



Federal Reserve Board Gov. Lisa D. Cook gives keynote address at GCSU

The Honorable Lisa D. Cook, Ph.D., returned to her roots and hometown in Milledgeville this past weekend, to give two inspirational keynote addresses at Georgia College & State University commencement ceremonies.

Governor Cook is the first Black woman and fourth native-born Georgian to serve on the Federal Reserve Board in its 111-year history. She was also a faculty member at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and Michigan State University.

"Dr. Cook has throughout her career consistently demonstrated a commitment to mentoring and advocating for underrepresented groups in the field of economics," said Georgia College President Cathy Cox, when introducing Cook at commencements for the university's College of Business & Technology and College of Arts & Sciences.

"All of Dr. Cook's impressive achievements would make her a prestigious selection as our commencement speaker this year," Cox said,



The Honorable Lisa D. Cook, Ph.D., spoke at two GCSU commencements.

"but there is more to the story that brings her here to Georgia College today."

Cook's mother, the late Mary Cook, was the first Black tenured faculty member in Georgia College's School of Nursing, where she taught for 17 years. Her father, the late Rev. Payton Cook, was a chaplain of Central State Hospital in Milledgeville, where a building now bears his name.

In addition, Cook's two sisters have ties to Georgia College. Pamela Cook served as director of Minority Affairs for more than four years, while Melanie Cook served as a Foundation Board trustee. Both were present to hear Cook's keynote addresses this weekend.

The sisters grew up with Georgia College as a second home, often visiting their mother on campus. They attended the Peabody Laboratory School as pupils for student teachers in the university's College of Education. Their babysitters were Georgia College students, and their Baldwin County teachers were trained at Georgia College.

The family also hosted dinners for international students, who intro-

duced the sisters to the world. Cook herself now speaks five languages: English, French, Russian, Spanish and Wolof, a Niger-Congo language spoken in a subregion of West Africa.

"I am not a graduate of GCSU," Cook told students. "However, my roots run much deeper than that. I was born in Milledgeville and, in many ways, it was Georgia College...that was my home...I grew up here, on this campus."

"My feelings about GCSU begin with immense gratitude," she added. "It was rare in the early 1960s for colleges to hire, let alone tenure, an African-American woman or man, particularly in rural Georgia."

For her family, Cook said, Georgia College represented the Civil Rights Movement promise that education could make the world fair and just for all people.

"For me personally, from an early age, GCSU, and the world it opened to me, was evidence that I could do anything in life and be anyone I dreamed of being, regardless of where I was raised or my race and gender," she said.

Cook congratulated the Class of 2024, urging them to find hope and meaning in her personal story. She said Georgia College prepared them well, and they are limited only by their "motivation, preparation and imagination."

"... whoever you are, wherever you come from, and whatever anyone has said about you and your capabilities," Cook said, "you can be anything and anyone you want to be."

"If you ever wonder what the future holds for someone like you—someone educated here in a small town in Georgia who then makes her way in the world," she added, "I am here to tell you today that you are not where you come from, and where you come from is not where you are going. The possibilities are endless."

For her many accomplishments, Cook received the highest recognition a university can bestow. Cox and Georgia College Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Coostas Spirou presented Cook with an honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters, from Georgia College.

Cook was named to the Federal Reserve Board in 2022 by President Joe Biden to fill the final two years of an unexpired term. She was renominated and reconfirmed in 2023 to a full 14-year term that ends in 2038.

Cook received her BA degree in philosophy and physics magna cum laude from Spelman College, where she was awarded the prestigious Truman and Marshall Scholarships. She and her sister, Pamela Cook, were the first two sibling recipients of the Truman Scholarship.

As Spelman's first Marshall Scholar, Cook earned a second BA in philosophy, politics and economics from the University of Oxford, England. Cook earned her Ph.D. in macroeconomics and international economics from the University of California, Berkeley.

Her teaching career began at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where she also served as deputy director for Africa Research at Harvard's Center for International Development.

In 2000-01, Cook was senior advisor at the U.S. Treasury Department of International Affairs. She was an international affairs fellow for the Council on Foreign Relations. She also was a national fellow and research fellow for the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

Cook advised the Nigerian government on banking reforms and the



President Cathy Cox (left) and Provost Dr. Coostas Spirou (right) present Gov. Lisa Cook with an honorary degree from Georgia College & State University.



