



GCSU stays No. 6 Top School, jumps to U.S. News' No. 4 Most Innovative

BEST COLLEGES

U.S. News & World Report

REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES SOUTH

Georgia College & State University, the state's designated public liberal arts university, gained strength among the elite top 20 universities in the Regional South in U.S. News & World Report's 2025 Best Colleges guidebook.

After moving into U.S. News' Top 20 ranking last year, Georgia College solidified its position in 2025.

One of the three selective admission institutions in the University System of Georgia, along with Georgia Tech and the University of Georgia, Georgia College is the state's only "Best Public University" to make the top 20 in the Regional Universities South category.

Georgia College rose to No. 4 "Most Innovative Schools" among public and private regional universities in the South. That's a six-point jump from No. 10 last year.

The university also ranked sixth for "Top Public Schools," maintaining its position among the top 10 public universities in the Regional South.

"Being sixth among all public regional universities and among the top 20 of all public or private universities in this wide territory of the South reflects the distinctive experience we offer our students," said GCSU President Cathy Cox.

"Our uniquely small class sizes, undergraduate research opportunities, vibrant campus life and exciting NCAA D-II athletics combine for a private college experience at a public-school price," she said.

Among all public and private universities in the Regional South—a category that includes 12 states from Virginia west to Arkansas—Georgia College ranked No. 15 overall, an increase from No. 16 last year.

For Undergraduate Teaching Programs, Regional South, GCSU rose one spot to fifth overall and is No. 1 among public regional universities in Georgia. To be ranked in this U.S. News category, universities must "have a strong commitment to teaching undergraduates instead of conducting graduate-level research."

U.S. News & World Report ranked GCSU on its list of Best Value Schools at No. 49 in the Regional South and No. 3 among public regional universities in the state.

"These rankings show the world what we already know: Georgia College students benefit from our contemporary liberal arts education and graduate exceptionally well prepared for their careers with skills like critical thinking, problem solving and communication abilities," Cox said.

Georgia College enrolled more than 7,100 students this academic year from 150 of Georgia's 159 counties.

In the last five years, students pursued top undergraduate majors like business, nursing, education, psychology, exercise science and communications, in addition to dozens of graduate programs and an unmatched pre-med mentoring pathway to medical school admission.

"Interest in Georgia College is at an all-time high," Cox said. "Applications to GCSU have grown 44% since Fall 2022 and the 2024-2025 academic year marks our largest overall enrollment ever."

For individual undergraduate programs of study, GCSU ranked as follows: No. 1 Business for Public Regional South in Georgia, No. 281 nationally; No. 2 Nursing for Public Regional South in Georgia, No. 149 nationally; No. 1 Psychology for Public Regional South in Georgia, No. 293 nationally; No. 1 (tie) Computer Science for Public Regional South in Georgia, top 500 nationally.

Georgia College students echoed the sentiments in the rankings report.

"Knowing that my institution is ranked makes me feel very secure about my education. I am quite confident in my ability to transition easily into the work force after graduation," said senior marketing major Abbey Ottaway of Flowery Branch, Ga.

First-year student Fnu "Sam" Samiya, a data science major from Pakistan, said rankings like U.S. News & World Report make an impact. "I feel proud to be a part of a university that is not only well-recognized, but also feels like home," Samiya said.

U.S. News publishes the Best Colleges rankings each year to provide prestigious rankings of best colleges and universities, as well as best graduate schools and hospitals.



GCSU Physics professor manages two NSF grants

Dr. Hasitha Mahabaduge, associate professor of physics at Georgia College & State University, is now the principal investigator in charge of managing two National Science Foundation grants totaling over a million dollars.

Recently, the university obtained a NSF EPIIC grant for nearly \$400,000. EPIIC stands for "Enabling Partnerships to Increase Innovation Capacity." Funded through August 2027, the grant supports Georgia College's future collaboration with Athens State University and Southern Utah University to foster interdisciplinary projects with rural industries and hands-on learning opportunities for students.

"This has the potential to contribute to economic growth, enhancing the reputations of the institutions involved and strengthening community engagement," Mahabaduge said. "The object is to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technology from academia to industry."

"This grant focuses more on green technologies, he said. "Our goal is to set up a new Institute for

Entrepreneurship and Academic Innovation to spearhead future projects."

Mahabaduge also leads a \$650,000 NSF S-STEM grant awarded in March 2021 to increase graduation rates of students majoring in chemistry and physics. It connects college education to STEM careers. By February 2026, 18 financial scholarships will be given to high-achieving, low-income students.

