



GCSU earns A+ for prepping teachers in the science of reading from NCTQ



Student teachers practice the craft of teaching in Central Georgia schools.



The latest report from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) ranks Georgia College & State University's Early Childhood Education program among the top 48 schools in the nation...

NCTQ's 2023 ratings were published in "Teacher Prep Review: Strengthening Elementary Reading Instruction." Its grading system gave Georgia College an A+ for "exemplary coverage" when preparing candidates for Bachelor of Science in Early Education degrees.

"We're delighted the Council has confirmed our consistent efforts to provide exceptional reading instruction for the teacher education program," said Dr. Linda Bradley, program coordinator for Reading, Literacy and Language in the John H. Lounsbury College of Education at Georgia College.

"This national recognition verifies our strong focus on high-level teaching, the dedication of our faculty and the sense of community that's fostered here for student success," she said.

In addition to Georgia College's highly acclaimed early childhood education training, the university also contributes to child literacy through its Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy.

The center's key focus is to ensure all third-grade students read proficiently before entering fourth grade. Currently, only two of every five 8-year-olds are capable readers by the end of third grade, according to statistics at the center's website.

If students aren't reading proficiently by the end of third grade—a pivotal year—they're four times more likely to drop out of high school, as shown by an Annie E. Casey Foundation study.

The Nation's Report Card—issued by the National Assessment of

Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2022—showed 37 percent of fourth graders in the United States scoring below basic reading levels—a substantial decline since the pandemic.

"An estimated 36 million adults in the U.S. continue to find reading difficult and may never reach proficiency," Bradley said. "The way to influence change is through stronger reading programs and exceptional teachers throughout a child's development."

Literacy faculty at Georgia College are working with educators, administrators and policy makers to contribute to these improvements at local, state and national levels.

The NCTQ evaluated five components of scientifically-based reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. To get the coveted A+, a program must "go above and beyond a standard of adequate coverage."

The goal of NCTQ's Teacher Prep Review is to ensure all K-12 students learn from qualified teachers. The organization consults with literacy experts, researchers and educators to redefine how teacher preparation programs are evaluated and ensure they align with the most recent evidence-backed research.

For most children to become successful readers, NCTQ research confirms a need for clear, step-by-step instructions grounded in the science of sound interpretation and comprehension. If all students had access to properly trained teachers, a literacy rate of 90% could be achieved, NCTQ reported.

About 27,000 programs in 2,000 institutions are responsible for training the nation's 3 million teachers.

Being among the top 48 best programs in the nation "means our field-based cohort model—where preservice teachers spend a significant amount of time in classrooms practicing what they learned under the guidance of mentor leaders and literacy faculty—is working," Bradley said.

GCSU makes \$303 million impact on local economy generating 3,000+ jobs

Georgia College & State University's impact on the regional economy grew more than \$18 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. That is up 6.4% to \$303 million from \$285 million in FY 2021.

Numbers come from a new study commissioned by the University System of Georgia (USG) Board of Regents.

"This report highlights the vital contribution Georgia College & State University brings to Baldwin County and our surrounding counties," said President Cathy Cox. "As the largest employer in the county, our nearly \$65 million payroll of course contributes to the local economy. But the spending power of the university, combined with the dollars our students, faculty and staff spend in local shops and restaurants also generates jobs, higher incomes and greater production of goods and services in central Georgia."

"In addition to the economic impact of GCSU, we aim to provide cultural resources for all ages, educational and sports camps for kids, and continuing learning opportunities for life," Cox

continued. "The thousands of volunteer hours our students contribute to the community also enhances the quality of life here. Having a state university in our area is a win-win situation for everyone."

For every job on campus, twice as many were created off campus. In FY 2022, Georgia College generated 973 jobs on campus, while another 2,050 off-campus positions existed due to institution-related spending.

This economic impact extends to Baldwin, Bibb, Hancock, Jones, Putnam, Washington and Wilkinson counties.

