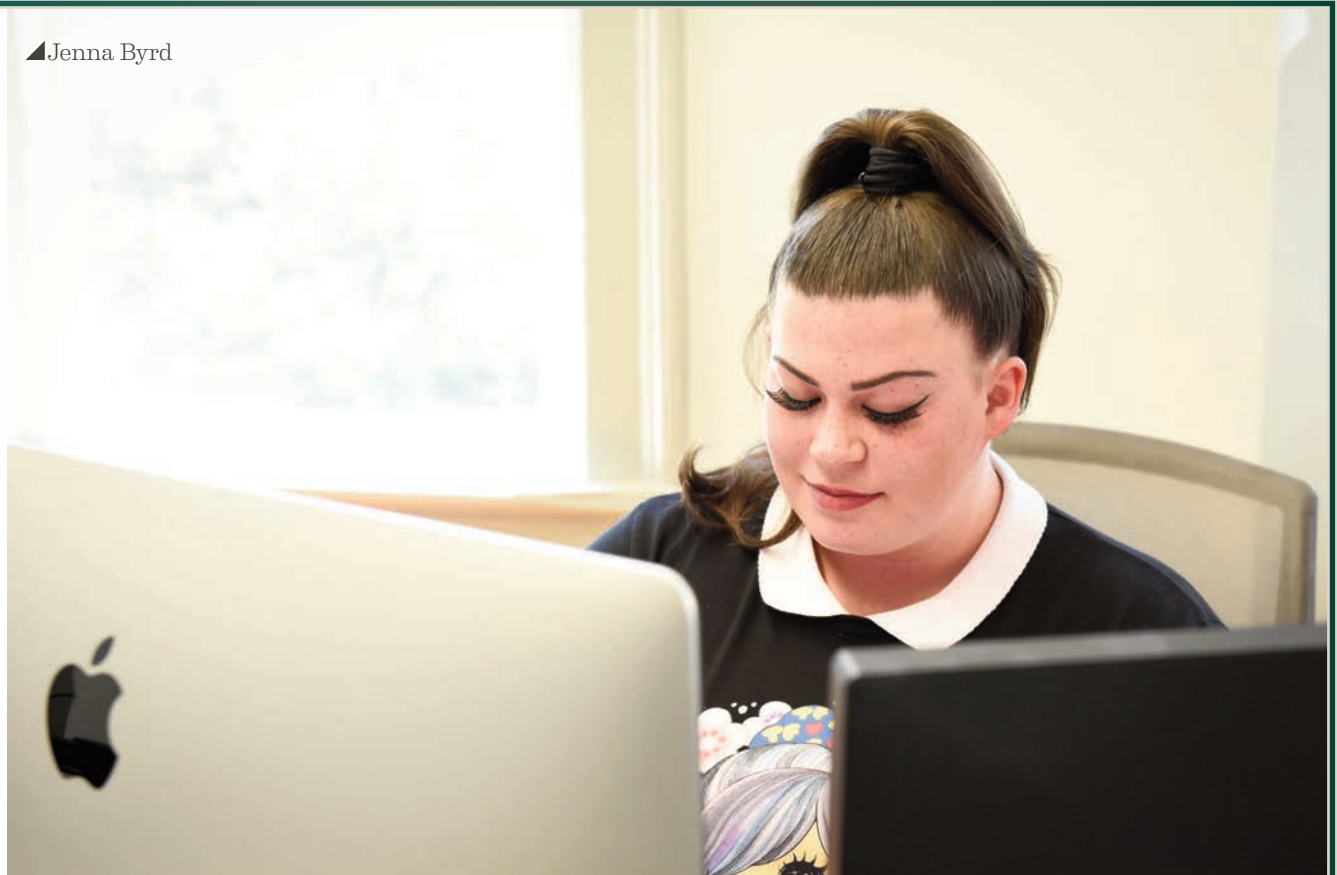
In June, Byrd will visit with family at Lake Tahoe in California. Then, she’s off to D.C. and Germany in July.

This hectic lifestyle fits her bubbly personality. She loves hiking, kayaking, swimming, traveling, modern art, podcasts and Squishmallows™ stuffed animals. Her dream is to live in a beach house near a nice city and one day own a public relations agency.

“When I get back from Germany,” Byrd said, “I see myself putting the work in and reflecting on what I took from being a young diplomat, because that’s just the craziest thing. I’m some college kid from Georgia. It’s weird to be flipping gears and working with Congress in this internationally recognized organization.”

“But it’s also really cool, and it’s something I’ve worked hard for,” she said. “So, I have a feeling only good things will come from it.” 🍷

▲ Jenna Byrd



▲ Dr. Tsu Ming Chiang explains data analysis.



## Five psychology students study the impact of COVID-19 on GCSU peers

**F**ive psychology majors are finishing data analysis on several projects relating to coronavirus and worldwide lockdowns that left millions dealing with mental health issues.

The results showed students at Georgia College — like people everywhere — weren't immune to the fallout of isolation and loneliness.

"Our conclusions were that loneliness increased and the reported overall state of mental health decreased, which corresponds to a strong negative correlation between loneliness and mental health across all stages of the pandemic," said senior psychology major Emma Kraby of Athens, Georgia.

"We can only assume mental health will continue to improve," she said, "but it's not quite to the level it was before."

