

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOMINATION LETTER

DR. COSTAS SPIROU, PROVOST OF GEORGIA COLLEGE

HOW THIS PROGRAM SUPPORTS THE MISSION OF MOMENTUM YEAR

OVERVIEW: HOW GC JOURNEYS SUPPORTS THE MISSION OF MOMENTUM YEAR	1
---	---

DATA/EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING

INCREASING AND SCALING HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES ACROSS CAMPUS	2
RESHAPING THE CURRICULUM TO ALIGN WITH MOMENTUM YEAR GOALS	3
FOSTERING PURPOSEFUL CHOICE	5
INTEGRATED INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES	7
REMOVING BARRIERS TO ACCESS	9
ASSESSMENT OF GC JOURNEYS	10

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

DR. DOREEN SAMS, PROFESSOR OF MARKETING	13
ERIN WESTON, DIRECTOR OF FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE	15
KENDYL LEWIS, STUDENT PARTICIPANT	16
GRACE KEARNEY, STUDENT PARTICIPANT	18

REFERENCES

REFERENCES	19
------------	----

FIGURES

FIGURE 1. UNIVERSITY OF INDIANA HIPS QUALITY STUDY- UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH (2019)	2
FIGURE 2. UNIVERSITY OF INDIANA HIPS QUALITY STUDY- STUDY ABROAD (2019)	3
FIGURE 3. AAC&U VALUE INSTITUTE ASSESSMENT- CRITICAL THINKING	4
FIGURE 4. GC JOURNEYS ESSENTIAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT (WRITTEN COMMUNICATION)	5
FIGURE 5. GC JOURNEYS ESSENTIAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT (WRITTEN COMMUNICATION)	5
FIGURE 6. GC JOURNEYS FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPATION	7
FIGURE 7. GC JOURNEYS HIPS EQUITY PARTICIPATION ASSESSMENT (UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS)	9
FIGURE 8. GC JOURNEYS HIPS EQUITY PARTICIPATION ASSESSMENT (TRADITIONAL STUDENTS)	9
FIGURE 9. GC JOURNEYS STUDENT PARTICIPATION (2018-19 v. 2019-2020)	10
FIGURE 10. GC JOURNEYS STUDENT PARTICIPATION BY HIP (2019-2020)	11
FIGURE 11. GC JOURNEYS GPA BY HIPS PARTICIPATION	11
FIGURE 12. GC JOURNEYS GPA BY HIPS PARTICIPATION GRAPH	12
FIGURE 13. GC STUDENT RETENTION (2017-2019)	12



**Provost and Vice President for
Academic Affairs
Campus Box 24
Milledgeville, GA 31061-0490
Phone 478.445.4715
Fax 478.445.5151**

October 26, 2020

To the members of the Regents' Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation Committee:

It is my distinct pleasure and honor to nominate the GCSU's Momentum Year initiative, GC Journeys, for the 2021 Regents Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation. The GC Journeys program enhances the liberal arts mission of Georgia College by infusing the curriculum with a series of extra- and co-curricular experiences that serve as a springboard for our students to explore career pathways, engage with local and global communities, develop leadership skills, and cultivate an academic mindset. Through these experiences, GC students acquire the focus and academic skills that position them for success during their time in college and beyond. In this regard, the goals set forth for the GC Journeys program are in harmonious alignment with the strategies set forth for the Momentum Year. The portfolio that follows documents the practices and pedagogies that have transformed our institution as well as those who teach and learn within it.

Purposeful choice lies at the center of the GC Journeys program. All students participate in three high-impact practices (HIPs) that are embedded into their degree program, but the other two the student chooses in consultation with their advisor. This flexibility affords the students the opportunity to select HIPs that most closely align with their personal and professional interests and long-term career goals. Whether a study abroad opportunity, internship, or undergraduate research project, engagement with these HIPs has had a profound and enduring impact on our students, building their knowledge and skills, but also expanding their world view, and cultivating a spirit of empathy, compassion, and a desire to build a better world.

Two opportunities that students receive as part of their GC education lay the foundation for future success: mentored undergraduate research and the common experience of the GC1Y.

Between 2019–2020, 42.7% of GC undergraduate students participated in mentored undergraduate research. Many GC faculty have co-authored publications and other creative work in collaboration with students. Working alongside their sociology professor, one group of students initiated a study on high school counselling and the ways in which the student-counsellor dyad influences the college application process. Through this project, which required the coalescence of essential skills such as community-based learning, quantitative literacy and problem solving, the students acquired a better understanding of how educational institutions and academic professionals can shape the students' engagement with learning and future career paths. In publishing this work, the students joined a larger dialogue regarding trends in higher education in the 21st-century, now with more confidence in their own roles as advocates.

While undergraduate research is one of several HIPs offered, all GC students enroll in a GC1Y, distinctive GC courses that cultivate critical thinking and global perspectives through a variety of subjects and themes from historical, sociology, philosophical, educational, or artistic perspectives. For example, in "Monsters and Machines" students make transcultural and transhistorical connections across disciplines as they explore the concept of the uncanny as it affects psychology, science, literature, and media studies. The course "Into the Wilderness" offers students the opportunity to study wilderness philosophy

and then apply this knowledge to a self-selected case study of a problem/conflict within a wilderness area. As part of the course, the students hold meetings/interviews with various stakeholders, including local citizens, advocacy groups, politicians, and government employers, thus drawing connections between theory and practice in a real-world context that is meaningful to them.

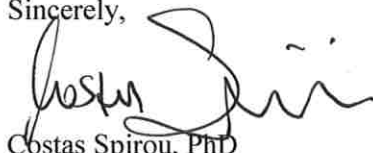
The GC Journeys program at Georgia College has a proven record of success. Since the inauguration of the program in 2017 and the attendant redesign of our core curriculum, our four-year graduation rate improved from 48.61% to 51.2%, but we have also achieved other significant benchmarks of success. Since 2017, two students have won the Boren award, five were Fulbright recipients, one received the Marshall Award, five earned Newman Civic Fellowships, and one student was awarded an NSF fellowship.

In many instances, the students' first-year experiences help them in plotting the course for their next three college years. A first-year music student participated in a study abroad program in the Czech Republic with the GC Jazz Band to complete one of his HIPs. During this time, he developed an interest in the Czech system for music and arts education. This first experience with global learning had a lasting impact on him, so when he decided to apply for a Fulbright in his senior year, he already had a plan in place for where he wished to go. In spring 2020 the student was named a Fulbright finalist.

Drawing on her studies as a psychology and economics double major and the leadership skills she cultivated during her time in the first-year leadership program, one student participated in the GC-in-DC internship program, where she was awarded an internship at Zero Hunger, a non-profit that researches food insecurity. This experience pointed the student toward her future career goal of earning a master's degree in public policy. In her junior year, this student was named a Truman Scholar Finalist.

