



**OFFICE OF GRANTS &  
SPONSORED PROJECTS**  
GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY

## Office of Grants & Sponsored Projects

### Spring 2024 Issue

Dear Bobcats Grant Explorers,

Welcome to another edition of our Grants & Sponsored Projects Newsletter! As we embark on a new academic year filled with limitless possibilities, it's with great enthusiasm that we extend a warm greeting to our dynamic community of faculty, staff, and students dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and innovation through grants and sponsored projects.



In the world of academia, we understand that securing external funding is not just a task; it's an art form. As grant seekers, we are the architects of ideas, the storytellers of innovation, and the driving force behind groundbreaking projects that will shape the future of Georgia College & State University. Remember, each proposal we craft has the potential to ignite a spark of discovery, drive positive change, and leave an indelible mark on our academic landscape. Whether a seasoned grant seeker or someone taking the first steps into the world of external funding, this is our space to thrive, learn, and connect.

This issue serves as a beacon of inspiration, providing us with valuable insights and success stories from faculty and students who have excelled in the grant funded world in the College of Health Sciences.

Thanks for being an integral part of our vibrant and innovative grant seeking community. Together, let's embrace the journey of transforming ideas into funded projects and creating a legacy of excellence at Georgia College & State University.

Wishing you boundless inspiration and success in all your grant seeking endeavors!

Warmest Regards,

Kadian Leslie

Director, Office of Grants & Sponsored Projects

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## Check out some of the grants from GCSU's College of Health Sciences!



### A Word From the Dean

Dr. Will Evans, dean of GCSU's College of Health Sciences, says he is proud of the work that the faculty are doing through the grants they receive. Be that as it may, the most important thing for Dr. Evans is not only the amount of funding received but the amount of progress made in the community's healthcare. "Overall, we're trying to promote a variety of things in the community," says Evans. Along with the grant work Dr. Francis, Dr. Coke, and Dr. Kaninjing are managing, Dr. Evans highlights some of the college's community projects, including a mobile health clinic. Individual donors have contributed over \$50,000 for the mobile clinic, and multiple foundations are waiting in the wings for their turn to

donate.

"We would like the community around Milledgeville to say, 'We're better off because the GCSU College of Health Sciences is out improving health outcomes,'" says Evans. With the dedication that the college's faculty and students have been showing, it seems that Georgia College's healthcare enthusiasts are well on their way to paving a way for better healthcare in rural Georgia.

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### Dr. Sallie Coke and the ANEW Nursing Grant

Currently headed by Dr. Sallie Coke, Professor of Nursing in GCSU's School of Nursing and PI of the grant since 2017, the HRSA ANEW grant aims to train Advanced Practice Registered Nurses and midwives by providing them with substantial financial aid and curricula geared towards improving access to healthcare. With the funds from the grant, Dr. Coke hopes to improve healthcare in rural areas of Georgia, a state which is medically underserved in its general healthcare and maternal care, the latter especially for women of color. For this reason, students entering the midwifery program receive a full ride.



Of the 200 nursing graduates between 2019 and 2023, 168 were on the grant, and 85% are working in rural and medically underserved areas. "Those that are committed to public health, that's a real

calling for them,” says Coke.

The GCSU School of Nursing will expand the parameters of its training with the introduction of the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program in summer 2024.

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### **Dr. Damian Francis' Research in Healthcare Disparities**

Dr. Damian K. Francis, Assistant Professor of Public Health and Director of the Center for Health & Social Issues, has recently worked on two grants, one of which is still in progress and nearing its second year, focused on studying ways in which medical workers and researchers can better understand health disparities. Alongside GCSU's Dr. Ernie Kaninjing, Dr. Francis created The Undergraduate Cancer Health Equity Research and Training Program (UCHERTP), an effort made possible with a subaward from Morehouse School of Medicine. Initiated in May of 2023 with a starting fund of \$22,000 (a grand total of \$66,000, the rest of which will be doled out in subsequent years), UCHERTP is an

eight-week mentorship program in which small cohorts of African American students are trained for cancer research.

“This internship is really a research internship,” says Francis, “but it is building students’ capacity in research communication skills.” The need for the program arose from the ongoing concern that, according to Dr. Francis, “research involving or including people of color, not just African Americans, is not readily available. It is thought to be that people of color participate in research less because research is not done by people who look like them.” The next eight-week mentorship period will begin in 2024, a year in which Dr. Francis hopes to recruit more African American male students for the program.

Dr. Francis has also been busy outside of the classroom as one of four Co-PIs working on a grant awarded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. As part of the project, titled “Creating a National Consensus on Centering Racial Health Equity in Evidence Syntheses to Address Racial Health Disparities,” Dr. Francis studies logic models and frameworks focused on healthcare disparities based on race. Dr. Francis’ research is motivated by a central question: “Are there methods that we can develop or strengthen for researchers who are looking for interventions for these disparities in health?” This project, alongside the training for UCHERTP, is one of many crucial steps to reducing health disparities for minority communities.

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### **Dr. Ernie Kaninjing, Training the Next Generation in Healthcare**

Dr. Ernie Kaninjing, Associate Professor of Public Health and Public Health Program Coordinator, is in the second year of managing a three-year NIH grant focused on examining acculturation among sub-Saharan African immigrant men (SSAI) and how it impacts their health behaviors. Specifically, the grant aims to determine how researchers can intervene in prostate cancer

Dr. Kaninjing is not alone in his endeavors. Research such as this requires the assistance of colleagues with different areas of expertise. In addition to Georgia College's School of Health & Human Performance, Dr. Kaninjing received aid from GCSU's Department of Mathematics and Department of Psychological Science, and he also trained two students, Rae Brennan Walker and Kaitlin Van Voorhis, in behavioral research for the aim of reducing health disparities. The purpose of such training is, as stated by Dr. Kaninjing, to "make the research atmosphere more vibrant."



"Students are involved in this project so they can learn, so they can grow," states Kaninjing. Ultimately, Dr. Kaninjing's goal for his student assistants is to encourage them and others to continue the work for the sake of helping populations affected by health disparities.

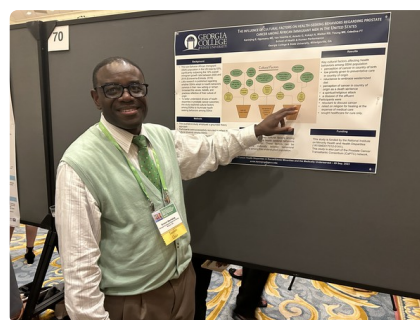
## Poster Presentations at the 16th Annual Conference On Cancer Health Disparities



**Dr. Ernie Kaninjing and  
College of Health  
Sciences Students**



**Dr. Ernie Kaninjing and  
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Sciences Students**



**Dr. Ernie Kaninjing**

### Have Questions?

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**Office of Grants & Sponsored Projects**

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