Altogether, Georgia College now has five active NSF grants. Others include: more than \$500,000 directed by assistant professor of biology Dr. Arnab Sengupta for mRNA research; nearly \$166,000 managed by biology professor Dr. Samuel Mutiti for research of mine waste using phytoremediation and biofuel energy; and nearly \$100,000 overseen by Dr. Kristine White, associate professor of biology, to understand biodiversity of under-studied marine organisms in the South Caribbean.

According to the science foundation awards database, Georgia College received its first NSF



grant of \$20,000 in 1975. Since then, the university has received a total of 17 NSF grants.

"Getting 17 in the past 50 years shows how difficult it is to obtain NSF grants," Mahabaduge said. "Out of those 17, only five were over \$100,000. Four of them are still active, and I serve as PI for two—our largest and third largest. It's a real honor."

Did you know?

Georgia College & State University dodged a bullet when Hurricane Helene passed last week—but its sister institution, Augusta University, experienced serious damage with many downed trees and powerlines.

To help, Georgia College faculty, staff and students chipped in to collect supplies. GCSU's dining and food vendor, Sodexo, also donated items.

On Saturday, Sept. 28, GCSU President Cathy Cox delivered food from Chick-Fil-A in Milledgeville with help from alumni and Chick-fil-A corporate board member Evan Karanovich, '12.

"We are happy to deliver comfort to our sister campus at Augusta University where the storm damage is severe," Cox said. "We are #USGStrong!"

Today, Oct. 1, Georgia College will deliver a truckload of non-perishable foods to Augusta University, along with water, electrolyte drinks, hand sanitizers and other necessary items.

GCSU welcomes Mike Cavaliere as new AVP for University Communications

Michael Cavaliere has been named Georgia College & State University's new assistant vice president of University Communications and chief communications officer, effective Oct. 1.

Cavaliere joins Georgia College with 15 years of experience in communications—10 at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida, where he currently serves as executive director of News and Media Relations.

He's been a journalist—both reporter and editor—as well as a university public relations specialist under multiple titles. He also worked in publishing and has written two books.

"Mike comes to us with more than a decade of higher education communications experience—plus news, journalism and creative writing experience, all of which will impact our ability to

tell the impressive stories of Georgia College in a more comprehensive and positive way," said GCSU President Cathy Cox.

Cavaliere got his Bachelor of Arts in English/creative nonfiction at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. He worked at Ocean Publishing in Flagler Beach two years, rising from proofreader to writer and editor, where he learned the value of storytelling.

From there, he worked for Observer Media Group in Palm Coast, Florida, writing for two newspapers. He served as business editor, associate editor and finally multimedia director.

Cavaliere has been at Embry-Riddle since 2014, first as a communications specialist, rising to digital managing editor and news manager before pursuing his master's in business administration

and leadership there.

He's written talking points and speeches for senior leaders, headed a team of veteran communicators, created databases, managed websites, overseen social media and successfully led that university's crisis communication during hurricanes and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cavaliere wanted to work in a liberal arts environment. He was attracted to Georgia College specifically for its tight community, diverse interests and big ambitions.

"Once I got on campus," he said, "it became immediately obvious how much people cared about their work, about this school and about growing together. Passion like that isn't always easy to find, but it's energizing and inspiring."



Mike Cavaliere is GCSU's new AVP for University Communications.

What's going on in Bobcat Territory?

Visit frontpage.gcsu.edu/calendar

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

1

5-7 p.m. Gabriel Sterling, chief operations officer for GA State Secretary's office will speak on "The Threat of Disinformation" as part of GCSU's "In Defense of Democracy" in the Pat Peterson Museum Education Room at Ina Dillard Russell Library.

5-8 p.m. Forensics Night's "Did Thunder Do It?" in GCSU's Integrated Science Complex.

2

Noon GCSU's Times Talk for "In Defense of Democracy" week on "Democracy on the Brink? A Global Update" in Ina Dillard Russell Library, room 241.

5:30-6:30 p.m. GCSU's Dr. Dana Garzelany-Mostak will give a free talk on Eminem's "Lose Yourself" song used by both political parties in A&S Auditorium.

3

6 p.m. The documentary "Lowndes County and the Road to Black Power" will be shown as part of "In Defense of Democracy" week in Peabody Auditorium.

4

Noon "How Do We Respond Today?" summarizing discussions from GCSU's "In Defense of Democracy" week with suggestions for future action at Allen's Market.

5

10-11:30 a.m. The 6th Annual Allison Ereth 5K run/walk at W. Campus Intramural lot, sponsored by GCSU's Exercise Science club and "Exercise is Medicine" initiative.