Kraby studied COVID-19 anxiety and mental health with fellow researcher Joseph Wenke, a senior psychology major from Roswell.

From March 2020 to Oct. 2021, they surveyed 154 of their peers, learning the effects of quarantine, fear and isolation. As lockdowns continued, charts show loneliness going up and mental health coming down.

Wenke took the research further by examining how loneliness can be mediated by personality traits. He looked at screen time

and other variables, like whether students had a pet. More screen time correlated with impaired mental health, while having a cat or dog to cuddle helped fight discouragement.

Upperclassmen, whose lives were interrupted by COVID-19, were more negatively impacted than those entering college after the pandemic died down, Wenke discovered. Social distancing, wearing masks and other restrictions seem to be the new normal for younger students and more-easily accepted.

Contrary to what one would expect—introverts were more negatively impacted than extroverts by isolation.

Things have improved two years later but only a little. Kraby and Wenke were surprised to find loneliness continues to be present in college students.

"It could just be the habits from quarantine—maybe people got used to more screen time and less physical activity. Maybe they're staying inside more. Or maybe people have gotten used to not having contact with friends," Wenke said.

"There's a lot more to be done on that," he added. "Generally, the results that I've seen show introverts were more negatively impacted by quarantining than extroverts, and so were people who were in college before COVID."

These results follow similar patterns experienced by the rest of



society and campus. Psychology Department Chair Dr. Lee Gillis said students and faculty in general are dealing with various levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

Psychology majors Maryelle Michael of Roswell, a senior, and Carson Beasley of Woodstock, a junior, are studying COVID-19 from a different angle. They're examining the role of exercise and how physical exertion improves anxiety levels.

"Pre-pandemic, exercise data was pretty consistent," Michael said. "But come March 2020, there was a big halt of exercise among adolescents and adults, because we were all in shock. No one knew what to do, essentially, and you couldn't go to the gym."

Data suggests a reduction in exercise correlates to a reduction in mental health and increased feelings of loneliness. But people soon found creative ways to exercise. They joined online initiatives like TikTok and workout routines on YouTube or Zoom.

Nevertheless, exercise levels—like loneliness and mental health states — are not back up to pre-pandemic levels.

"That makes sense," Beasley said. "Some people are still scared to go out in public or go to the gym and join classes. I think a lot of people underestimate the positive effects physical activity has on mental health. Because COVID has impacted that, we weren't really shocked to see physical activities fall so low."

The COVID-19 research teams will present their findings at a regional conference at the end of March. Twenty-six psychology students will attend the Southeastern Psychological Association's annual conference, showcasing various topics in addition to COVID-19, such as:

- Microaggressions in the classroom
- Substance abuse in ADHD and bipolar disorders
- Belonging and wellness of minorities in predominately white institutions
- Self-injury and suicide among transgender and gender nonconforming college students
- Stereotypical gender beliefs and harsher disciplinary strategies for male children
- Effects of lying on memory

"Conducting quality research in undergraduate years is invaluable," said Dr. Tsu-Ming Chiang, professor of psychology.

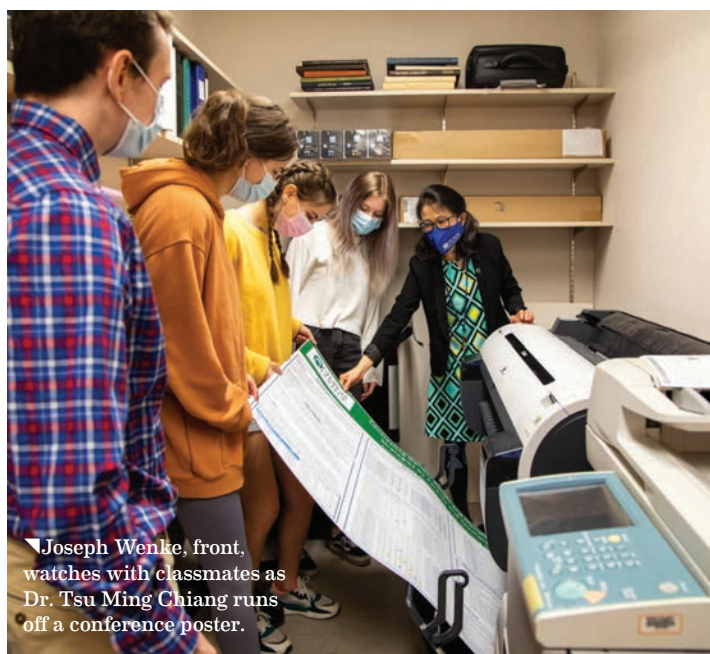
Her research students often perform higher than peers in graduate school and jobs after graduation. They find themselves ahead in skills like generating ideas, formulating questions, data collection, analysis and communication.

Beasley said he learned to collaborate in groups, listen to other ideas and interpret information. He's soaking in as much experience as he can before graduation and hopes to get a job as a professional counselor.

Kraby's COVID-19 research helped her gain acceptance into the University of Denver's Master of Counseling Psychology program in Colorado.

"Undergraduate research makes you a competitive applicant for programs like that," she said, "especially in psychology, where most programs are research-based. Not only conducting the research—but having the opportunity to present it at conference is a really big opportunity."