Georgia College is extremely pleased with the impacts of GC Journeys. We hope that our application demonstrates just how much GC Journeys has changed the educational experience for our students. As our internal and external assessments affirm, Georgia College is graduating students who are thoughtful leaders, critical thinkers, and global-informed citizens with the requisite knowledge and mindset necessary to set them on a path for future success. The first year-programming we offer aligns with the Momentum Year strategies as well as the Essential Learning Outcomes and liberal arts mission of our institution and it is clear we have a bright future ahead. It is for these reason that I'm excited to offer my complete support for the GC Journeys program for the 2021 Regents Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation. Thank you for considering this nomination.

Sincerely,



Costas Spirou, PhD

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Overview: How the GC Journeys Program Supports the Mission of Momentum Year

Momentum Year at Georgia College started when the Provost formed the GC Momentum Year committee with representation from all around the university (faculty and staff from each administrative unit), which led to campus-wide conversations and town halls. Ultimately, while most GC students were taking 15 hours each semester, and the institution was not offering co-requisite courses, there were opportunities to improve. The most pressing needs that emerged were an increase engagement opportunities, support for innovative pedagogies to guide students through their educational journey, and the need to re-align the curriculum. The result of such widespread campus engagement was ***GC Journeys***, a plan that integrated the Momentum Year principles with our liberal arts mission. This plan has two distinct parts.

At the heart of GC Journeys is fostering purposeful choice, emphasizing high-impact practices for our students. GC sought to deepen student engagement by increasing and scaling high-impact practices across the campus. The campus decided all students would undergo five high-impact practices during their degree program: three would be embedded into their degree (first year experience, career milestones, and capstone), and the other two would be chosen by the students through purposeful advising. For faculty, this emphasis on high-impact practices meant integrating engaging pedagogies into curricular experiences.

The second part of GC Journeys is an emphasis on curriculum, starting with first- and second-year students. The university decided to align each course in the core curriculum with an essential skill (from AAC&U's Essential Learning Outcomes). These skills, which AAC&U and work force research have identified as integral for a 21st-century education, include a focus on quantitative literacy, critical thinking, teamwork, global learning, and problem solving, among others.

GC's Momentum Year plan is embedded across the campus, which has led to major strategic investments from Georgia College. These include restructuring parts of Academic Affairs to streamline Momentum Year efforts (centralizing advising), creating an Office of First-Year Experience, hiring as Associate Provost for Transformative Learning, and creating a GC Journeys budget line to support and incentivize participation in Momentum Year activities. Georgia College has heavily invested in student success, and while GC Journeys is ambitious, especially as a non-QEP initiative, it has been extremely successful. This award packet will elaborate on some of the successes of GC Journeys. These include:

- Improved retention rate since the start of GC Journeys—2017, 2018, 2019 (see Figure 13).
- Increased the GPA of students participating in GC Journeys (see Figure 11).
- Integrated Momentum Year into the Strategic Plan.
- Expanded professional development for faculty in the form of workshops, informational sessions, and external professional development opportunities (see Figure 4).

- Funded for GC Journeys mini-grants to support faculty leading these experiences.
- Increased participation in high-impact practices across campus (see Figure 9).
- Increased the quality of our high-impact practices.
 - Undergraduate Research program was named a finalist for the CUR AURA award
- Enhanced the core curriculum through essential skills.
 - Led to gains in critical thinking.

Increasing and Scaling High-Impact Practices Across Campus

Students who undertake multiple HIPs have increased rates of graduation and retention, as well as demonstrated post-collegiate success. This is especially true for students from underserved backgrounds. According to Ashley Finney and Tia McNair’s *Assessing Underserved Students Engagement in High-Impact Practices* (2013), the average college student completes 1.3 HIPs during their college career. In GC Journeys, students complete 5 High-Impact Practices (HIPs) during their 4 years at college, which is 3x the national average, all starting with a robust First-Year Experience. Ultimately, what sets GC Journeys apart is the level of student engagement and faculty buy-in across departments.

At GC, Momentum Year has been a team effort. Each department submitted a GC Journeys plan of how they would integrate HIPs into their curriculum, this was faculty-driven. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) worked with faculty on course development. Meanwhile, the Director of GC Journeys worked with each department on this plan to ensure that all students have an embedded capstone experience. The Associate Provost and the Registrar worked closely with department chairs to create a curricular ‘tagging’ system. For a HIP to “count,” it must receive a “course tag,” and to receive a tag, it must meet specific criteria. To help, GC Journeys created resources for faculty and chairs to work together to assure the experiences are “high-impact.”

In Fall 2019, GC participated in Indiana University’s HIPs Quality study, which included 58 institutions and 25,155 respondents in order to examine the quality of HIPs and offer comparisons with national peers. GC (N=453) found that the HIPs we offered were meeting, and sometimes exceeding, national peers. The below tables (Figures 1 & 2) show GC vs. the national peers, where + stands for an emphasis on the high-impact practice criteria, and ++ stands for a strong emphasis on the category.

Undergraduate Research

	High experiences for performance	Demand time & effort	Substantive interaction w/faculty & peers	They help students engage across differences	They provide students with rich feedback	Structured opportunity to reflect & integrate	Opportunity to apply & test learning in new situations	Public demonstration of competence
National	++	++	++		+	+	++	++
GC	++	++	++		+	++	++	++

Figure 1. University of Indiana HIPs Quality Study - Undergraduate Research, 2019

Study Abroad								
	High experiences for performance	Demand time & effort	Substantive interaction w/faculty & peers	They help students engage across differences	They provide students with rich feedback	Structured opportunity to reflect & integrate	Opportunity to apply & test learning in new situations	Public demonstration of competence
National	+	+	+	++	+	++	+	
GC	++		++	++		++	++	

Figure 2. University of Indiana HIPs Quality Study – Study Abroad, 2019

While GC's HIPs Quality results confirmed the effectiveness of our HIPs, our recent National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) results emphasize the impact that HIPs are having on GC students. GC's incoming first-year students (n=226) show no significant difference when compared to other students at University System of Georgia (USG) institutions, GC's comparator peers, and NSSE 2020 peers. However, GC Seniors (n=205) exceeded the USG, comparator peers, and the NSSE 2020 national means in *Collaborative Learning* and *Student-Faculty Interaction*, and also exceeded its comparator peers and NSSE 2020 national mean in the areas of *Supportive Environment*, *Reflective & Integrated Learning*, and *Discussions with Diverse Others*. Additionally, both our first-year and senior results show that overall participation in HIPs at GC exceeds all 3 peer groups. GC's NSSE data shows how our students come on par with our peers, but leave excelling in five different categories. Thus, the transformative nature of GC Journeys. Combined, these two external assessments show the success of GC's Momentum Year efforts—our high-impact practices are readily available for students, are on par or exceeding the national averages in quality, and are making a difference in the students' educational experience.

