



Students in Dr. Timothy Gsell's Biology class learn through hands-on experience.

Letter from the Dean



Andrae Marak
*Dean, College of Arts
and Sciences and
Graduate Studies*

Welcome to the fifth annual College of Arts and Sciences newsmagazine, the second published under COVID pandemic restrictions. I would like to frame my comments this year – a year of major adjustments and losses that further revealed the unequal impacts that systemic inequality and racism have on our communities – through the words of our own students. They remind us that Governors State University is part of the solution to our society’s many problems. We are a community, a place of belonging. As Alex Pavloski tells us in the VOICES section, “[On campus,] I was always running into someone I previously met. It was a nice feeling to be recognized, everyone I met was always kind and

welcoming.” If you are not already, I welcome you too to become part of our community. If you are already a member, please continue welcoming others into our ever-growing community. No one who makes GSU a part of their life fails to notice our uniqueness. Our incredible diversity serves as a mirror to the future of the United States, and our use of high impact practices – such as this student-written newsmagazine and our faculty’s focus on trauma-informed pedagogy (this issue) – provides our students with the skills that employers want, and our communities with well-prepared leaders.

We are again indebted to *ArtSci’s* faculty advisor Dr. Christopher White (English) and his team of dedicated students – Ansam Abdeljaber (English BA), Erik Kay (English BA), Courtney Keller (English BA), Brittany LaFond (English BA), and Kelly Weissbohn (English BA) – who hone in on only some of the many examples of hands-on experiential opportunities that the College of Arts and Sciences provides for its students. In this issue you’ll learn more about how GSU modified its laboratory and art studio and media studies courses and programs to provide students with flexible and safe learning options as well as the shift to virtual live streaming adopted by our Theater and Performance Studies program, allowing GSU to “outperform COVID-19.”

GSU’s mission is to offer an exceptional and accessible education that prepares students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed in a global society. This includes a continued commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The stories on our students and faculty like Kimelia Carter, Breana Smothers, Novia Pagone, and Rebecca Siefert provide shining examples of this in practice. GSU continues to have an incredibly positive impact on the region both through the wide range of academic opportunities that we offer as well as through our community outreach via the Center for Performing Arts; the Center for Community Media; the Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park; the Art Gallery; the Biological Field Station; and the Institute for Politics, Public Service, and Social Justice. As Madeleine Naliwko (Biology BS) reminds us, you “don’t have to miss anything about GSU” if you choose to stay here or return to continue your education. You can also stay connected by donating to scholarships to support our students, by volunteering your time and expertise, or creating internship and job opportunities for our current students and alumni. Please contact me (CASdean@govst.edu) and let me know how we can work together. I look forward to hearing from you.

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ArtSci is a student-written publication highlighting the major events and achievements of the students, alumni, and faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences at Governors State University.

Ansam Abdeljaber

Writer/Editor

I am an English major who loves watching Sci-Fi shows. I'm always looking to express my creativity through writing, painting, and various home renovation projects.

Erik Kay

Writer/Editor

I am an English undergraduate and creative writing minor. While I'll be graduating this semester, I don't foresee any end to my education. In fact, I think I've only completed the first step in what will be a lifelong love affair with language—whether reading a good novel, perusing some poetry, or drafting my own work, I'll always be reading, always be moving commas and swapping modifiers.

Courtney Keller

Writer/Editor

I am an English major and Creative Writing minor who adores storytelling in all mediums. I spend my time collecting books I swear I will eventually read, writing poetry, and escaping into different lives through film.

Brittany LaFond

Writer/Editor

I am an English major minoring in Human Communication. I have a seemingly never-ending list of books to read, which I tackle in between school assignments and my part-time writing tutor job.

Kelly Weissbohn

Writer/Editor

I am an English major who loves reading and writing. I enjoy spending my free time curled up on the couch reading a good book or outside enjoying nature.

Dr. Christopher White

Faculty Advisor for ArtSci

I am an Associate Professor of English, in my 12th year at GSU. My teaching and scholarly interests are in American Literature, Cognitive Literary Studies, and Narrative. Working with students on ArtSci is one of the many things I love about teaching at GSU.

We are always interested in new CAS-related story ideas. If you have one you would like to share, please contact Christopher White at cwhite@govst.edu.

Science Stops for Nothing

By Kelly Weissbohn

Keeping the Science Labs Running During a Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the scene in GSU's science labs drastically. When the announcement came that campus would be closing and classes were moving to alternate modes of instruction, faculty and staff had to move quickly and efficiently to accommodate the changes. Research had to be done to find budget-friendly alternatives to in-person learning. Professors and lab managers who once had teaching materials at their fingertips, now had to move as much as they could to a remote platform for their students.