"This research not only prepared me for any situation I find myself in as an undergraduate," she said, "but it's also given me a lot of hands-on experience as I prepare to go to graduate school. I wouldn't feel as confident in my own ability and experience without it." 🎧



▼ Joseph Wenke, front, watches with classmates as Dr. Tsu Ming Chiang runs off a conference poster.



# Class of 2022:

Psych major researches cognitive and neuro-behavior with dog by her side.



▼ Van Boxel and Artemis.

**Name:** Mackenzie Van Boxel

**Hometown:** McDonough, Georgia

**Major/minors:** Psychology with a minor in creative arts therapy

**What made you choose Georgia College & State University?:**

My lovely sister inspired me to take a chance and come to Georgia College. I was really swayed by the small class sizes and the intimate relationships students were able to craft with their professors

**Medical Alert Dog:**

Artemis, a 9-year-old golden retriever, though we call him rose-golden because he has a little red in his coat. He's a medical alert dog for narcolepsy and panic attacks. He assists me due to my various sleep disorders. When I fall asleep, he either tries to

wake me up, get someone else to wake me up or lays on me for security. I often fall asleep in reaction to high emotions, stress, and exhaustion. This came to a head when I was a freshman and fell asleep in an alleyway at night. My mom decided I needed someone who could look after me 24/7 and Artemis was chosen!

**Biggest achievement:**

Proving to myself that I'm worthy of success. I've dealt with a lot of imposter syndrome in my life. When I was honored with the Euri Belle Bolton Award for outstanding research, it solidified that I am a competent and professional researcher.

**Most impactful moment:** For me, it would have to be the SEPA (Southeastern Psychological Association) conference. Being able to nerd out about research and interact with fellow researchers and professors in a casual way was, for sure, a highlight. It was also the one time I let Artemis off harness and everyone got to pet and play with him. It was a great experience for both of us.

**Favorite professor:** I would say the professor I got the closest too was Dr. Young from the psychology department. She pushed me to do my thesis and has been an amazing advisor over the past year. She encouraged me to be the best version of myself and treats her students with compassion. Her talent and wisdom cannot be spoken of highly enough.

**Favorite courses:** Challenge Course with Dr. Speelman, Drugs and CJ with Dr. Doude, Experiential Education with Dr. Turner, Inside Out with Dr. Liles, and Constitutional Law with Professor Lamparello.

**Research:**

I was active in research in my department, signing up for two labs—cognitive psychology and neuro-behavioral psychology—as well as doing my own thesis on rest. I've been a part of more than five research projects, between my two labs and thesis. In my neuro-behavioral lab, we focused on manipulating cricket and tardigrade behavior.

Through this, I learned how to design and execute procedures on a small scale with subjects that cannot understand reasoning.



Though frustrating at times, I thoroughly enjoyed it. In my cognitive lab, we focused on decision-making in humans. I learned how to design a study from scratch and work in a group research setting.

The research I'm most proud of is my senior thesis on rest and wayfinding. I've always been passionate about sleep research, and this was my chance to dip my toes into the field. The feeling of creating and running a study on my own was exhilarating and exhausting. I learned resilience, patience and the joy of seeing my research come to fruition. Unfortunately, most of the results from my various projects were insignificant. But just because the results aren't significant doesn't mean we can't learn something from them!

**What will you miss most about GSCU?** The community and relationships I have built within the program. I've always been sort of a loner. So, having this built-in community of like-minded people was amazing for me. I think I'll miss my professors the most, though. I've worked hard to develop strong relationships with most of the professors in my department.

**Advice for incoming freshmen:** Get in a lab ASAP! Not only will you experience hands-on research in creative ways, but you'll also strengthen your relationship with peers and professors. My lab mates like to say we were 'trauma bonded' from all the work we did. It really is a wonderful experience, both socially and academically.

It can often feel like you don't have time to do everything, and that's okay. Make sure to take time for yourself and check in with how you're feeling throughout your time here. If you are too focused on the grind, there may be nothing left of you by the time it's all over. Make friends, make memories and make mistakes. That's what college is for.

**Key to success in college:** Time and emotional management. Too often, have I allowed my ambitions in school to take over my social life and mental health. It can often feel like you don't have time to do everything, and that's okay. Make sure to take time for yourself and check in with how you're feeling throughout your time here. If you are too focused on the grind, there may be nothing left of you by the time it's all over. Make friends, make memories and make mistakes. That's what college is for.

How she's changed in four years: I've become more emotionally intelligent and more resilient. I've also learned to be kinder to myself. I used to cry and panic over every little mistake I made. Now I'm confident in my abilities and can navigate through tough situations in a mindful way. One bad test grade isn't the end of the world, and it doesn't represent who you are as a person.

**Future plans:** I plan on following my passions and going into the sleep research field. My long-term goal is to become a somnologist, a doctor who diagnoses and treats sleep disorders. I want to help people who have the same experiences and worries as I do. While there's no specific sleep program at Georgia College—the psychology program taught me how to be an effective researcher and how to pursue a professional career. They don't just teach you psychology but also how to apply it to your life moving forward, whether that be getting your doctorate or going straight into the workforce.



▼ Artemis, Boxel's service dog.



# FAUNA AND FLORA:



From bluffs and dunes to rocky cliffs and mountain peaks—this past summer six environmental science majors took multiple mini-trips this summer to learn about the state’s diverse ecosystems.