Reshaping the Curriculum to Align with Momentum Year Goals

The GC community also embraced the opportunity to use Momentum Year to help increase retention, while making our core more applicable for 21st-century students. This is why it was determined that one of the best ways to support student success was to align our core curriculum with the AAC&U Essential Learning outcomes.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness has worked with individual departments on curricular alignment. Faculty from each corresponding discipline were asked to decide which AAC&U Essential Outcome was best reflected in each of their core courses. Rubrics were created to

reflect both the student learning outcomes for the course's area and the AAC&U outcomes for the course. As a result, GC students will take core courses that embed Essential Skills such as written communication, critical thinking, global learning, inquiry and analysis, ethical reasoning, and quantitative literacy.

To support faculty who incorporate these skills into their courses, the Center for Teaching and Learning hosts a variety of workshops each semester aimed at the Essential Skills. All department chairs emphasize the importance of these courses for faculty. Our external assessments of these essential skills with the AAC&U Value Rubric have been helpful. In a recent example (see Figure 3), GC assessed Critical Thinking for first-year students, via an external assessment, by submitting 114 artifacts from GC1Y courses to the AAC&U Value Institute. Overall, we were extraordinarily pleased with the results. They showed students exiting the course exceeding first-year target milestones. Largely, our students are demonstrating critical thinking skills at the 2nd and 3rd year levels, with 3% of our students scoring at the Capstone mark on their explanation of issues. This external assessment is another example of the effectiveness of our core alignment with these essential skills.

Critical Thinking (AAC&U Value Institute)

Metric	% of students at Capstone	% of students at Milestones 2 & 3	% of students at Milestones 1
<i>Explanation of Issues*</i>	3%	88%	9%
<i>Evidence*</i>	0%	83%	17%
<i>Influence of Context and Assumptions</i>	0%	68%	32%
<i>Students Position</i>	0%	74%	26%
<i>Conclusions & Related Outcomes*</i>	0%	80%	20%

Figure 3. AAC&U Value Institute Assessment- Critical Thinking (First-Year Experience)

Internally, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness assesses and reports on the Essential Skills in the Core Curriculum at GC. The results have been extremely pleasing so far. For example, in the skill of Written Communication, the majority of our students are either progressing, target, or mastery (Figure 4). At the same time, largely only 2% of students did not meet the target benchmarks. Another example of an important skill emphasized in GC Journeys' core redesign, Quantitative Literacy, demonstrates an overall positive picture; however, even though the majority of students meet the expected benchmarks, 14% do not meet expectations and 9% are developing (Figure 5).

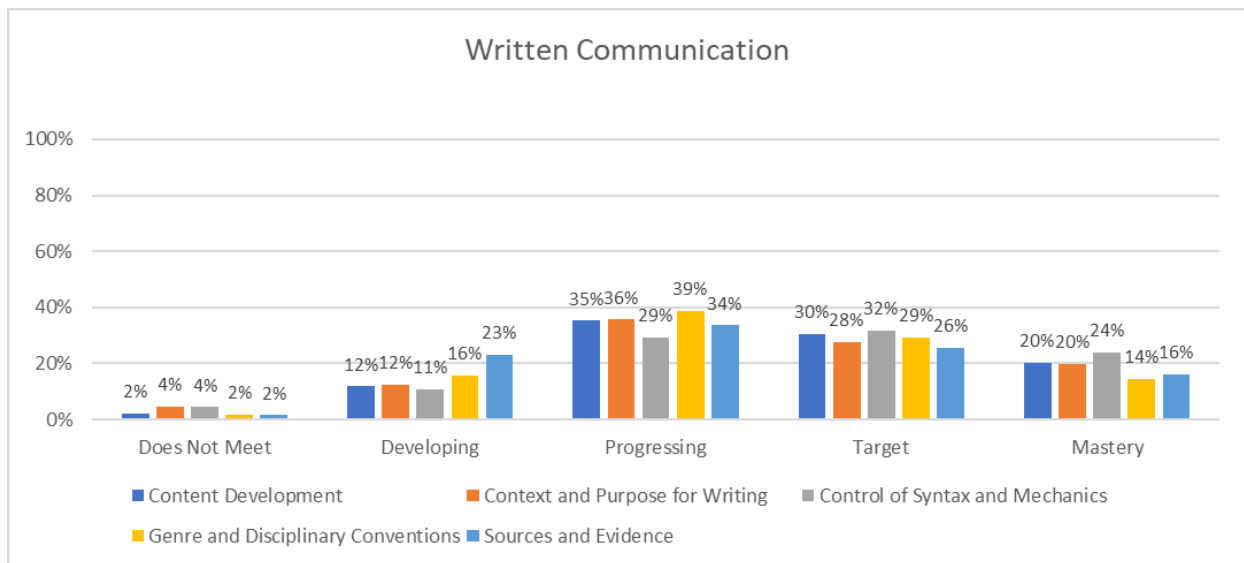


Figure 4. GC Journeys Essential Skills Assessment (Written Communication)

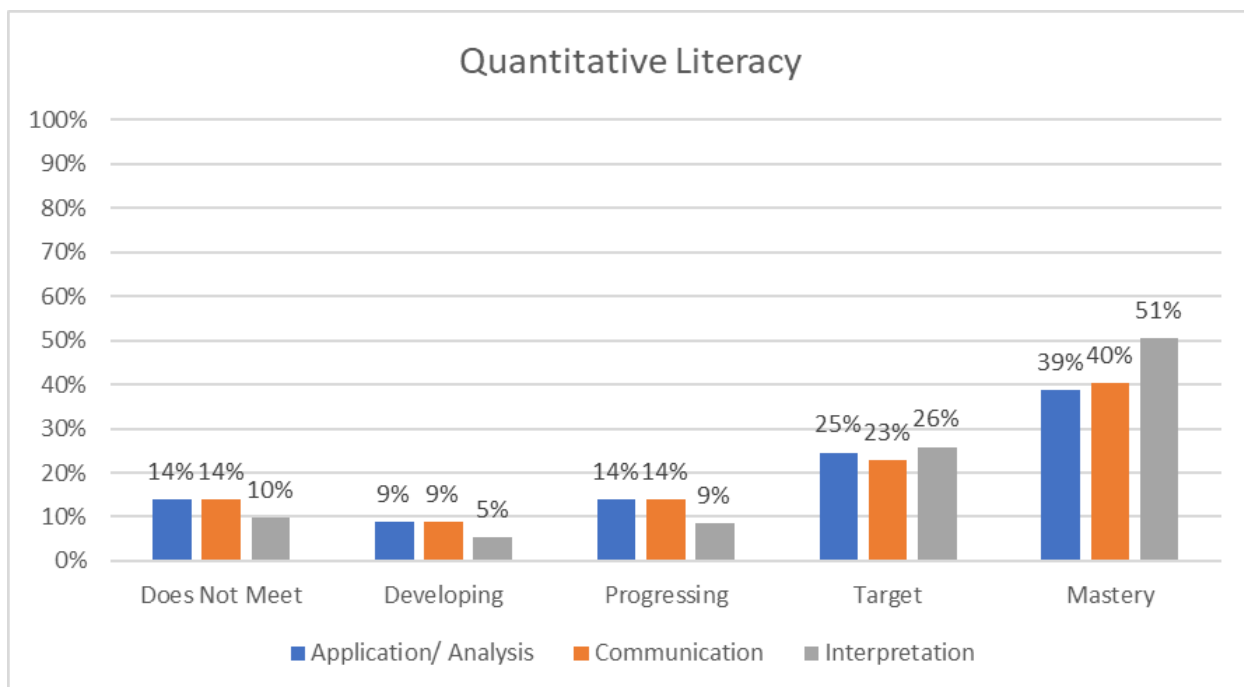


Figure 5. GC Journeys Essential Skills Assessment (Quantitative Literacy)