Dr. Aparna Palakodeti (Biology) explained that the teaching format required considerable modification: "I tried to keep as many labs as possible remote since some students are unable to come to campus owing to personal circumstances." For the labs that could be conducted remotely, she posted material on Blackboard that would supplement in-person learning without compromising the quality of instruction. For example, she explained that she was able to obtain virtual simulations for labs such as blood and urine analysis. "Although these simulations might not be as exciting as real time analysis of blood and urine samples in-person, they provide the necessary knowledge of the theory and methodology. Also, they outweigh the risk of handling biohazardous material in a lab during a pandemic." She also held live sessions to go over the virtual slides and lab simulations and recorded those sessions for students who were unable to attend in real-time. "Recording the sessions so that students may access them in the future was one advantage with [the] online format as students can go back to the material and instructions anytime," Dr. Palakodeti remarks.



Students in Dr. Palakodeti's Biology Lab use Bunsen burner to sterilize tools.

Right, students in Dr. John Sowa's Spring Organic Chemistry Lab.



Below, a chemistry student demonstrates the use of the eyewash station.



"I have a new appreciation for the strength and grit of my students and colleagues who have managed to make the best of whatever challenges were thrown at them."

Of course, not everything could be moved online. Certain labs require a hands-on approach for learning, such as how to perform dissections or properly use a microscope, so schedules had to be created to allow students to come into the labs on campus. There has been an extraordinary amount of coordination between lab managers and faculty to ensure proper scheduling and that safety procedures are being followed in order to keep the labs open and running smoothly. Cutting lab capacities in half, social distancing, and vigorous cleaning and sanitizing measures were taken to ensure the safety of all students, faculty, and staff.

Despite the obstacles, professors like Dr. Palakodeti were able to effectively teach their students with the help of other department faculty and staff. Now that we are well into this new way of teaching, she says, "I think that we have somewhat of a handle on the situation now." Having already completed a semester and a half of this new remote learning style, students and faculty are progressing well and adapting to these new modes of instruction. "As much as it has been a challenge to quickly adapt to the new circumstances, I think that I have learned some great teaching strategies that I plan to use even when we return to in-person learning," says Dr. Palakodeti.

She adds, "I am extraordinarily impressed with how students have overcome some extremely difficult personal and study challenges and still successfully managed to adapt to the changes. I have a new appreciation for the strength and grit of my students and colleagues who have managed to make the best of whatever challenges were thrown at them." Although, like most of us, Dr. Palakodeti does hope that we are able to go back to on-campus learning soon. ■

Approaching Education from a New Perspective

By Ansam Abdeljaber

Faculty Pedagogy Group Considers Trauma's Effects on Student Learning



Dr. Novia Pagone

From dealing with a global pandemic, being laid off from work, witnessing police brutality, and so much more, to say that 2020 was a traumatic year is an understatement. In the midst of a global pandemic, we've turned to professors to help students navigate their emotions while simultaneously ensuring that students succeed academically.

As Spanish professor Dr. Novia Pagone explains, "People had family members who were very sick or they were sick or they might have had family or friends who have passed away, and supporting them is important."

English graduate student Sarah Wiora, who is writing an MA thesis about expressive writing as a method of processing trauma, explains, "Trauma is a response to an upsetting or disturbing event. It leads to an individual struggling to cope with the resulting emotions and can leave them feeling helpless or trapped." What we often forget to mention is that professors are going through a traumatic experience as well. It's been over a year since the pandemic hit. Faculty are still teaching online classes, and some don't have previous experience teaching online. For faculty members, their workload has doubled, and they struggle to keep a work-life balance.

Last spring, Dr. Pagone hosted a retreat for faculty members to prepare their online classes for the fall semester. The retreat sparked conversations, and from there, a trauma-informed pedagogy group formed. Within the group, teachers came together and discussed various methods of teaching students who have experienced trauma. Dr. Pagone explains, "It's a topic that we see a lot from a faculty perspective, and we want to support our students and make sure that they have the tools that they need to succeed." While the group did focus on helping students learn, it was also helpful for professors: "I think for me it's been

very helpful through the pandemic, having a group of colleagues that I know I'm going to see, and we can talk and help each other."