The monthlong study-away program was headed by Dr. Bruce Snyder and Dr. Christine Mutiti, associate professors of biology and environmental science. Faculty led students on informative day trips and longer camping excursions. Together, they studied the biogeographical imprints of forests, upper and lower coastal plains and vast canyons.

“Georgia is an incredibly diverse state and few students have had a chance to visit many of these sites,” Snyder said. “We rarely teach from this approach where we look at the whole ecosystem.”

“While there’s a big emphasis on understanding plant communities, we also brought in geology, topography, soils, fire regime and other aspects that make each ecosystem unique,” he said.

Ecosystems are biological communities of interacting organisms—vegetation, waterways, wildlife and human impact. Students got up close and personal with these worlds, going beyond lectures and textbooks.

During fieldwork, students had the opportunity to examine a variety of habitats and interact with plants and animals. They set up camp sites, sometimes in the pouring rain. They hiked miles of terrain, kayaked and cooked by campfire. They came across alligators, raccoons, squirrels and other critters and learned how rattlesnakes are tracked on Jekyll Island.

“You can’t really understand the connections within ecosystems—or even



# Ecosystems teach students about diversity *and* sustainability



between systems—from the classroom,” Snyder said. “Something as simple as ‘Where do we find or not find particular plants’ can’t effectively be replicated indoors.”

It was an ambitious adventure. Snyder said they “only scratched the surface” at 16 spectacular study-away locations:

- **Week One:** Students hiked among the pine and oak trees at Bartram Forest; the rocky shoals of Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge; and the glade at Oconee National Forest.
- **Week Two:** Students discovered the lower coastal plains at Moody Forest with its longleaf pine trees; Jekyll Island with its beaches, dunes and maritime forest; Cathead Creek, where students kayaked in tidal streams and old rice canals; and Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge with its swamps and marshes.

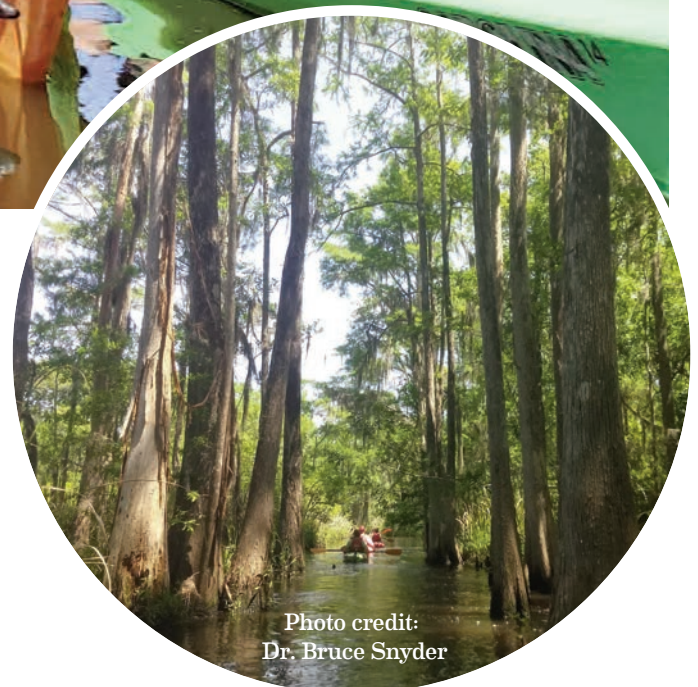


Photo credit:  
Dr. Bruce Snyder





▲ Six environmental science students explored eco-systems this summer. Drs. Christina Mutiti and Bruce Snyder in back.

• **Week Three:** Students explored the upper coastal region at Sprewell Bluff Wildlife Management Area; walls of sandy cliffs at Providence Canyon State Park; and the boyhood residence of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, now a national historic park in Plains, Georgia.

• **Week Four:** Students learned how fire is used in forest management. They explored Tallulah Gorge State Park with its bluffs and ravines; Vogel State Park in the Chattahoochee National Forest; Sosebee Cove, a picturesque forest between two mountains; Blood Mountain, the highest peak along the Georgian Appalachian Trail; and Black Rock Mountain State Park in Georgia's Blue Ridge Mountains.

Senior Anna Lippy of Lilburn said the study-away course immediately caught her eye when advertised last fall.

"It sounded like a great opportunity to get into the field and apply what I've been learning in class," Lippy said.

Her favorite location was Providence Canyon in Lumpkin, Georgia. The red and white cliffs looked more like portions of the American West. Students spent all day exploring the canyon. They saw salamanders, kaolin deposits and even old cars that were abandoned there.

Another location Lippy found fascinating was Moody Forest in Baxley, Georgia. The 4,500-acre preserve is home to 200- and 300-year-old longleaf pine trees. Students spotted endangered Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers on their trek. They could smell the smoldering debris from a prescribed fire, done to keep invasive plants from crowding out pines.

Students learned to identify longleaf pines from similar slash, loblolly and shortleaf pine trees. At several locations, Mutiti pointed out sourwood leaves for students to taste.

Lippy was also interested in coastal plain ecosystems, which cover 60% of the state.

"Subtle changes in topography can have a huge impact on the ecosystem, because this area is so close to the water table," she said. "These are mostly sandy ecosystems, so the sediment moves easily, making this very dynamic area."