The report was released by the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business.

Its companion study showed graduates can expect to earn \$1 million more in their lifetimes than they would without a bachelor's degree.

Data was collected between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022, to determine economic impact. During that period, USG's 26 colleges and



universities contributed more than \$20 billion to the state economy—an increase of 4.14% or \$800 million.

USG institutions created the same employment impact statewide as Georgia's top five employers combined, the study showed.

Did you know?

From 5 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 19, Georgia College & State University's Department of Chemistry and Science Education Center is hosting its annual Family Fun Night at Herty Hall.

Part of National Chemistry Week, a community-based program of the American Chemical Society, this year's theme is "The Healing Power of Chemistry." There will be a healthcare-themed lab. More than 30 science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) majors have volunteered to assist the public at 10 activity stations.

Led by the GCSU Chemistry Club, activities include science magic shows at 6 and 7 p.m., a blacklight maze, a periodic table of cookies and the ever-popular outdoor pyro-chemistry show—with dancing Gummy Bears and carving pumpkins chemistry style. Families can also make tie-dye shirts and watch the finale at 8 p.m. with exploding ping pong balls and gigantic eruptions of 'elephant toothpaste.'

Working with sloths and other animals in Costa Rica

Imagine being up-close and personal with Costa Rican rainforest wildlife.

Georgia College & State University senior biology major Amelia Pound of Savannah did just that. For two weeks this summer, she worked alongside veterinarians in Costa Rica, helping its native creatures stay healthy.

Pound was selected as part of a small team of students who volunteered to care for sloths, peccaries (pigs), kinkajous (squirrel-like creatures), capuchin and spider monkeys, macaws and other colorful parrots, parakeets and more.

Pound traveled with the Loop Abroad Pre-Veterinary Wildlife Medicine program—the largest pre-veterinary study abroad program for animal rescue and release in the U.S. She worked at the Costa Rica Rescue Center.

There, Pound helped an opossum with physiotherapy and taught baby sloths how to climb trees once they're released.

She observed various sloth ultrasounds, monitored vital signs during a peccary surgery, restrained a macaw to receive nutritional supplements and medication, calculated sedative dosage for a horse getting dental work and performed a necropsy on a paca (like a groundhog) to determine cause of death.

Pound spent the most time with the peccaries, observing their behavior and activity.

"I sat by their enclosure logging behaviors and performing extensive research on the species to see what type of enrichment would best benefit them," she said. "After implementing my enrichment activities including puzzle feeders, toys or

grooming apparatuses—anything that mentally stimulates animals or their senses—I did more timed observations. During my free-time, I visited them for several hours just to watch them play and interact."

Pound enjoyed bonding with her patients, who only understood Spanish.

"As with most domesticated, non-releasable animals I work with, I found that speaking to them in a calming voice aids with bonding," she said. "Most of the non-releasable animals within the rescue center were imprinted from hearing the voices of their prior owners, and all of them understood Spanish."

She plans to use these transferrable skills in her career as a veterinarian.

"I would like to teach aspiring veterinarians and encourage curiosity," Pound said, like "my professors inspired me."



Amelia Pound with a rescued macaw in Costa Rica.

What's going on in Bobcat Territory?

Visit frontpage.gcsu.edu/calendar

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

17

7-9 p.m. Jazz Jam at Amici in Milledgeville.

18

3-5:30 p.m. GCSU Soccer vs. Tusculum University at Bobcat Soccer Field, W. Campus.

5-7 p.m. International Fest on Front Campus.

19

5-8 p.m. Family Fun Night with hands-on chemistry activities at Herty Hall.

20

7:30 p.m. The GCSU "Music Department Honors Recital" in Magnolia Ballroom.

21

9 a.m. to noon, chemical monitoring training for state's Adopt-A-Stream program at Lake Laurel.

Noon to 3 p.m. Water Education Day on Front Campus.