



Spotlight: Sampling of graduating GCSU seniors

With spring commencement season upon us—Georgia College & State University is gearing up to award nearly 1,400 degrees in the Colleges of Health Sciences, Education, Business & Technology and Arts & Sciences.

Here is just a sprinkling of bright students graduating this week and embarking on the world:

Senior psychology major Anna Boughton of Dallas, Georgia, knew since high school she wanted to be a therapist and help people.

Being a part of Dr. Tsu-Ming Chiang's Social Emotional Development lab at the Early Learning Center in Baldwin County gave Boughton greater confidence in her abilities. Students ran studies on emotional competence in children, taught empathy lessons and learned how to collect and analyze data.

Boughton also studied abroad five weeks in Montepulciano, a small Italian town in Tuscany. Traveling with close friends, exploring different cities and learning Italy's art, history and culture broadened her worldview.

Decorated basketball athlete and public health major Brandon Thomas of McDonough plans to pursue a master's degree at the University of Georgia and become an infectious disease epidemiologist at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta.

Thomas worked one and a half years at GCSU's Center for Health and Social Issues, assisting Dr. Damian Francis, assistant professor of public health. He served communities in Baldwin County and was integral in planning breast cancer outreach events. This earned him the center's Community Service Medallion.

Senior special education major Taylor Casey of LaGrange found what she wanted at GCSU: a small-class atmosphere. She was able to make friends and join many organizations that helped her grow, like the Council of Exceptional Children and Zeta Tau Alpha Sorority.

Casey worked with a teacher in Putnam County to create a service-learning project for middle school children with disabilities. They partnered with the Butterfly Garden in Eatonton to plant flowers.

She will work as a special education teacher at Richmond Hill Middle School, teaching sixth grade.

Music major Nicholas Koebert of Suwanee studied the violin and played in more concerts than he can count. The biggest lesson in college, for him, was conquering the fear of performing in front of large audiences.

Through his professor, Dr. Bryan Hall, Koebert was chosen to perform a movement from a Mozart Concerto with the Boise Baroque Orchestra in Idaho last summer.

Although he plans to continue playing music, Koebert discovered a passion in college for Christian ministry. He plans to pursue a career in cross-cultural ministry through an international Christian missions organization called Youth With A Mission (YWAM).

Other graduating seniors in the class of 2023 include 22 valedictorians from across Georgia with perfect 4.0 Grade Point Averages (GPAs).

The top five majors for 2022-23 were nursing, management, marketing, psychology and special education. Popular minors were Spanish language and culture, marketing and criminal justice.

Georgia College & State University will hold four commencement ceremonies Friday and Saturday, May 5-6, at Centennial Center, 251 S. Clark Street, Milledgeville. Receptions will follow each ceremony.

At 2 p.m. Friday, May 5, 291 undergraduates and graduates of the College of Health Sciences will receive degrees, followed by a 7 p.m. ceremony in the John H. Lounsbury College of Education awarding 327 degrees.

On Saturday, May 6, the J. Whitney Bunting College of Business & Technology will award 376 degrees at 9 a.m., with the College of Arts & Sciences at 2 p.m. awarding 425 undergraduates and graduates.

Keynote speakers include the Honorable Brad Raffensperger, Georgia Secretary of State, who will speak at the Business & Technology ceremony.

For more information see frontpage.gcsu.edu.



Special education major Taylor Casey of LaGrange, Georgia.



Public health major Brandon Thomas of McDonough, Georgia.



Above: Music major Nicholas Koebert of Suwanee, Georgia. Left: Psychology major Anna Boughton of Dallas, Georgia, with children from Baldwin County's Early Learning Center.

Chemistry Professor wins the 2023 COPLAC Award

Dr. Catrena Lisse, chemistry professor and director of Georgia College & State University's Science Education Center, has won the 2023 Charles Dunn Award from the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC).

Dr. Eric Tenbus, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, called the honor well-deserved, saying Lisse continues to be a "tremendous ambassador" for Georgia College.

"We're ecstatic for Dr. Lisse to have won the COPLAC's Dunn award," Tenbus said. "She fully represents the teacher-scholar model as a faculty member and has been a tireless proselytizer for science education throughout the region for many years."

"We are so pleased that she represents the College of Arts and Sciences in her interactions with the area's schools—whether running a statewide science fair or mentoring high school and possibly future GCSU students in our Young Scientists Academy in the summer," he said.

Along with the distinction, Lisse was given a



Dr. Catrena Lisse.

\$500 cash prize.