Fostering Purposeful Choice

Helping students make purposeful choices, especially through advising, emerged as an important component of GC Journeys. In order to support students making a purposeful choice, GC decided to centralize academic advising, moving it away from a decentralized faculty-

advising model (professional advisors had previously only worked with undeclared students). Advisors have become a “touch point” for GC Journeys, through both purposeful advising and the First-Year Experience. The advisors create a degree map and help students decide which high-impact practices they will plan to take during their time at GC. During advising meetings, advisors also ask strategic questions about GC Journeys and keep track of student responses in their advising notes. Finally, students submit a GC Journeys assignment in their First-Year Academic Seminar course and can track their own progress in completing high-impact practices through Degree Works.

The First-Year Experience at GC is now a robust experience which includes a First-Year Academic Seminar (FYAS), which is an orientation-style, one-hour seminar in which students are onboarded for GC Journeys and student life at GC. Through this seminar, students form relationships with their academic advisors. Students also learn about productive academic mindset and sense of belonging in this seminar, which is why it is where our students take the Mindset Assessment (pre and post).

In Fall 2019, our new Office of First-Year Experience created ‘First-Year Guides,’ which are peer mentors embedded in First-Year Academic Seminars. These guides, largely sophomores and juniors, are assigned to First-Year Academic Seminar sections, where they facilitate activities in class, lead FYE student experiences, run separate "GroupMe" accounts to communicate with students, distribute weekly personalized newsletters, submit weekly reflections, and meet individually with 7–10 students each week. The First-Year Guides offer peer assistance/mentoring for first year students. These 16 students attend first-year academic seminar (FYAS) each week.

In addition, the First-Year Experience at GC includes GC1Y, a 3-hour interdisciplinary course (Area B) led by faculty teaching on a topic of interest. Some popular GC1Y sections include: *Sex, Drugs, and Economics*, which offers an introduction to economics and the principles of the black market; *Monsters and Machines*, where students make transcultural and transhistorical connections across disciplines as they explore the concepts in psychology, science, literature, and media studies; *Fantastic Beasts*, a course which is taught by Biology faculty and explores real world (and fictional) fantastic beasts; and *Utopia and Dystopia*. All First-Year Students also participate in a common read program (GC Reads). Finally, starting in Fall 2020, the First-Year Guides partnered with the Learning Center to offer student success workshops. These workshops have focused on topics such as Managing Test Anxiety, Productive Academic Mindset, Critical Reading for STEM Courses, and General Note-Taking Skills.

As these structural changes demonstrate, GC was able to use Momentum Year to rethink and restructure our approach to the first-year experience and purposeful choice. As a result, our retention rates have held steady, and our four-year graduation rate improved from 48.61% to 51.2%. Additionally, our number of undeclared majors has dropped from over 200 students (pre-focus area) to 64 students, a nearly 70% decline.

Integrating Innovative Pedagogies

In order to support GC Journeys, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) offers training for faculty leading high-impact practices and embedded essential skills by supporting innovative pedagogies. First of all, GC Journeys offers a monthly informational session, which gives faculty the opportunity to learn about the program, while also getting everyone on the same page. The CTL and Director of GC Journeys also offer two separate 90-minute workshops: Transformative Experiences (High-Impact Practices) and Essential Skills (Essential Learning Outcomes). Since Fall 2019, these workshops are required for all full-time faculty. Additionally, the CTL runs a High-Impact Practice faculty learning community, where faculty have learned about pedagogies to support flourishing in the classroom and encourage a productive academic mindset. Finally, the CTL offers an extensive multi-week course on high-impact practices. During the class, faculty learn about the concepts surrounds HIPs before selecting a curricular HIP to develop/incorporate. Then, they work with a faculty mentor on developing the HIP, and finally give a presentation on that HIP. For doing so, faculty earn a Transformative Experience certification, which certifies them to offer HIPs and mentor faculty. Figure 6 shows faculty participation in GC Journeys events (Fall 2019–Spring 2020).

	Sessions in 2019– 2020	Attendance
GC Journeys Info Sessions	6	103
Transformative Experiences Workshop	10	158
Essential Skills Workshop	12	151
HIPs Learning Community	4	8
Design for Transformative Learning (course)	Semester-long course	71

Figure 6. GC Journeys Faculty Development Participation, 2019–2020

GC Journeys also provides financial support to faculty leading these experiences. In 2019–2020, GC Journeys offered Department Mini-Grants for faculty. Faculty teams (3-5 for a small, 6-10 for a large) applied for department-level grants, and in exchange, each member of the faculty team mentored students. All told, GC Journeys awarded \$25,000 in grants (10 grants to 9 different departments): Department of Chemistry, Physics, and Astronomy; Department of Communication; Department of Music; School of Health and Human Performance (2 awards); Department of Government and Sociology; Department of History and Geography; Department of Psychological Science; Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences; and Department of English. These diverse departments represent the interdisciplinary nature of GC Journeys. In 2020–2021, GC Journeys is offering Project Grants to support engagement and completion of individual high-impact practices.

Ultimately, through the support of GC Journeys, faculty have developed experiences and pedagogies to foster purposeful choice among students, particularly in hands-on experiential

high-impact opportunities. By embedding HIPs into the curriculum, and integrating them together, students receive distinctive interdisciplinary experiences. Some examples include: the Department of Theatre & Dance's undergraduate research/study abroad experience in the Czech Republic, where students research biographical and historical aspects of the Czech Republic, then write and perform original plays. The departments of Chemistry and Art have worked together to create joint undergraduate research and service-learning opportunities, as the students work together with the Andalusia museum to produce prints based on pictures of Flannery O'Connor's farm. Students also experimented with the chemistry behind watercolor and acrylics. In the Department of Marketing, Management, and Logistics, Dr. Sams coordinates with the Office of International Education and Spanish companies on a study abroad/ undergraduate research/service-learning experience. This hands-on experience is similar to one developed by the Department of Communication and Rhetoric, which requires all students to complete a service-learning based capstone, where they get hands-on experience working with clients and offer free services for community partners. These are just some examples of the innovative assignments and experiences developed through GC Journeys support.