The group learned that trauma can be handed down from generations, causing students not to be aware that it affects them. Dr. Pagone explains, "It comes out in a student's behavior or disengagement." Students who struggle with trauma lack the motivation to learn. Students can also experience symptoms like sadness, difficulty concentrating or making decisions, or even physical symptoms like headaches. They may struggle to complete simple assignments and keep up with the course syllabus's slightest changes. Students struggling with trauma have a harder time reading for class, focusing during class discussion, retaining information, or even completing assignments to the degree they would otherwise.

Students who are affected by trauma are encouraged to reach out for help. Currently, GSU offers remote counseling appointments. Students can also reach out to professors for help. Moreover, GSU's Dr. Maristela Zell and Dr. Tim Pedigo host a Mindfulness Practice every Thursday via zoom for students, faculty, and staff. However, if students are not ready to reach out, Sarah Wiora explains, "Journaling can make a huge difference." While it doesn't substitute for counseling, journaling can help you gain control of your emotions; writing your feelings can help you reduce stress, manage anxiety, and even cope with depression. ■

For more information about GSU's counseling services or to schedule an appointment, visit:

<https://www.govst.edu/counselingcenter/>

"We want to support our students and make sure that they have the tools that they need to succeed."

Kimelia Carter: Thespian, President, Artist

By Erik Kay

“I told myself once I enrolled at GSU that I was going to come in and be noticed.”

In my brief tenure here, I’ve been gently persuaded by supportive professors into several extracurriculars. But not all students need such a push. Some students come to GSU with a mission in mind; they have something to prove. Students like Kimelia Carter. A TAPS major and Creative Writing minor, Kimelia came to GSU determined to make a name for herself: “I told myself once I enrolled at GSU that I was going to come in and be noticed.” Well, Kimelia, you’ve certainly been noticed.

In addition to her classes, Kimelia serves as the Stage Manager for GSU’s TAPS productions, and as the President of *Reconstructed*, GSU’s literary and arts journal. But that’s not all. Kimelia spent last semester in an independent study dedicated to writing protest poetry, much of which she’s revising into dramatic monologues. Kimelia says of her many responsibilities, “I love being able to write poems and short stories and being part of *Reconstructed*. But, I also love being a part of a production, of watching it grow from a small gathering of people into an experience that you can be proud of.”

Kimelia’s enthusiasm for drama is apparent. She served as Stage Manager for two previous GSU productions—*The Laramie Project*, and *Picnic*—and continues in that role for *BobrauschenbergAMERICA*. Kimelia says of her duties, “Stage Managers are the director’s second in command. We manage large groups of people, from the actors to the designers, in the hope of making the director’s vision a reality.” Kimelia’s favorite production is *BobrauschenbergAMERICA*. She cites the production’s vivid colors, dance, and music as its best features.

Having worked with Kimelia on *Reconstructed*, I can personally attest to her leadership. Her tenure as President has been marked by hardship—she assumed office just prior to the pandemic. Since our switch to



Kimelia Carter

e-learning, she’s done all within her power to keep the magazine running, including spear-heading the magazine’s move to a digital, “live journal” format. Indeed, Kimelia helped push this small gathering of people towards a year they could be proud of.

Kimelia isn’t content just to foster artistic expression; she must also express herself artistically. In her fall 2020 independent study with Prof. Laura White (Creative Writing), Kimelia set out to write a series of spoken word protest poems about police prejudice and brutality. She ended the semester with *To Be Honest*, a short collection of poems, each of which examines police prejudice from a different perspective. Now, she’s adapting *To Be Honest* into a series of dramatic monologues.

To speak of Kimelia’s accomplishments without speaking of her character would be a crime. She’s the friendliest, most charismatic student with whom I’ve had the pleasure of working. And her attitude towards her work says it all: “I want to create moments of belonging for groups that are outcasts in their societies. So, if someone can pick a book I made, watch a series I’m in, or look at a show I wrote, and find a moment of relatability, then I’ve done my job. I’ve reached my dream.” ■

GSU’s TAPS Productions: https://www.govst.edu/About/Center_for_Performing_Arts/

GSU’s *Reconstructed*: <https://reconstructed2.wixsite.com/my-site/2021-journal>

Art Co-op Connects Communities

By Brittany LaFond

This past winter, a local Artist Co-op provided GSU Art faculty, students, and alumni a valuable opportunity: free space to showcase their artwork in Flossmoor. A local landlord opened their vacant building for artists to showcase their work in a pop-up exhibition setting, and several GSU community members jumped at the opportunity. Art professor Leanne Cambric first heard of the opening, then worked with Jeff Stevenson (Director and Curator of the Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park and Visual Arts Gallery) to encourage other members of the GSU community to participate. In addition to Prof. Cambric and Stevenson, current graduate students Heather Cox, Debbie Burk, and Hannah Mobley, and GSU alumni Jason Blohm, Kenya Moffet-Gardner, and Taylor Mezzo also participated in the pop-up.