The award is given in memory of the late Charles Dunn, former president of Henderson State University who appreciated the role faculty play in student success.

In giving Lisse the news, COPLAC Executive Director Cole Woodcox wrote: "Your work exempli-

fies the value of attending a place like Georgia College & State University. On behalf of the 30-member COPLAC Board of Directors, I wish to congratulate you on this recognition of your exceptional work to advance students' success at GCSU. Thank you for making a public liberal arts education so meaningful."

Lisse got her Ph.D. at Georgia Institute of Technology and has taught at Georgia College since 2002, where she is heavily involved in undergraduate research and community outreach. Through things like the annual Chemistry Fair, STEMing into the Community and the Young Scientists Academy—Lisse works tirelessly to break down barriers that impede historically underrepresented groups from higher education and STEM-related fields.

At Georgia College, Lisse has also received the university's Inclusive Excellence Award and, more recently, the Bobcat Award for Outstanding Service to Students.

Throughout, Lisse has mentored more than 60 undergraduate research students.

Did you know?

Georgia College & State University alumna Anagha Ramakrishnan, '22, is set to engage in a yearlong cultural exchange in Greece as a finalist for the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

A journalist with bylines in the Atlanta Journal Constitution and CNN, Ramakrishnan will travel to the cradle of Western Civilization to explore the underpinnings of communication, research the roots of democracy and teach local students.

"Greece is the starting point for theatre, comedy, drama, politics, democracy and where communication really sparked up with Aristotle's theories of persuasion," Ramakrishnan said. "To be in an area where those theories and practices were born out of and to experience that firsthand will truly help me become a stronger communicator and a stronger storyteller, which is my ultimate goal."

Ramakrishnan graduated Georgia College in 2022 with a bachelor's degree in mass communication.

GCSU alumna and Yale assistant professor helps people kick smoking habit

When Dr. Danielle Davis, '14, came to Georgia College & State University, she majored in psychology so she could become a therapist.

"I always knew I wanted to help people in some way," she said.

Then, Davis discovered her love for research. The culmination of her undergraduate research led to several research posters she co-authored and presented at local and regional conferences. Her work was so impressive, she won the Department of Psychological Science Award for Outstanding Psychology Student three years in a row. Winning these awards validated that she was on the right track toward her career goal.

Davis' strong drive to research continues today. She is an assistant professor at the department of psychiatry in the Yale School of Medicine. She

oversees and conducts basic and applied research, assessing tobacco product regulation and cessation among youth and adults.

Davis oversees several research studies. On any given day, she could be writing research papers, contemplating new research studies and doing lab work.

"I love to think of research questions and find ways to answer them, which is a big part of my job," Davis said. "It's just fun to work on science that's actually being used to hopefully change laws to improve public health."

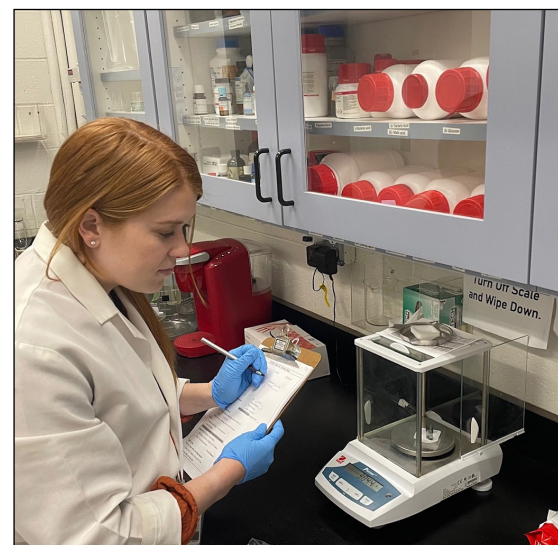
The U.S. Food and Drug Administration funds much of her work, which informs the development of regulations for tobacco products. The abundant resources of the federal government enable Davis to work with researchers from a

wide range of specialties.

"Collaborating with team members ensures our science is relevant and within scope," Davis said. "It also helps with FDA funding. I work on other people's projects, and they work on mine, which places many different experts on each project."

She's currently working on a study in which her team uses different techniques to motivate youths to quit vaping. If participants can abstain from vaping for multiple days in a row they receive monetary rewards. Plus, her team encourages cognitive behavioral therapy during that time.

"We hope these two things will replace the nicotine reward," Davis said. "This therapy will work ... (to) achieve long-term success."



Dr. Danielle Davis in the research lab at Yale University.