Assistant Professors Dr. Peter Rosado Flores in chemistry and Matt Forrest in art began working together in 2016. Chemistry students used organic-compound reactions to produce a Creamsicle-orange pigment. Art students added oils and acrylics to thicken the dye for screen printing. This provided students with real-world applications of chemistry, while giving artists the means to produce photographs. Next, they moved out of the classroom and worked at Andalusia with restoration grants to produce prints based on pictures of Flannery O'Connor's farm. Advanced printmaking students learned to mix multiple colors, how to reproduce imagery on Lino-cut, and how reproduction of color can be achieved in chemistry labs.

Removing Barriers to Access

We knew that in order for all students to participate in GC Journeys, we needed to identify and eliminate barriers to access. Using grant money, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness surveyed student participation in high-impact practices. As part of our commitment to diversity and inclusion, our study focused on Pell eligible, and underrepresented students. While the results ($N=442$), included below (Figures 7 & 8), were encouraging—81% of students cited no barriers to participation (360/442)—we found some trends among students worrisome. Among these trends cited were financial barriers (study abroad) and a lack of belonging (undergraduate research).

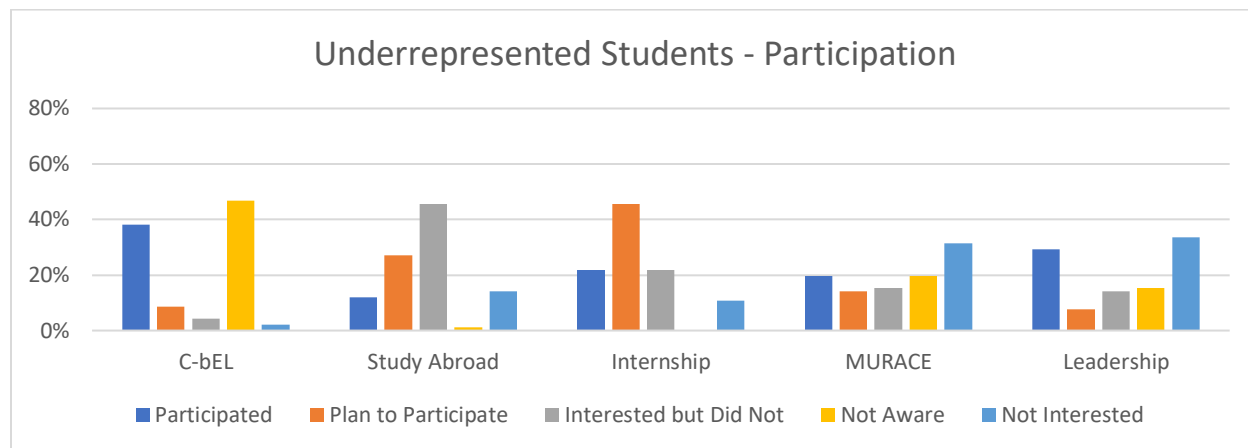


Figure 7. GC Journeys HIPs Equity Participation Assessment (Underrepresented Students)

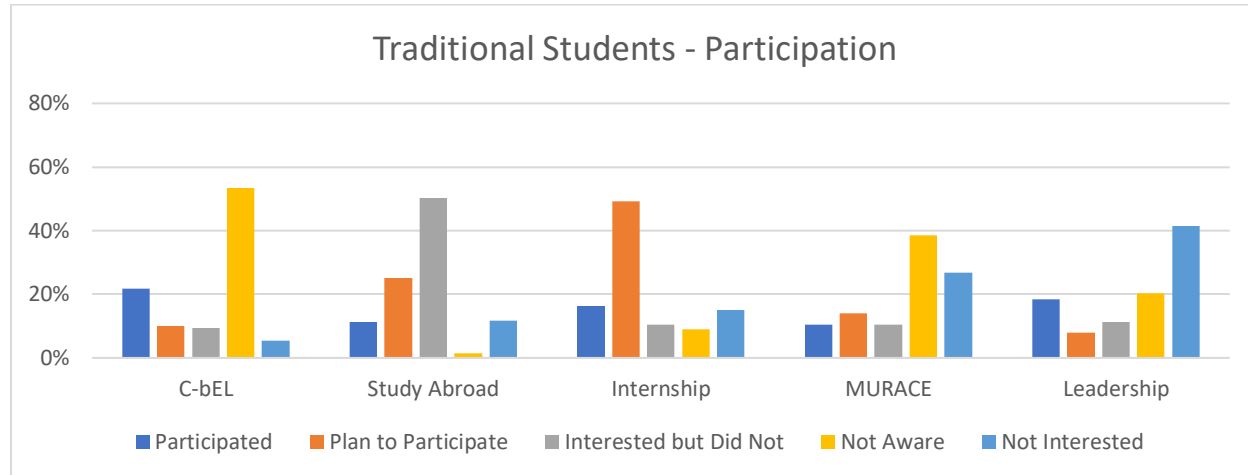


Figure 8. GC Journeys HIPs Equity Participation Assessment (Traditional Students)

The feedback from the survey offered the opportunity to address the barriers to participation in high-impact practices by acknowledging which experiences were the least accessible. From there, those in charge of the experiences brainstormed potential solutions to increase equity and accessibility.

For example, after students cited financial concerns as a barrier to studying abroad, the Office of International Education worked with the Offices of the Provost, Advancement, and Financial Aid in order to create New Horizons, a need-based scholarship for study abroad (Fall 2019). This scholarship is used to help eliminate barriers for study abroad. In a similar approach, the Leadership program created need-based scholarships (based on FAFSA and Pell Eligibility) for the Leadership Academy, which waived all fees. Additionally, while students from underrepresented backgrounds felt too intimidated for undergraduate research, our Office of Mentored Undergraduate Research and Creative Endeavors teamed up with the Office of First-Year Experience for targeted intervention. In Fall 2020, these interventions included students from the Student Research Circle, a student organization dedicated to undergraduate research.



Marissa Mayfield, an Environmental Science major, received an NSF grant as part of her joint Study Abroad & Undergraduate Research experience with Dr. S. Mutiti. Dr. Mutiti's class traveled to Kawbe, Zambia, the most toxic city in the world and worked with schools and residents on water purity and environmental impact of the area. After completing these two high-impact practices as part of GC Journeys, Ms. Mayfield, was awarded an NSF grant for her work on the Moringa tree and plans to return to Zambia.

Assessment of GC Journeys

Another internal benefit of the USG Momentum Year initiative is that it has given GC multiple opportunities to assess (internally and externally) all of our HIPs on campus and has created a framework for students to participate in these HIPs. As the table below demonstrates, from 2018–2019 through 2019–2020, GC has had a 15.3% increase in total HIPs involvement, including a 76% increase in undergraduate research. Additionally, in 2019–2020, 3804 students (65.1%) participated in GC Journeys experiences.