The pop-up began in November 2020, opening right around Black Friday, and lasted through January 2021, when a restructuring of the building shifted the available space. Though the pop-up was short-lived, it provided valuable professional experience for the participating artists, giving them practice showcasing,

marketing, and selling their work. As Stevenson noted, seeing the work in a gallery space like this gave potential buyers a sense of urgency, since a work could be purchased by anyone who wanted to purchase it, and the pop-up was embraced by the community. “We were activating an otherwise empty space,” Stevenson said. “They were happy to see that it was activated. We had a lot of foot traffic, considering that it was a pandemic.”

The pandemic disrupted many of the GSU Art Department’s typical opportunities for students to showcase their work. The Art Forum, which typically holds art sales on the GSU campus twice a year, hasn’t been able to hold these events lately. For students interested in displaying their work, the Flossmoor Artist Co-op was an excellent way to still gain that experience.

“We’re members of our communities, and because we work at GSU, we’re sort of the bridge that connects our communities with GSU.”



Leanne Cambric



Deborah Burke pottery and artwork pictured above.

Beyond gaining practical experience, participating in the Co-op also took on a more symbolic meaning as a form of outreach from members of the GSU Art Program. As members of the GSU community, the Art Program already emphasizes outreach through ongoing activities. Every year, GSU hosts the Illinois Community College Juried Exhibition, which showcases community college student artwork at GSU, and there is an ongoing effort to connect with high school art programs. “We’re members of our communities, and because we work at GSU, we’re sort of the bridge that connects our communities with GSU,” Stevenson remarked. The Co-op, however, was not an official GSU endeavor. Rather, the participating artists presented themselves as individuals with GSU affiliations. Individual connections can make major changes, and as Stevenson describes, “It’s a ripple effect of connections with community members, because we live here, we work here, we want our communities to be as exciting and interesting and vital as possible.” ■



Jeff Stevenson with his artwork.

New Art at theNate

By Kelly Weissbohn

“We continue [Lewis Manilow’s] habit of looking for important voices in the art world and amplifying them. We are honored to have both of these artists make such significant contributions to the collection.”

GSU’s Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park, or “theNate,” is set to grow this summer, expanding its collection of 30 large-scale sculptures by adding two new works. Jeff Stevenson, Director and Curator of theNate, is in charge of acquisition for the park’s collection. He explained that “funding for theNate is completely dependent upon donations, sponsors, and grants, so it is rare for new pieces to be added to the collection.”

Acquiring and displaying new art for the park is a process. The Advisory Board for theNate has committees of board members that engage with numerous aspects of the park. The Exhibitions, Acquisitions, and Conservations committee is the group charged with decision making related to obtaining new art. The decision process can vary, depending on how new art is obtained. Stevenson explains, “Depending on if it is donation or new commission or purchase, we would follow slightly different steps, but ultimately the artwork must be unique from and complimentary to the other work in the collection. It must also fit with our mission of continued diversity of artists, views, practices, and materials.”

The first sculpture, which is untitled at this time, is being created by Bernard Williams, a Chicago-based artist. Williams was chosen as a finalist in the Art in Architecture program of the Capital Development Board of Illinois, where a percentage from any state building project is set aside for art acquisitions. The GSU F Wing renovation had such funds set aside, allowing GSU to commission this piece. Stevenson was charged with assembling a committee of GSU representatives to guide the process. The Art in Architecture program called for proposals from artists.



“We had around 40 artists submit,” Stevenson said. Williams had his design selected to become the new sculpture at theNate. He proposed a structure that will serve as an observation deck for the park’s Butterfly Ranch Prairie Restoration Project.

The second sculpture, “Stargazing with Contrails” is being created by Terrence Karpowicz, another Chicago-based artist, and was donated to theNate by advisory board member Paul Uzureau and his wife Linda. Karpowicz currently has a sculpture located in the Main entrance of the D building. However, because it is made out of wood, it is more easily preserved indoors. His new sculpture will be located across the lake from the Hall of Governors patio.