Rwanda government on economic development.

In 2005, she became a professor of economics and international relations at Michigan State University. Under President Barack Obama in 2011-12, Cook served on the White House Council of Economic Advisers. She held visiting appointments at the National Bureau of Economic Research, University of Michigan and Federal Reserve Banks of New York, Chicago, Minneapolis and Philadelphia.

Throughout her career, Cook has been an advocate of advancing underrepresented groups in the field of economics. She worked several years as director of the American Economic Association Summer Training Program and was awarded the Impactful Mentor Award. The award recognized Cook for mentoring graduate students through AEA's Mentoring Pipeline program.

Class of 2024: History valedictorian headed back to the U.K. for a master's

You won't find a senior more involved with Georgia College & State University museums than Caroline Cole, a graduating history major and English minor.

Introduced to Matthew Davis, director of historic museums, at the Presidential Scholarship Competition in 2019, she's worked at the museums since her second day of college.

Cole will attend the University of St. Andrews in Scotland for graduate school.

"I love getting to meet all different kinds of people," Cole said. "We get people from all over the world and all over the country. So, I just get different types of people as well, people of all types of beliefs and types of cultures—that's been a really rewarding thing."

She started at the Sallie Ellis Davis House and worked her way up to being a docent for Georgia's Old Governor's Mansion. After working with the best of the best in museums and thousands of guests over her college career, Cole is more than ready to pursue her dream of curating museum



exhibits.

"Museums are a gateway for the public to look into what's going on in historical research," she said. "And I really like helping adults learn and discover new things—that's part of why I enjoy doing this job."

But Cole isn't just an expert on Georgia College

museums. One of the university's graduating valedictorians, she's also an active member of the Honors College and studied most of her English minor at the University of Oxford last year.

As a visiting student at Oxford for a spring semester, or hiliary term, she studied the global Middle Ages and Victorian literature. Regent's Park College, the University of Oxford college that Cole was a part of, invited her back to complete two more terms after her impressive academic prowess. That year she wrote 36 essays for Oxford.

"It was hard moving to a whole other country with all these new people who I'd never met before," Cole said.

From humble beginnings in Buford, Georgia, to Georgia College, Cole is now on her way back to the United Kingdom. Soon, she'll start a 12-month Master of Letters program in museum and heritage studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.



GCSU's first Truman Scholar, political science major Colin Hall, with criminal justice major Sydnni Adams at Saturday's commencement.

Class of 2024: GIS certificate helps geography major map career

The first thing everyone asks Tanner Adams when they learn he's graduating with a major in geography is "What are you going to do with that?"

But for Adams, the bigger question is: "What can't I do?" It boggles his mind more students aren't elbowing their way into the field.

"For a lot of people, geography reminds them of a sixth grade map quiz," Adams said. "But it's so broad. There are so many things you can do with it. The problem, like my professor always said, is 'You will never find a job called geography.'"

"Some people don't realize geography is even a discipline," he said. "But if it's what you really want to do, if you open your eyes to the idea—geography will apply to almost any job."

Adams should know.

The Savannah resident landed a job in February—well before graduation—doing GIS data work at Spatial Engineering Incorp. in Rincon, Georgia. In fact, several companies reached out to Adams after reading his resume on LinkedIn.

He's one of four students graduating this spring from Georgia College & State University with degrees in geography.

In addition, Adams earned a certificate in GIS. His knowledge of geographic information systems led to two internships doing GIS mapping for the Baldwin County Board of Commissioners.

The job involved a technical mixture of computer software and creative visualization in the art of 'cartography' or mapmaking.

"If you're lucky, if you manage to follow the

GIS certificate and get an internship and little bit of real-life experience, it puts you above the curve," Adams said. "Just having those opportunities and having so many people reach out to me has given me hope—not for me, but for my peers and anybody else interested in this industry because, clearly, there are jobs."

Adams knows a Georgia College alum who works as a GIS analyst in Colorado and another who works with FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"I don't regret it for an instant. Obviously, I've had amazing experiences here," he said. "Being able to work in GIS at a smaller school, I've been presented with so many opportunities. I'm so lucky to be where I am today."



Recent graduate Tanner Adams worked as an intern in the map room at the Baldwin County government building.