Experience	2018-2019	2019-2020	Difference
First Year Experience	1642	1519	-123
Career Milestones	452	324	-128
Capstone	1053	1118	+65
Leadership	584	602	+18
Undergrad Research	1318	2325	+1007
CbEL	477	728	+251
Internships	1076	1086	+10
Study Abroad	255	203	-52
Total Student Participation	6857	7905	+1048

Figure 9. GC Journeys Student Participation (2018–2019 v. 2019–2020)

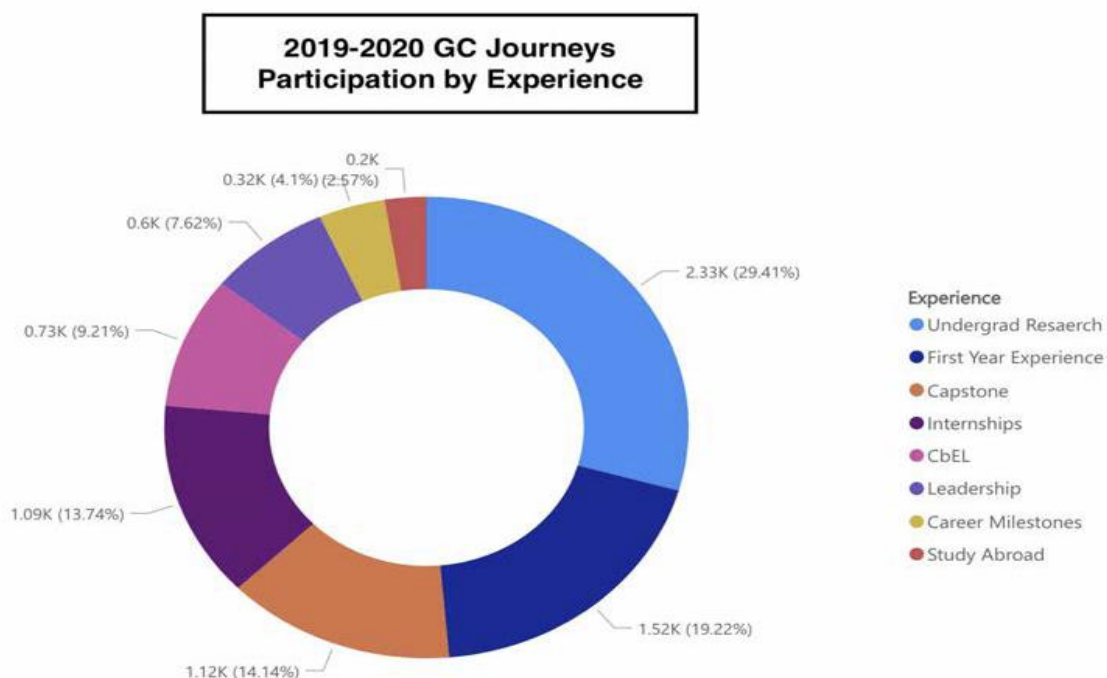


Figure 10. GC Journeys Student Participation (2019–2020 by HIP)

However, tracking participation is just one element of our assessment strategies. GC has many external assessments, such as working with the AAC&U Value Institute (see Figure 3), participating in the 2020 NSSE, and taking part in the 2019 University of Indiana HIPs Quality Study (see Figures 1 & 2).

Internal assessments of GC Journeys have also been promising, with results mirroring the external assessments. Our essential skills assessments show that the selected skills are being integrated into the student learning outcomes. A cumulative look at our HIPs shows that students who complete zero high-impact practices have an average GPA of 3.25 ($n=1280$). However, over the course of 4 years, students who complete at least two high-impact practices see a significant boost with an average GPA of 3.40 ($n=1516$). Furthermore, students who complete 3 HIPs have an average GPA of 3.43. Students participating in GC Journeys are seeing a 5.5% increase in GPA. Since rolling out GC Journeys, we have seen a 1.5% cumulative increase in 1st year retention (see Figure 13), an increase in GPAs (see Figure 11), and an increase in graduation rates. Finally, in our initial assessments, since GC Journeys was in its third year and hasn't had a full class graduate yet, we didn't have enough students who had completed five HIPs to warrant inclusion.

Number of HIPs Completed	Number of Students	GPA
4 HIPs	48	3.4097015
3 HIPs	376	3.43357895
2 HIPs	1516	3.40064028
1 HIPs	1745	3.28083578
0 HIPs	1280	3.25937182

Figure 11. GC Journeys GPA by HIPs Participation, 2017/18–2019/20

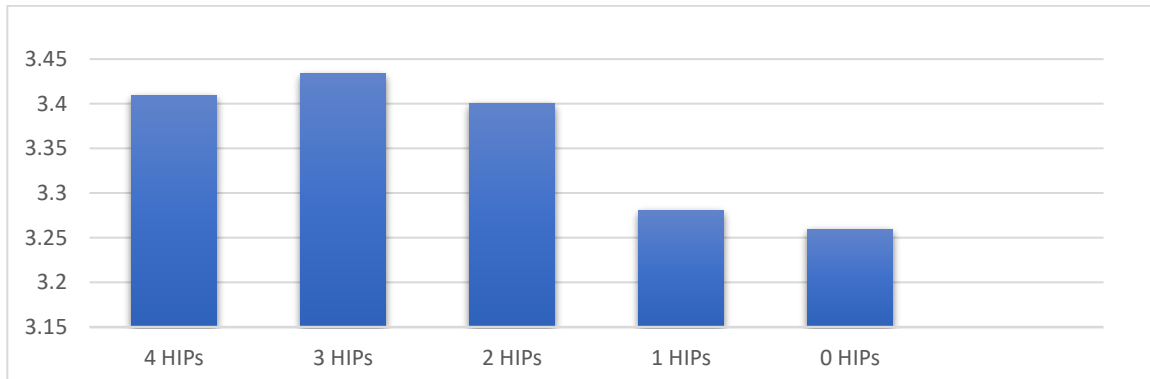


Figure 12. GC Journeys GPA by HIPs Participation graph, 2017/18–2019/20

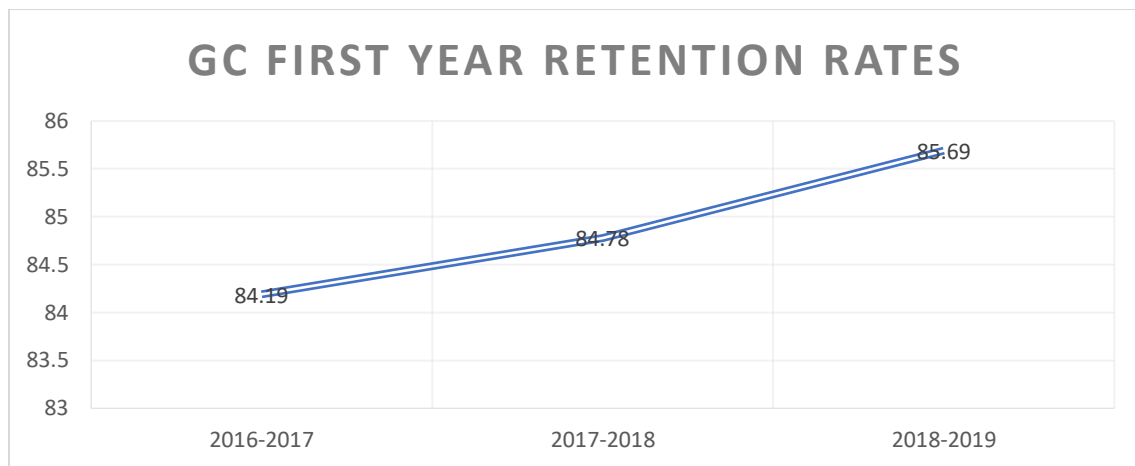


Figure 13. GC Student Retention (2017–2019)