These two new pieces will be put in place by a combination of prefabrication and on-site assembly, with the help of heavy equipment including trucks, trailers, and cranes. Once they are assembled and ready for viewing, Stevenson says they hope to have a dedication ceremony this summer or fall, at a time that works for everyone. In addition to the donation of a new sculpture, the Uzureau’s have made a donation to establish a “New Acquisition Fund” so that theNate can continue to add new pieces in the future. “Lew Manilow collected important art of the time,” Stevenson explains, “and we continue his habit of looking for important voices in the art world and amplifying them. We are honored to have both of these artists make such significant contributions to the collection.” ■

For more information on theNate’s newest developments and a full calendar of its events, visit: www.govst.edu/sculpture, or follow their social media accounts: www.instagram.com/thenate and www.facebook.com/nathan.manilow.sculpture.park/. If you are interested in contributing to theNate’s New Acquisition Fund, <https://www.govst.edu/nmspdonation/>.

You're Worried About Viruses. So is the New MS in IT Program

By Ansam Abdeljaber

In Fall 2020, GSU became the first public university in the area to offer an advanced program in the rapidly expanding field of Information Technology. GSU currently offers an MS in Computer Science (CS). While CS and IT may seem very similar, CS is more of the architect of the operating system, and IT looks more at how that system works. There are two concentrations offered for the MS in IT program: Infrastructure Administration and Cybersecurity.

Prof. Rich Manprisio (IT) explains that Infrastructure Administration “focuses on managing an enterprise network environment, managing users, setting up and maintaining a complex networking environment. Additionally, it gets into social engineering, unified communications, and more.” The Infrastructure Administration concentration will be utilizing the Netlab. The Netlab is an educational tool that allows students to design and develop machines in a virtual space. With the Netlab, students will learn Configuring Advanced Windows Servers and Designing & Implementing a Server Infrastructure. While Netlab is an educational tool, the knowledge gained from it translates to real world scenarios. As Prof. Manprisio notes, “Companies have been shifting to virtualization as a way to increase their equipment while keeping costs down, and our Netlab environment provides them this same experience to make them better prepared for their chosen career.”

Whereas Infrastructure Administration focuses on managing a network, Cybersecurity (the second MS in IT concentration) focuses on protecting that network. Cybersecurity is about protecting information from cyber threats, warfare, and terrorists—all of which are



on the rise in our increasingly digitized world. Also, the concentration will help students learn how to protect businesses and individuals from digital-based attacks.

With an MS in IT, students will advance their careers and become senior network engineers, senior infrastructure managers, and technical directors.

Students may have other responsibilities such as work and family, or they are not geographically close to campus. To help accommodate those students, Prof. Manprisio explains, “The program is working on a hybrid approach to be more advantageous for our students.” ■

To learn more about the program visit:
<https://www.govst.edu/ms-it/>

GSU Hires Dr. Siefert, Fires the Canon

By Erik Kay

New Art History Professor Dedicated to Diversity

“It’s very rewarding to be a full time faculty member, to design new courses, build long-term bonds with students.”

Art History professor Dr. Rebecca Siefert first noticed the predominance of white male artists in the Western canon early in her career: “[A]s a teaching assistant, I noticed that the final exam—which tests students on the ‘greatest hits of art history’—included maybe one woman and one person of color.”

Dr. Siefert is relatively new to GSU. She began as a Visiting Professor in fall 2018 and was promoted to Assistant Professor by fall 2020. Her research and classes facilitate equal representation within the artistic canon; her pedagogy reflects her commitment to her students.

Since her time as a teaching assistant in NYC, Dr. Siefert has dedicated herself to equality and inclusivity. Her research on modern and contemporary art and architecture has set the record straight for artists/architects like Laurotta Vinciarelli, whose influence on architect Donald Judd was previously uncredited. Dr. Siefert continues such efforts in the classroom: she teaches a ‘Women in Art’ course and an ‘Art Images of Social Justice Movements’ course. ‘Women in Art’ examines the works of canonical, lesser-known, and contemporary women artists. ‘Art Images of Social Justice Movements’ examines art from various movements, including: Civil Rights, Women’s rights, LGBTQIA+, and many others. Ultimately, Dr. Siefert seeks to move art history away from the homogenous, exclusive concept of canon and towards the diversity she sees in her students.



Dr. Rebecca Siefert

Of course, even superb educators like Dr. Siefert were affected by the pandemic. During spring 2020, flush with an intellectual life grant, Dr. Siefert arranged two guest artist lectures for her classes. Their purpose was simple: to enrich the learning experience of her students. However, the lectures were waylaid by the pandemic. By fall 2020, Dr. Siefert had arranged for four virtual guest lectures from: Steve Sherrell, Sergio Gomez, Mitch O’Connell, and Kenyatta Forbes. Sherrell and Gomez are both Chicago-based mixed media artists; they both have long-standing relationships with GSU’s art department. Mitch O’Connell is a pop artist whose works have been featured in *Time*, *The New Yorker*, and *Rolling Stone*. Kenyatta Forbes is a multidisciplinary, Chicago-based artist whose works explore the intersection of race and identity. McConnell and Forbes were requested by Dr. Siefert’s students. She contacted them personally, endeavoring to further enrich her students’ lives.

