

>> GEORGIA COLLEGE

# Georgia College targets critical teacher shortage at statewide summit

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission hosted its inaugural Teacher Pipeline Summit at Georgia College & State University (GCSU) to address the critical need for K-12 teachers throughout the state. Organized by Gov. Brian Kemp, the summit tasked education leaders to design a plan to elevate the profession and attract new teachers to the field by providing multiple career pathways, as well as boosting teacher retention.

"We cannot keep hoping the pipeline will fill itself, because it won't," said Sen. Sonya Halpern of Atlanta, a member of the Senate Education and Youth Committee. "We need to be intentional about how we recruit, how we prepare, how we retain, and how we connect this work to Georgia's long-term goals for economic growth and community stability."

According to the job board Indeed, there are currently over 2,000 active teacher openings throughout the state of Georgia. Those openings create an opportunity for those interested in pursuing or advancing



Several Georgia state legislators attended the Teacher Pipeline Summit Wednesday at GCSU. From left: Dist. 67 Representative Lydia Grace, Dist. 9 Representative Will Wade, and Dist. 39 Senator Sonya Halpern.

COURTESY OF GCSU

a career in education, according to Dr. Joanne Previts, interim dean of the John H. Lounsbury College of Education at GCSU.

"Ensuring we have high-quality teachers is essential for quality K-12 education in Georgia and throughout the country," Previts said. "Teacher shortages have countless negative consequences, including limiting special education services, reducing school and extracurricular programs,

requiring instructors to teach outside of their fields of specialization, creating and compounding learning gaps, and necessitating larger class sizes."

In the past five years, Georgia College has prepared 1,021 new teachers — specialized across elementary, middle, special and secondary education — including 194 new teachers in 2024. That level of impact is part of GCSU's mission, according to GCSU President Cathy Cox.

"The quality of a state's public education system is a critical barometer in determining a state's overall success — the success of its people and of its business community — which is why it is vitally important to attract new, high-performing and

passionate teachers to the field," Cox said. "As a historical leader in talent development for Georgia schools, Georgia College & State University is proud to host this inaugural event, which should herald in a new and exciting era for educators, and students, throughout the state."

Several state legislators attended the summit, which also featured a series of strategic work sessions for education professionals throughout the state.

"If we want to address the educator shortage and prepare for the Georgia we are becoming, then we need a coordinated, fully resourced plan to recruit, prepare, support, and retain a high-quality, high-capacity education workforce," Halpern added. "We need a statewide strategy that's as bold as the challenge itself, one that brings together our data, our expertise,

our institutions, to ask and answer the hard questions."

The summit is planned to reconvene annually at other Georgia institutions.

"Today is really about what can be done at the local level," said Dr. Penney McRoy, director of educator preparation for the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. "All of these actions that are being developed in small groups today will inform ... a cohesive statewide plan for recruiting educators."

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission was created by the Georgia General Assembly in 1991 to assure the preparation, certification and professional conduct of certified personnel employed in Georgia's public schools. Its responsibilities include the support of recruiting functions throughout the TeachGeorgia.org website.

— Contributed

## LOVE

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Institute's "Reconsidering Flannery O'Connor," where he learned from O'Connor experts and explored the GCSU archives. During his time at the endowment, he published work on *Flannery O'Connor in Christianity & Literature* and the *Journal of the Georgia Philological Association*.

"My dissertation includes the study of late 19th and 20th century American Literature with a focus on ecocriticism and the American South. So, I am studying agricultural spaces and the way these spaces represent change and transformation in this time period in American Southern fiction and nonfiction," said Love. "Flannery O'Connor plays a huge role in that with all of her farm fiction and general themes of her writing and the changing nature of the American nation at that time."

O'Connor is just one of the authors featured in Love's dissertation, alongside other authors such as Mark Twain and Zora Neale Hurston.

"I've had experience in GCSU archives looking at some of O'Connor's materials and I was able to visit Andalusia Farm once during my time at the summer institute. However, this will be a focused period of study into O'Connor to see how I can incorporate her work and background with these other authors," said Love. "I plan to focus on material texts, explore

Andalusia Farm and the materials in the interpretive center and try to visualize the space she was writing about and lived in."

Love is most interested in how O'Connor depicts agricultural space and agricultural labor, which is why he wants to focus a part of his visit on Andalusia Farm itself. O'Connor lived and worked on the farm and completed the majority of her narrative work while living there.

"I truly am looking most forward to going back out to Andalusia to feel and see the space and interact closely with the staff," said Love. "I plan to investigate many different aspects of the space and the interpretive center."

According to Love, he has no plans to continue research on O'Connor after his dissertation but rather would focus on educating others based on what he learns throughout his time in Milledgeville.

"Once I graduate, I plan to stay in higher education and hope to teach American Literature and about my research. I started in the PhD program because I enjoy educating and being a teacher," said Love. "O'Connor will

continue to be a huge part of what I do and I plan to continually teach her in any classes I can incorporate her. She features prominently in the classes I've already had opportunities to teach so I continue to want to incorporate her writings into my teachings."

According to Simon, Love will be invited back to speak about the results of his studies.

"They [the scholars] give back to our campus community by sharing their insight. A lot of these insights are exciting. These are young scholars dealing with contemporary issues and people read O'Connor in different ways and different times given their lens, orientation, perspective, and the research they are able to do."



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LOCAL MATTERS

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# June 7, 2025

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