Each trip was previewed with lectures and students did reflective writing. At various sites, they interacted with forest managers and park rangers to learn about potential careers in environmental science.

They ended the course understanding the vulnerability of ecosystems: How they're changing, what threatens them and what can be done to sustain them.

Sometimes ecosystems are converted for agricultural purposes. Neighborhoods or parking lots are constructed in them. Or resources like timber and coal are extracted from them.

"We saw the interactions of human development, climate change, invasive species, fire or the lack thereof," Snyder said, "and how these affect, threaten or endanger natural communities."

Seeing with her own eyes the beauty, diversity and fragility of ecosystems made Lippy want to continue studying and help find ways to protect the planet.

Study away helped crystalize what she'd learned in class. She created visual memories that help her recall information with ease.

"I didn't feel like I was in a class, yet I learned more than I do in a normal classroom," Lippy said. "It was an environment that cultivated learning and curiosity unlike any class I've taken before." 🎧



# Class of 2022:

## Criminal Justice major aspires to help others through career in law enforcement



**Name:** Chase Thompson

**Hometown:** Roswell, Georgia

**Major/minors:** Criminal Justice, French and Outdoor Education

**What made you choose Georgia College & State University?:**

When I toured here, I felt that I could see myself here. I felt that I could see myself studying in the library and hanging out on Front Campus.

**What inspired you to pursue a degree in Criminal Justice?:**

Ever since I was little, I have been interested in a career in law enforcement. I always knew that I wanted to help people and I feel that law enforcement was the best way to do that. A degree in Criminal Justice seemed like the best way to achieve my goals.

**Memorable experiences you've had during your time at GCSU:**

My time at GCSU allowed me opportunities that I never thought I would have. I was able to facilitate an event for 4H students from all over the country because of the classes I took. I was able

to get internships that helped me experience things few others get to experience, and one of the most memorable lessons I'll take with me from GCSU is to keep an open mind and to consider other perspectives.

**Faculty or staff members who stood out during your time here:**

Billy Copeland, Dr. Jeff Turner, Dr. Sara Doude, Professor Wilkinson, Tanya Darden, and Dr. Liz Speelman.

**Favorite courses:** Challenge Course with Dr. Speelman, Drugs and CJ with Dr. Doude, Experiential Education with Dr. Turner, Inside Out with Dr. Liles, and Constitutional Law with Professor Lamparello.

**Organizations and programs:**

- I always loved being outside and doing things in the outdoors, and when I came to GCSU, the Outdoor Center allowed me to continue going on adventures and enjoying the outdoors. The Outdoor Center made me decide to add an Outdoor Education minor to learn more about the outdoors. It even became somewhere for me to work, helping with trips on the weekends and working at the climbing wall at night.

- I was able to mentor two students at Oak Hill Middle School. I hope I've helped them and made a difference in their lives.

- I also worked in the library for the entire time I spent at GCSU. It allowed me to continue some of the interests I had in high school, like 3D printing, and it also allowed me to learn a lot about the resources that the library offers to students so that I could make use of them for myself.

**Plans after graduation:** I hope to be a police officer with the Gwinnett County Police Department or any other department that will take me.

**What will you miss most about GCSU?:** I will miss some of the connections I've made and the people I've met along my journey to get my degree.



## Mass Communication students learn about media and life in Demark

It took a study abroad program to Denmark to renew Michael Marcinko's faith in journalism.

A senior mass communications major and music minor, Marcinko was one of 14 Georgia College students who traveled to Denmark in May. They met various government personalities and engaged with Danish journalists. This enabled them to compare Denmark's public broadcasting network and Danish methods of persuasion to media content in the U.S.

"It renewed a bit of my faith in journalism, which has been almost completely eroded in the United States," Marcinko said. "Visiting different state-funded news organizations, as well as independently run organizations, seeing their differences and strengths, and noticing how serious they hold the truth in their reporting gave me a renewed sense of hope in journalism as a career and as a watchdog for government and private organizations."

The study opportunity was the department of communication's first abroad program since 2012, and its first to Denmark—considered to be one of the happiest places in the world.

Most people in the group started out as strangers but quickly became friends.

"My overall impression of Denmark is that it's a beautiful, quaint, clean and easy-going country with some of the happiest people I have ever seen," said senior Rob Trotter, a mass communications major with a minor in music.

"I would highly encourage others to visit Denmark after the experiences that I've had," he said. "It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime trip that I'm so grateful and lucky to have been a part of."

The two-week program was led by Denmark native and Assistant Professor of strategic communication Dr. Mikkel Christensen and Dr. Janet Hoffman, professor of rhetoric. This was homecoming for Christensen, who worked as a reporter for the Danish Broadcasting Corporation in

Copenhagen.

The group followed a challenging and fast-paced agenda—touring Christiansborg Palace, where the Danish parliament resides; walking Copenhagen with a boat ride on the Nyhavn Canal; meeting the editor of the Danish Broadcasting Corp.; talking with a musician and AIDS activist; visiting the Berlingske newspaper and National Museum of Denmark; and getting a photo with Mette Frederiksen, the prime minister of Denmark. They learned about 'spin' on news, what it's like to work with reporters, politics and relations between the U.S. and Denmark.

The group also toured the TV2 News station; a Danish minority newspaper in Flensburg, Germany; the Børneavisen, a newspaper for children; a Danish radio station; and the Danish School of Media and Journalism.