In Fall 2020, GC Journeys will offer its first internal program review conducted in each capstone class. Furthermore, starting Summer 2021, GC Journeys plans to offer an internal review of ePortfolios submitted to assess individual experiences. Ultimately, GC has used Momentum Year as an opportunity to create a unique and innovative approach to educating our students. As a result of the emphasis on fostering purposeful choice for students and supporting innovative pedagogies for faculty, GC has created a program that has not only helped increase retention, progression, and graduation, but has created a sustainable program that faculty, administration, and students have embraced.

Dear Committee,

It is my great pleasure to recommend Georgia College & State University's Momentum Year plan, GC Journeys, for the 2021 Regents Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation. I believe GCSU is deserving of this award due to GC Journeys' emphasis on offering our students high-impact practices, while encouraging faculty to use innovative pedagogies.

As a Professor of Marketing at Georgia College, I have taught several high-impact practices in GC Journeys, including mentored undergraduate research, study abroad, and service-learning courses. Although I have worked at Georgia College since 2005, GC Journeys has energized our campus by using our public liberal arts mission to allow us to offer unique experiences. Personally, I have worked with faculty in Biology and Theatre on a GC Shades of Green sustainability service-learning project to benefit the Baldwin County Georgia community. I have also been able to combine internships with study abroad and undergraduate research to offer a Study Abroad program in Spain, focused on international marketing, where students work with Spanish companies on real projects and get real world job experiences.

Another benefit of GC Journeys is that academic affairs has put its money where its mouth is. GC Journeys has offered awards and workshops to train faculty on high-impact practices and ways to improve our teaching. At the same time, we [faculty] have been able to work together on projects. Other departments, such as physics, have brought marketing students into their projects to help promote them. This gives students in biology, physics, psychology and other disciplines the experience of working with a marketing professional to explain an idea or campaign. This simulates the workplace for so many of these students.

As the faculty director for our Mentored Undergraduate Research and Creative Endeavors (MURACE) office, I also serve as the advisor for our student research club. I have been very intentional on trying to attract students from all different disciplines to show them that research is for everyone. In March, on our last face to face meeting before COVID, our meeting was focused solely on highlighting research in the arts (music and theater). All of my marketing students were so excited to hear about and impressed by the research presented from other disciplines. This is but one example of how exposing different types of research across disciplines benefits everyone attending the Student Research Circle.

Finally, my biggest interest in GC Journeys is that I am deeply concerned about our students' access to these high-impact practices. GC Journeys emphasizes interdisciplinary work by offering resources and workshops through CTL, but GC has also been intentional about making sure that these experiences are possible for students. The Office of International Education has created scholarships for need-based students, I had students receive this scholarship in 2019 and this is the only way they could have gone to Spain. Our research circle has also been targeting first and second year students to show them that undergraduate research is possible, in fact, we also invite students from nearby Georgia Military College to participate. In the past, we have had students say that they aren't smart enough for undergraduate research or that undergraduate research isn't for them. This is personal for me because, as a non-traditional student who didn't have the opportunity to attend college until later in life, I was that student. We know that academic mindset is everything, so we want to capture those students and show them that they are capable of having these life-changing experiences. So, last year MURACE coordinated sending faculty to First Year Academic

Seminars to talk to students about undergraduate research. This Fall, we recruited our own research students to help out. In fact, this week (Oct 28th) is GC Journeys week in our FYAS courses. We have our students leading peer info sessions for undergraduate research. Then, in November, our student club will host 'research roundup,' which is based on a speed-dating model. Students will be able to go from virtual table to virtual table and spend time with faculty who are looking for research students. We think this is a good way to get students connected with different research projects around campus.

GC Journeys have been so energizing to so many faculty members on GC's campus, but it's also been life-changing for our students. It's made us be more intentional about our goals for our students, how we achieve those goals, and how we can work together to do so. This is why I think GC Journeys should win the 2021 Regents Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation.

Sincerely,

Doreen Sams, Ph.D.

Dr. Doreen Sams,
Professor of Marketing

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing to express my support of Georgia College's GC Journeys Program for this year's Regents' Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation. I am uniquely qualified to offer support due both to my role as Director of the First-Year Experience and as a member of the GC Journeys implementation team. I have been at Georgia College since 2008, and GC Journeys has provided the most robust framework for our students to engage in high impact practices, in turn creating an environment where students thrive.

A comprehensive First-Year Experience was established as part of our GC Journeys program. Our first-year students not only live together on campus, but they also participate in a number of shared experiences. In their first-year seminar course they are introduced to their First-Year Guide (FYG) the FYG student mentor provides support, develops programming, and engages in individual personalized outreach throughout the year. In this, our second year of the FYG program, these students have also begun assisting our office in on-boarding first-year students to GC Journeys. They co-facilitate a lesson on Journeys in seminar, assist students in developing their initial GC Journeys plan, and help students navigate the Journeys resources and tracking software. This peer-to-peer education on Journeys has helped our first-year students understand that GC Journeys is the best way to maximize their liberal arts experience. Through early introduction to high-impact practices, and the intentional creation of a GC Journeys plan in the students' first semester we are fostering purposeful choice among students.

Our First-Year Experience office also intentionally works to cultivate a sense of belonging in our first-year students. First-Year Guides communicate weekly campus engagement opportunities to all their assigned first-year students. FYGs also hold individual meetings with all their students, and submit reports back to the FYE office about students who are struggling either academically and/or personally. Through planned collaboration with the Division of Student Life our office notifies University Housing about any students who indicate feeling homesick or struggling to connect. These students are contacted by both their student Community Advisor (our equivalent to an RA) as well as their first-year guide.

This is an exciting time at Georgia College, due in large part to GC Journeys. Faculty and staff are exploring new and innovative ways to propel our students to success. We continue to refine existing high impact practices while seeking to develop even more high impact opportunities for our students. For these reasons, the GC Journeys program has my strongest support for the Regents' Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation.