Though Dr. Siefert’s time here has been brief, she has nonetheless made a significant impact upon the GSU community. She says of her time here, “My experience has been great so far . . . It’s very rewarding to be a full-time faculty member, to design new courses, build long-term bonds with students, and contribute to their college experience.” ■

To explore Dr. Siefert’s research, go to:
<https://rebeccasiefert.wordpress.com/lectures-articles/>

Home Is Where the Art Is

By Courtney Keller

How the Art Department Keeps Beating through COVID-19

Vacant classrooms, social distancing reminders taped to the floor, the muffled sound of masked conversations, a striking quietness of halls haunted by the students once filling the space. Walking around GSU since the pandemic hit resembles a community put on life support. But even with the school's body shut down under the past year's extreme circumstances, Prof. Leanne Cambric (Ceramics) insists, "There is still a heartbeat on campus and it's coming from the art department."

Cambric and other art faculty whose instruction is reliant on peer-to-peer and professor-to-peer collaboration have had to reenvision the way art can be taught to adapt to COVID-19. Since the initial switch to remote learning back in March 2020, Art professors have consistently worked with students and colleagues to accommodate their courses to the drastic transition. Prof. Javier Chavira (Painting) and Prof. Sanghoon Lee (Film) incorporated the use of tools like Blackboard, Voicethread, and WebEx to simulate in-class discussion and provide a place for students to share their work. Cambric and Prof. Gretchen Jankowski (Printmaking) filmed video tutorials and designed interactive PowerPoint lectures to recreate the classroom experience. Although, most of them note that such efforts with remote instruction have not been able to fully capture the feeling of in-person art courses. Chavira explains, "One of the important experiences that students get when they are all working together in the studio is that they are able to see and talk about each other's work. You miss that remotely." Because of their need for collaboration, the art department returned to campus as much as possible for the 2020-21 school year.

With the pandemic still raging on, meeting in-person presented risks. To make sure all faculty and students could resume regular studio work safely, numerous measures have been taken.



Dominique MacLean is shown working on printmaking.

"There is still a heartbeat on campus and it's coming from the art department."

For Prof. Cambric's ceramics courses, they have cut meeting time in half to 3 hours each week, limited class size to 6, and implemented online sign-up sheets to spread out individual students' studio work. With the class Cambric co-teaches with Jankowski, meetings are held in both the ceramics and printmaking studios to keep students working at a distance. In those studios, there are multiple air purifiers and even a facilities staff member they refer to as the "Ghostbuster" who routinely sprays the air each day with a green tank he wears that is filled with disinfectant. Additionally, everyone wears masks, equipment is washed and sanitized after someone uses it, and each student even has their own bins to store supplies to limit peer-to-peer contact.

During all of the chaos from the last year, the art department has proven to be a resilient part of GSU. Its faculty puts in immense effort to always give their students the education they deserve, and Prof. Cambric is so happy with how her students have been responding: "The students have been making amazing work . . . It continues to be a very lively, active, art-making space filled with lots of creative energy." No matter what problems afflict GSU, the arts remain a place for students to sustain life on campus. ■

Background photo is a graduate student, Debbie Burke with faculty, reviewing her sculpture for her senior project.

Chemistry Student Breana Smothers Nicholson: Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers

By Ansam Abdeljaber

Breana Smothers Nicholson didn't always know what she wanted to pursue when she started college: "I wasn't sure if I wanted to go biology or chemistry. I had a professor contact me from the chemistry department [at Chicago State University] and she encouraged me to pursue biochemistry." Nicholson graduated from Chicago State in 2017 with her BS in Biochemistry. In January of 2019, Nicholson began her MS in Analytical Chemistry at GSU and this semester she was the recipient of a coveted American Chemical Society (ACS) Bridge Scholarship.

Despite her struggles to pick a major, Nicholson eventually found her place in GSU's Analytical Chemistry program, "I started looking into a Master's degree options with chemistry, biochemistry, then it was like okay [analytical chemistry] is something different." Nicholson appreciated the instruments that GSU has for its students. As her mentor, Chemistry Professor Dr. John Sowa remarked, the MS in Analytical Chemistry is "a wonderful program . . . I think we have fantastic facilities, fantastic instruments so the students can learn how to drive and operate the instruments independently."