Students were expected to collaborate with each other to document their experiences through texts and photos. These will later be published online.

"Often it was hard to remember what all I did each day," Marcinko said, "because we did so much! It was hard work, exhausting and required a lot of walking, but well worth it."

"Having visited Denmark," he said, "I've been given a positive outlook on the country, on their politics, on their journalism, on their culture, on almost every aspect of life there. I'd love to visit again and plan on doing so in the future and I would encourage others to visit, if they can."

Junior Kaitlyn Holtz is a mass communication major with a pathway in strategic communications and a concentration in advertising. This opportunity was the highlight of her year, she said, allowing her to connect class lessons with interactions with journalists and politicians. Holtz's most prized moment was meeting Denmark's prime minister and learning new political perspectives. She also enjoyed talking with Brigitte Borup, foreign editor for Denmark's biggest newspaper.



"It was really eye opening being able to hear her speak freely about American politics. But most importantly, she wanted to hear what we thought. Seeing a woman in a power position like that especially in such a tough industry was truly inspiring," Holtz said.

"Being able to not just do the normal tourist things but being able to actually meet people working in the industry we are all striving to get into was priceless," she said. "Also, the first-hand personal experiences and the hands-on learning we were able to do with professionals in the industry is something I will never forget."

Along the way, the group sampled traditional Danish food like Danish meatballs on rye and pickled herring with curry sauce. They spent time at Christensen's family beach house and two nights at Løgumkloster Folk High School—a type of summer camp where young adults explore relaxing topics like mindfulness, board and card games and even how to maintain chicken coops.

Marcinko especially liked the folk high school, because he's always had a fear of "falling behind in life." It helped him realize life is not all about finding a career. He'd like to return to Denmark someday and attend a folk camp.

"It made me realize that life isn't a sprint, and it doesn't have to be a marathon," he said. "I could go and learn things that interest me. I could

do things for my own happiness, rather than my own success, and I could be in a community with people that share my same thoughts."

Prior to going abroad, the students weren't sure how Danes would accept Americans. But they quickly discovered that Nordic culture is friendly, laidback and unsuspicious. So much so, in fact, Trotter was surprised to see parents leaving babies unattended in strollers on the sidewalk, while they watched from inside restaurants.

"We were greeted by pleasant culture shocks," Trotter said. "Danes are very trusting of one another. This gave me hope in humanity and reassurance that not everyone has ill intentions."

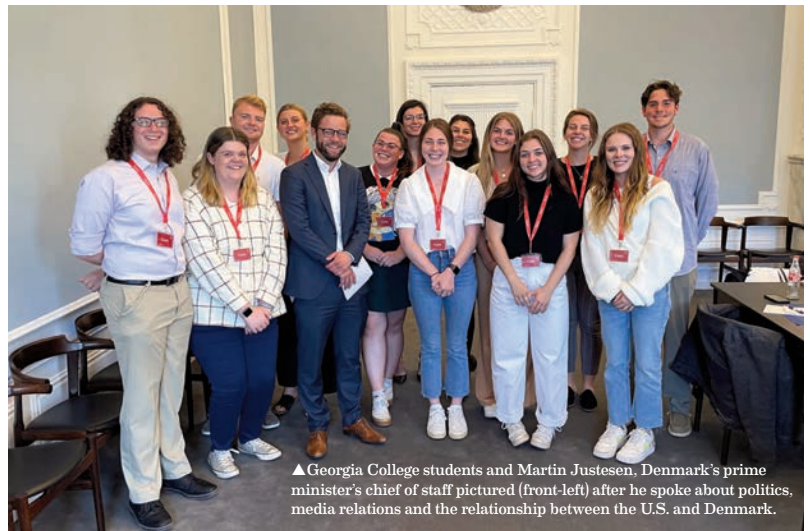
The study abroad opportunity was "an eyeopener," giving Trotter a firsthand view of the possible careers he can pursue in communications—something he is "extremely grateful for."

Christensen was delighted to share his home country with the group. As a former reporter for a consumer magazine, plus radio news and the Danish Broadcasting Corp., Christensen—in devising the program—felt his connections and experiences would offer a perspective his students were unlikely to encounter otherwise. 🎧



▲ The Prime Minister of Denmark, Mette Frederiksen, is pictured in the front left corner.

► Georgia College mass comm students at the Danish Broadcasting Corp. in Copenhagen.



▲ Georgia College students and Martin Justesen, Denmark's prime minister's chief of staff pictured (front-left) after he spoke about politics, media relations and the relationship between the U.S. and Denmark.



# Class of 2022:

## Geography major mapped Baldwin County roads



**Name:** Jhalen Reymoreno Billingslea

**Hometown:** Decatur, Georgia

**Major/minors:** Geography major; Urban studies, minor

**What made you choose Georgia College & State University?:**

I originally chose to attend Georgia College because my best friend from high school decided to go here. I stayed because of the academic quality.

**What inspired you to pursue a degree in Geography?:**

I chose geography because I always had an interest in maps. I chose urban studies because my degree will earn me opportunities in planning and development. Urban studies enhance my attractiveness to employers.

**Internship:** My internship is with Baldwin County Public Administration. I'm working in the Geographic Information System (GIS) department under the leadership of a Georgia College alumnus. Currently, I'm making an interactive web map that contains information on all roads within the county that fall under the jurisdiction of Baldwin County.