Sincerely,

Erin R. Weston

Director, First-Year Experience

Dear Committee:

My name is Kendyl Lewis and I am a senior at Georgia College pursuing degrees in Economics and Psychology. I am honored to write a letter supporting the GC Journey's Program for the Momentum Year Award. This program has had a profound impact on my college experience, and it has set me up to be successful in my future career. Starting with the First Year Experience (FYE), the GC Journeys program created a solid foundation for me to explore my career and engage in transformative experiences while at Georgia College. The GC Journeys program encourages students to complete at least two high-impact practices, but I took advantage of as many high-impact practices as possible including an intensive leadership experience, an internship, and mentored undergraduate research. Each of these has helped me to discover my passions and integrate them into a strategic path towards my future career.

When I first began attending Georgia College, I was amazed by how meaningful each of my extra-curricular and co-curricular experiences were. As part of the FYE experience, I had an academic seminar with my major advisor. This course provided me with a meaningful opportunity to explore potential careers relevant to my major. As part of this career exploration, I was exposed to the many high-impact practices Georgia College offers to help students develop the soft-skills necessary to be successful in their future careers. One high-impact practice I pursued was the first-year leadership program, the Leadership Academy. The Leadership Academy helped me to define my personal leadership style. Additionally, it gave me the skillset and confidence to put my leadership into practice, so I started my own student organization called Swipe Out Hunger. Although I was still a first-year student when I founded Swipe Out Hunger, I always felt that I had the support I needed to lead a new organization due to the strong leadership foundation that I had acquired through the FYE and the Leadership Academy.

After completing my first year, I had caught the "bug" of wanting to take advantage of as many opportunities that Georgia College had to offer. I began to develop a deep passion for alleviating food insecurity as I learned more about the systemic issue of food insecurity and how I could use my platform as a college student to advocate for those struggling with hunger. I wanted to learn more about the specific policies that impacted food insecurity, so I applied to participate in Georgia College's GC-in-DC internship program. I applied for the Zero Hunger Internship—a program that would allow me to learn more about food insecurity policy by working at a hunger-fighting non-profit in our nation's capital. I was accepted into the program and the internship turned out to be one of the most impactful experiences of my college career. My internship was a perfect intersection between what I had been learning in my Economics classes and the policy issues I had become passionate about through my involvement in Swipe Out Hunger. Once I finished the internship, I felt like my education was more than just a compilation of required major courses. Instead, I felt like my classes and extra-curricular experiences were propelling me towards a future career in public policy.

In addition to the passion I developed for public policy and alleviating food insecurity, I also loved learning about Psychology. By the time I entered my major courses for Psychology, I knew that I wanted to dive deeper into the content I was learning. I remembered hearing about undergraduate research during my academic seminar and I decided to approach one of my professors about joining her research lab. She eagerly accepted me, so I began doing mentored

undergraduate research during my sophomore year. That year, I helped design and run a study that I was able to present at a research conference. I have continued to do research every semester since then and I was even awarded the McDaniel Research Scholarship to complete a senior research thesis this year. Because of my experience with mentored undergraduate research, I have developed a deep passion for research, and I plan to go to graduate school to earn my PhD so I can influence policy through research.

Before starting college, I often felt overwhelmed when thinking about what career I wanted to have and how I would get there. I am the kind of person that becomes passionate about a variety of topics, and I was concerned that I would never find a major or a career that would satisfy all of my passions. However, I am thankful for the GC Journeys program because it has helped me to not only explore a variety of career options, but it has also helped me to find the intersection between all of my passions. Someone who does not know me may be confused as to how Economics, public policy, Psychology research, and food insecurity are all intertwined, but I have a clear understanding of how I can use my skills in each of these areas to have an impactful career. As I wrap up my four years at Georgia College, I am thankful for the transformative experiences I have been able to take advantage of in the GC Journeys program, and I feel confident that I will be able to successfully enter the next phase of my career.

Kendyl Lewis
Georgia College & State University, Class of 2021
Economics & Psychology
Kendyl.lewis@bobcats.gcsu.edu

Dear Regents' Award Committee,

I never thought I would be where I am at right now. I will be graduating a year early with a Mass Communications Major, Marketing Minor, and Leadership Certificate, all while working two jobs. I say all this to tell you how I got here. GC Journey's was introduced in my freshman seminar class, and gave me a broader understanding of what my collegiate years would look like. With advice and council from my advisor and First-Year Guide, I was able to personalize my college experience from the very beginning and save money by graduating early. Without an initial understanding of my college career, beginning with my First Year Experience, I would not have been able to do this.

The Leadership Program was not something I came into college planning to obtain. I remembered the program was a part of the GC Journeys, so my advisor encouraged me to go for it to check the box. Little did I know, that checked box has been the most impactful and empowering part of my college experience. This program has taught me to think critically, communicate efficiently, collaborate with diverse groups, and engage with the community. This program has also influenced my civic engagement, providing me with tools to expand my community impact while remaining service-oriented.

Because of the impact my First-Year Guide had on me during my freshman experience with GC Journeys, I became a first-year guide myself. This role has helped me apply my leadership knowledge in real world situations. I have been able to collaborate with other first-year guides to not only problem solve, but also come up with exciting and engaging events during a socially distant, virtual, COVID-19 world.

Through my GC2Y class, I was able to complete the Community-based Engaged Learning (Service Learning) section of my GC Journey. My group and I created an event to inform and raise awareness on Domestic Violence. This included collaborating with community directors to come speak at our event. I was able to take what I learned from the class, and apply it through the creation of our event and event website. In addition, this helped my oral and written communication skills due to the constant communication with community officials. We were able to give back to the community and our collegiate peers, while also gaining skills that the liberal arts education promises and fulfills.

GC Journeys has shaped me academically but also intellectually. I am more confident in my knowledge and abilities, and believe in myself to achieve my social responsibilities. GC Journeys not only helped me graduate early, but also get the most out of my college career through deeper learning experiences. I am eager and prepared for my transition into the real world because of the tools, experiences, and support I have received through GC Journeys.

Grace Kearney

REFERENCES

"Chemistry and Art Combine for a Library Display." (May 2020). GCSU. <https://frontpage.gcsu.edu/index.php/node/4080>.

Core Assessment Outcomes (2019). GCSU. <https://irout.gcsu.edu/stuach16/gc-core-outcomes.html>

Dorman, S., & Brown, K. (2018). "The Liberal Arts: Preparing the Workforce of the Future." *Liberal Education*. (104.4).

Finley, A., & McNair, T. (2013). *Assessing underserved students' engagement in high-impact practices*. Washington DC: Association of American Colleges & Universities.

Kuh, G. D. (2008). *High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Washington DC: Association of American Colleges & Universities.

Kuh, G., & O'Donnell, K. (2013). *Ensuring quality and taking high-impact practices to scale*. Washington DC: Association of American Colleges & Universities.

Linder, K., & Hayes, C. (2018). *High-Impact Practices in Online Education: Research and Best Practices*. Sterling, VA.: Stylus Publishing.