Through the outstanding facilities that GSU provides, Nicholson was able to form a thesis focusing on a particular machine, High-pressure Liquid Chromatography (HPLC). She was able to figure out how to use the HPLC and develop her own method of using it. Her next step is to get the results as precise as she needs it before presenting her thesis in May 2021.



Smothers Nicholson using the HPLC machine.

She was excited to receive the ACS Bridge Scholarship, which is intended to get underrepresented students interested in chemical science PhD programs. "Dr. Sowa sent me a link and asked me to look into it" remarked Nicholson. Realizing that the scholarship aimed at supporting women and underrepresented students, Nicholson remarked, "So, I was like I'm both. Why not apply?" After receiving the scholarship, Nicholson took advantage of the online workshops that it offers, including one that allowed her to learn the HPLC machine better.

Upon graduating, Nicholson hopes to get back to working in the pharmaceutical field where she worked for five years. That work focused more on research and development rather than analytical skills. Now, Nicholson says, "I'm looking to put them together and just see where it takes me." ■

GSU's Center for Community Media Puts Theory into Practice

By Erik Kay

“The heart of CCM is the approach to community.”

GSU doesn't beat around the bush when it comes to its core values. Diversity, inclusiveness, and community outreach are at the forefront of our beloved institution's mission. The Center for Community Media (CCM) seeks to enact these values through community-oriented journalism, increased media literacy, and the union of scholarship, teaching, and public service.

Dr. Deborah James (Media Studies) has led the CCM since it was conceived in 2018 and assumed the chair of the CCM Steering Committee in the fall of that year. The Committee guides and assesses CCM projects conducted by its three collaborative units: The Student Media Institute, the Media Across the Curriculum initiative, and a proposed Media Research Institute.

The Student Media Institute is responsible for GSU Sports Broadcasting, and the student-run news sources *This Week at GSU (TWAG)* and *The Phoenix*. In 2019, GSU joined the Broadcast Education Association, thus granting students networking opportunities and access to BEA competitions.

The Media Across the Curriculum initiative, led by Dr. Novia Pagone and Dr. Kerri Morris (Professors of Hispanic Studies and English, respectively), bolsters media literacy and participation across the GSU curriculum. Dr. Pagone and Dr. Morris accomplish this by bridging their First-Year Seminar and First-Year Writing courses. They guide students through the production process as written stories are transformed into A/V scripts read for a live camera.

The proposed Media Research Institute will promote and support media projects for interdisciplinary and public audiences. For instance, this year CAS supported Dr. Rebecca Siefert (Art History) who produced a TED-style talk program that explores the influence of artist/architect Laretta Vinciarelli on architect Donald Judd, and which further explores issues of sexism and accreditation in Art History.

Perhaps the most visible fruits of the CCM's labors are two podcasts: *The Southland Health and Wellness Hour (SHWH)* and *Teaching and Learning: Theory vs. Practice (TLTP)* produced by COE faculty with the support of Marketing and Communications. According to Dr. James, the *SHWH* provides “much needed discussion on the intersection of social justice, race, [and the] health and wellbeing of residents of the Southland region.” Recently, *SHWH* ran a series of podcasts concerning COVID-19 and its effect on local communities and the importance of health oriented self-advocacy. The episodes, partially funded by a Healing Illinois Grant through Illinois Health and Human services, include a frank discussion about COVID-19 vaccination access, as well as an episode on farming and gardening. Developed and hosted by COE's Dr. Joi Patterson and Dr. Amy Vujaklija, the *TLTP* podcast boasts 25 episodes with 15 more in production (at the time of press), and addresses the question of theory vs. practice and its effect on education.

Though its current productions already enact GSU's core values, the CCM is looking to expand. The CCM is currently applying for formal standing as a Research Center. Once approved, Dr. James expects to “expand . . . opportunities to all disciplines and [to] launch an internet campus-community radio station.” The radio station will offer students additional opportunities to experience media production.