This interactive map will also have symbols for all road signs that fall under that jurisdiction, along with an attached photo of the sign. The map will save road workers and, hopefully, the fire department precious time that can be used to serve local people. Currently, when certain information is needed, my superiors must locate physical documents. If they can't, they may have to drive to a street to evaluate it. When this map is complete, it'll allow multiple departments to run more efficiently. We all win in this case, and I'm very proud of that.

**Favorite professor:** Dr. Oetter, because he's the main reason I was able to land a great internship.

**Biggest achievement:** My biggest achievement in college was making the Dean's list Spring 2020 semester, even though COVID-19 hit that semester.

**Activities:** Geography Club

**Research:** I've done small research projects on multiple geographic subjects. One research paper I completed focused on improving birth-rates in Japan. I found that Hungary had found success improving birth rates by gifting couples a new house in exchange for having another kid.

**Plans after graduation:** I plan to make some high-risk investments, using money from a GIS career to fund them. I'll certainly be working in GIS for at least a couple of years. I would love to live somewhere warm outside of Georgia for a while.

**What will you miss most about GSCU?:** I'll miss those first two months of freshman year the most. Everything just felt so magical, and I met people I will never forget, even if we don't hang out anymore.

**Advice for first-year students:** Two things—reach out to the people on your floor when you first get to the dorms and don't be afraid to say "hi" to people you recognize. Many times, someone wants you to reach out to them, but they may not know how. Be polite to your professors and participate in class. I had a professor bump me from an 89 to a 90 because I was polite and engaged during class.

**Key to Success:** The key to success for me was learning how to get through the first 10 minutes of an assignment you don't want to do. Those first few minutes, after sitting down to complete an assignment, can be quite painful. Drink a coffee and remind yourself that you can do it. It will stop hurting!

**How have you changed during college?:** I was wild coming out of Decatur High School. Now, I am morally a much more upstanding person. I have a much better work ethic and character. I am more confident in general.

**How Georgia College helped:** The geography department did a fantastic job teaching me the skills to be successful and employed in either the public or private sector. My coworkers at my internship were highly impressed. Thank you, Dr. Oetter, Dr. Sumpter, Dr. Fahrer, Dr. "O" and Dr. Rochello!



# Theatre graduate practices her craft at summer internship



Erden Mohl painted scenery this summer—exquisite, authentic-looking bricks and wood grains—for a production at Flat Rock Playhouse in North Carolina.

Mohl is one of more than 120 Georgia College and State University students and recent graduates that completed internships this summer. It was the perfect transition between school and the workforce, giving the theatre major a chance to build upon skills she learned at Georgia College.

“The challenge of leaving behind this community that I’ve grown accustomed to for the last four years was difficult. Graduating is so exciting, but it seriously took a bit to really wrap my head around it,” Mohl said.

“The huge changes and twists and turns of transitioning into post-college life were hurdles that I feel lucky to have overcome,” she added. “The internship helps by allowing me to learn on the job and also work and network with some amazing artists.”

Internships are on the rise again. Prior to Covid, more than 230 students a year did internships at 167 employment sites. They’re a great way for students to get their feet wet, learn from professionals and explore career options.

As trainees, interns gain confidence and valuable work experience. They also get a competitive advantage in the job market—if not a job offer.

About 95% of Georgia College students receive job offers at the end of their internships, according to Brittany Archer, assistant director of employer relations and internships at the University Career Center. The other 5% would’ve

been given jobs based on their performance, employers reported, if there were openings at the time.

“Internships offer high-impact learning opportunities where students can get hands-on experiences and both develop and improve the transferable skills that we place a huge focus on as part of our liberal arts mission,” Archer said.

“I’ve seen first-hand the benefits a student receives from completing an internship,” she said. “A huge part of student development here at Georgia College is self-awareness and self-promotion, and our internship program strives to help a student master those professional skills.”

Internships also play an important part in the GC Journeys program, serving as one of the five ways students can have transformative experiences outside the classroom. Other ways include study abroad, research, leadership and community-based engagement.

Mohl is certainly experiencing a transformation this summer.

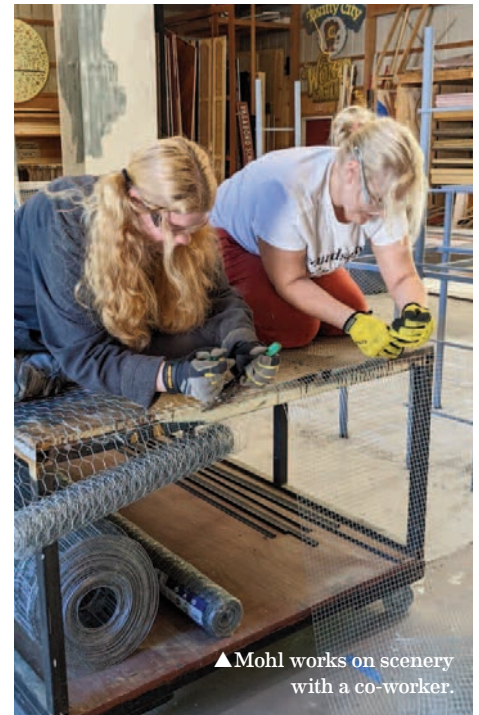
After prominent acting and directing roles in Georgia College productions of “Heathers: The Musical,” “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” “Ballet Russes” and “Ride the Cyclone,” Mohl can now add realistic set designs to her portfolio.

