



Georgia College Retiree Association Newsletter



Note from the Chair

Greetings Retirees!

As the 2024-25 Georgia College Retiree Association (GCRA) Executive Council Chair, I am pleased to contact you using a slightly modified GCRA Spring 2025 Newsletter format. The format modifications in this issue utilize the University's branding guidelines where feasible. We hope the format modifications will enhance the visibility of the GCRA's deepening affiliation with Georgia College & State University and reflect our advocacy and support of GCSU mission-driven initiatives. University Advancement serves as our home department. Kelly Pope, Senior Director of Principal, Planned and Estate Giving, serves as our liaison.

The GCRA Executive Council (GCRAEC) has had a very active year thus far, working on essential infrastructure operations projects. These projects were initiated and guided by the dedicated leadership of David Muschell (Chair, 2022-24), completed in December 2024, and are being implemented under the leadership of the GCRAEC's designated Workgroups this current year.

I am pleased to announce that the GCRA will provide oversight for the nomination and selection processes of the Hemphill/Sallstrom (H/S) Award and will work closely with the University Advancement to ensure the Awardees' selected GCSU Student Organizations receive the respective monetary awards from the H/S Award Endowment. Our special thanks to Dr. Paul Jahr and his H/S Workgroup members for their dedicated efforts to delineate all the details of this Award process. Most importantly, we extend our most profound appreciation to Dr. John Sallstrom and Dr. Ralph Hemphill (posthumous) for establishing the Endowment designed to recognize the distinguished service of GCSU faculty and staff retirees annually.

Since its inception, one of the GCRA Executive Council's most ongoing challenges has been obtaining accurate and up-to-date contact information on GCSU Retirees. Thanks to the Communications Workgroup comprised of Cindy Bowen, Ken Farr and Artis Williams, we have a much more accurate and coordinated membership database. This database will need to be



continuously updated, but it is a significant step forward in assisting the GCRA in achieving its communication, outreach, and advocacy goals.

As you have seen from previous communications, the GCRAEC has made concerted efforts to encourage GC Retirees (and future retirees) to participate in meaningful events on campus. These events provide retirees with opportunities to reconnect with each other and the university's essential constituencies, i.e., administrative leaders, faculty staff, alumni, and students. The members of the GCRAEC participated in the annual GCSU Benefits Fair this past fall semester. GCSU employees could stop by our table, chat about our association, and ask questions about retirement processes and benefits. Additionally, President Cox hosted a GCSU Retiree Brunch in early December. The event was well attended, and President Cox shared updates about the University that were especially pertinent to Retirees and notable university accomplishments achieved during the academic year. It was so good to reconnect with colleagues, some hadn't seen each other since pre-COVID on campus. I encourage all retirees who can attend this annual event in the future!

I invite you to attend our GCRA Annual Spring Meeting & Brunch on Friday, April 18, 2025, at 10:00 AM in the Heritage Hall Reception Area and the Pat Peterson Room. We will dedicate the Hemphill/Sallstrom Award Plaque, recognize the current and past Awardees, and then hold the brunch/ meeting session. GC Retirees are invited to attend the Celebration of Excellence at 9:00 AM on April 18th in Russell Auditorium. The newly selected H/S Awardees will be announced at the ceremony. Please save the date on your calendar and plan to celebrate and connect with friends and colleagues at these two back-to-back events. Just a short stroll between the two event venues!

I have one last but essential item to share with you. Several current members of the Executive Council are completing their leadership terms. The Council has open slots that need to be filled and room for expansion. Please see the information below from Robin Harris.

I hope to see you at our events this Spring. Don't hesitate to get in touch with me if you have questions about the GCRA or feedback/news you would like to share at sandra.gangstead@gcsu.edu

Spotlight on History by Dr. Bob Wilson



J. Luther Beeson (1867-1943)

President of Georgia State College for Women (1927-1934)

Probably the most impressive memorials to exceptional faculty and staff are campus buildings named in their honor. In this and some subsequent GCRA newsletters, I will include sketches of the best of them. The beautifully restored Beeson Hall is named for J. Luther Beeson. Beeson came to Milledgeville from Alabama and in 1897 became professor of natural science. Until the late 1920s, Beeson was one of only two faculty that had a doctoral degree, having received his Ph.D. in Chemistry from Johns Hopkins in 1893. Over the years he taught courses in physics and astronomy, but by 1914 his title was professor of chemistry, his classes and lab were located on third floor Parks where the Provost's Office is now located. Faculty who had offices on the second floor complained of chemicals leaking down through the ceiling.

Beeson's solemn countenance, small round glasses and drooping gray moustache, belied his actual personality: he was gentle, kindhearted and endowed with a puckish sense of humor. The students loved him. Dr. Beeson served unofficially as President Marvin Parks' second in command, and, in December, 1926, when Parks was struck and killed by an automobile in Tampa, Florida, Beeson was appointed interim President. A search to replace Parks was undertaken, and the Board of Directors chose a distinguished former GN&IC faculty member named Ambrose Suhrie, who was then Director of the Teacher's College at New York University. Suhrie accepted the offer and was elected President, but in July, he rather mysteriously tendered his resignation, and so Dr. Beeson was now chosen as Parks' permanent successor.

Beeson, now 60 and not in good health, just wanted to stay as head of the Chemistry Department, but he dutifully took the presidency. He turned out to be quite effective, keeping



the college afloat as the country entered the Great Depression. Under Beeson, Parks Memorial Infirmary was built, Bell Hall was erected, the college acquired Nesbit Woods where Sanford, Napier, Wells, Parkhurst, and Foundation halls are now located. Also, of major importance, Russell Library was erected. However, when GSCW became part of the new University System in 1934, Beeson was uncomfortable that the college was no longer fully independent. Beeson owned some stock in the local Fowler-Flemister building supply firm, and when Russell Library went up, it appeared to be a conflict of interest to some on the Board

of Regents. In April, 1934, Beeson received a letter from the Chancellor requesting his resignation. Dr. Beeson stepped down and, in declining health, continued to teach chemistry part-time, nearly until his death in 1943. When you happen to walk into Beeson Hall, please think of the gentle old chemistry teacher and former president for whom it is named.

Holiday Brunch



President Cox hosted the annual Holiday Brunch Honoring Retired Faculty and Staff. In 2023, President Cox working with former chair, David Muschell, expanded the event to include all retirees. The efforts to expand outreach resulted in increased participation in 2023 and 2024. Attendees enjoyed reconnecting, a fantastic brunch and heard a campus overview by President Cox. Thank you to President Cox for hosting this annual event held in late November or early December.

Be A Part of the Executive Council!

Robin Harris, Nomination Chair, shares information about serving on the GCRAEC. As we expand our participation in university events, we need additional members to help plan and develop programs and information for our retirees and future retirees. You can lay low, listen, and chime in when something strikes your fancy, or, if you'd like, you can jump into a leadership role. There's a place for everyone! If you are interested in serving or have questions, please me at: robin.harris@gcsu.edu



Upcoming Events

April 18, 2025

Celebration of Excellence | Russell Auditorium | 9 AM

GCRA Spring Meeting | Heritage Hall and Pat Peterson Room | 10 AM

Website: gcsu.edu/retireeassociation | **Email:** gcr@gcsu.edu

Thank you to University Advancement for their assistance and support to the GCRA and the production of our newsletter.