For Flat Rock’s “West Side Story,” she took scenery created by carpenters and treated them with various paint products to produce real-world effects. She created wood grains, bricks and other textures seen in cities.

“As an artist, it’s important to understand what others do,” Mohl said. “Collaboration is really the core of everything in theatre, so I felt I could be a better team member if I understood what other positions entail.”

“With scenic painting, I get to really contribute to what the world of the play looks like,” she said. “You get to transform the scenery into something amazing.”

Flat Rock Playhouse is a full community experience. Mohl lives and works in the historic village of Flat Rock. She walks to work and helps direct parking for performances. She’s experimenting with materials, like joint



compound mixtures, and learning new things, like spatter paint techniques. For her, the internship checks all the boxes.

“I wanted a collaborative and hands-on experience, and that’s exactly what I’m getting here,” Mohl said. “The caliber of theatre this playhouse accomplishes is astounding. I feel proud to be a part of it.”

Mohl is quick to say she wouldn’t be where she is today without Georgia College. The class of 2022 was deeply affected by Covid. Unlike other playhouses around the country, the Georgia College Theatre and Dance Department went on with the show. Many productions during the pandemic were filmed and streamed online.

“Theatre was heavily affected by Covid because it’s a human craft for humans, and Covid didn’t allow us to have human experiences,” Mohl said. “I can’t thank the professors at Georgia College enough for their commitment to continuing our theatre experience in whatever form possible during that time.”

Her classes at Georgia College heavily contributed to Mohl’s professional development. Her favorites were play analysis, directing and advanced acting. She especially thanks Amy Pinney and Isaac Ramsey for their “incredible and impactful” mentorship. They challenged and pushed her to grow as an artist.

Mohl applies everything she learned to her internship. It has reinforced her passion for all aspects of performance. 🎭

# FROM THE **BIG APPLE** TO THE **PEACH STATE:**

## INTERNSHIP TEACHES A NEW WAY OF LIFE



**I**n New York City, the wildlife is sparse and specific: pigeons, raccoons, squirrels, etc.

Can you imagine how surprised Elijah Lopez was when he traded his home in the Big Apple for a working farm in Milledgeville, Georgia?

“It’s so small, there’s not a lot of cars honking, there’s no pigeons flying around everywhere. It was a complete culture shock,” Lopez, at the time a senior history major, said. “I’m always ready for change, but it can be a little scary.”

Lopez chose Comfort Farms for his summer internship, the capstone experience prior to receiving the department of history and geography’s Global Foodways Studies Program Certificate.

The certificate program nurtures students’ education in culture and history through food and more.

“Students like Elijah embody the mission of Georgia College by cultivating a better understanding of diverse cultures and peoples,

engaging in community development and fostering greater social awareness,” said James “Trae” Welborn, associate professor of history. “They forge a well-rounded intellectual perspective that engenders cultural empathy and appreciation—crucial characteristics of good citizenship.”

Lopez was drawn to Comfort Farms, a small, veteran-owned, family farm and veteran rehabilitation project, after learning about Jon Jackson, its owner.

Jackson is a former Army Ranger. He started Comfort Farms to honor fellow Army Ranger, Kyle A. Comfort, who died during a deployment in Afghanistan. As a reservist in the National Guard and a member of Georgia College’s Senior Division Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), Lopez felt a personal connection to Jackson.

The internship at Comfort Farms introduced Lopez to a whole new world, where he met livestock like poultry, rabbits and pigs for the first time.

“Everything I’ve done for this internship, and this course, has been humbling,” Lopez said. “I’m from New York City, so I have very limited access to understanding what goes into food production.”



On the farm, Lopez assists in planting, care of livestock, harvesting plants and animal products, cleaning and manning the weekend market. “Instead of becoming just a historian, now I have management capabilities, the skills to work in a restaurant and I understand where food comes from,” Lopez said. “More importantly, it teaches you that you need to get down and dirty sometimes, and it’s okay if you mess up, because there are people willing to help you.”

“I’ve learned to never take something for granted,” he said.

Following his graduation, Lopez hopes to make active duty. But if that falls through, he’s got a job lined up to teach middle grades at a charter school in the Bronx. He’s also been offered a fellowship for teaching middle grades that would cover costs for a master’s degree.

“At Georgia College, I’ve developed as a leader and stepped out of my comfort zone,” Lopez said. “And as a person, I couldn’t be more pleased with my results. Since arriving as a transfer student two-and-a-half years ago, every milestone I’ve reached has made me who I am.”

His worldview has shifted, he observed. Now, he considers where he buys food, what that means for the community and what he can do to contribute. Nothing is stopping him from growing his own food and sharing that expertise with later generations.

“Jon Jackson said that if I have room for gray space, or down time, I have room for improvement,” Lopez said. “If you want to change or want something to be different, don’t be scared, embrace new possibilities.” 🎧 🎧



▼ Comfort Farms grow crops, raise livestock and serve veterans.



► Elijah Lopez at Comfort Farms.



► On the farm, Lopez helps with sowing, planting and harvesting hogs.



ARTS AND SCIENCES **NEWSLETTER**  
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