Ultimately, the CCM's mission is to foster community and awareness: according to Dr. James, “The heart of CCM is the approach to community. CCM provides a framework for interdisciplinary problem solving by building collaborations between faculty, students, and administrators and our surrounding communities.” As the aforementioned podcasts indicate, the CCM strives to bolster awareness of social, environmental, health and economic issues. ■

Tune in to GSU's podcasts:

<https://www.govst.edu/podcasts/>

Dr. Siefert's TED-style talk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvCeG1ez6KE>

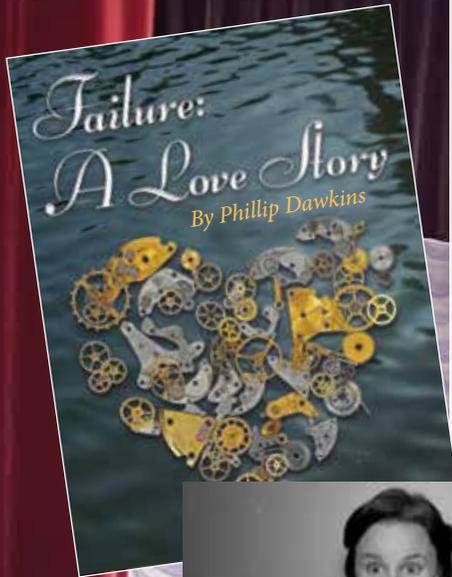
Embracing the Unexpected

By Courtney Keller

GSU's TAPS Program Outperforms COVID-19

"Working in the theatre is embracing the unexpected," claims visiting director Jeremy Ohringer. With the limited ways in which shows could be performed because of the past year's pandemic, GSU's Theatre and Performance Studies program (TAPS) has been passionately proving this sentiment to be true. Not only have students adopted new ways to learn their craft, but they have also transformed the experience of live performance into a virtual format that audiences can enjoy in the comfort of their own homes.

During the TAPS program's 2020-'21 season, directors like Ohringer and GSU's own Dr. Patrick Santoro have continued to collaborate with casts and crews to create memorable productions despite COVID-19. Without the ability to meet and work in-person as they could before, "Zoom theatre" has become a place where performance can still thrive.



"I think that working in the online format pushed us to be resourceful and creative problem solvers. You can use what is around you to create something special."

Back in November of 2020, Ohringer directed a completely remote production of the play *Failure: A Love Story* which follows a whimsically told tale of three sisters who all meet untimely ends within the same year. Relying solely on Zoom calls to put together the show involved constant communication and innovation from the entire group. The production team helped order and deliver costumes and props to the cast so they could more easily create movement and energy on-screen. Additionally, they learned how to use Premiere Pro to edit a prerecorded show together for online streaming to avoid any potential technical issues of a live Zoom performance. The cast also presented a more subtle, film-style performance rather than the exaggerated acting of on-stage theatre. GSU student and cast member Manuel Reza says of the experience, "We do not necessarily need to be in a theatre to create enthralling performance art. I think that working in the online format pushed us to be resourceful and creative problem solvers. You can use what is around you to create something special."

Cast members rehearse for their live-streamed performance of *bobrauschenbergAmerica*.
 Upper right photo (from left to right):
 Rey Andujar, Michael DePriest,
 Faiz Siddique, Thea Anderson,
 and Ronald McDowell.
 Lower left photo (from left to right):
 Chuck Salvatore and Thea Anderson.



“bob has been a welcome opportunity to embody our craft once again, in real-time and real space, in a room with other people. Personally, it’s made me feel less alone, more connected to others, and that’s what so many of us need right now.”



The TAPS program continued to create something special through its most recent spring 2021 production of *bobrauschenbergAMERICA*—a play that explores America and what it means to be American within a nonlinear narrative told through the collage style of visual artist Robert Rauschenberg. Instead of a completely remote experience, the TAPS program integrated an in-person element for this play. There were multiple in-person rehearsals and the show itself was live-streamed on campus. “Zoom removes the embodied,” explains Dr. Santoro who directed the production, “bob has been a welcome opportunity to embody our craft once again, in real-time and real space, in a room with other people. Personally, it’s made me feel less alone, more connected to others, and that’s what so many of us need right now.” With in-person meetings, the production team was extremely careful to ensure everyone’s safety. The cast was kept 6 feet apart at all times, masks were always worn, and Stage Manager and TAPS major Kimelia Carter would even check everyone’s temperatures before any rehearsal began. Even though all of these precautions were taken, one company member did contract the virus. However, safety remained the production’s first priority, so the live-streamed event was postponed until May 6-8.

Overall, GSU’s TAPS program has been incredibly innovative and flexible in its approach to performance during COVID-19. Reza explains, “Because of covid, it felt like we could not do the things we love anymore. Doing this show proved that idea wrong, and it was because of everyone’s combined effort.” The show must go on and at GSU you know it always will. ■

For more information on past and future TAPS productions, visit:

[https://www.govst.edu/About/Center for Performing Arts/All Events by Date/](https://www.govst.edu/About/Center%20for%20Performing%20Arts/All%20Events%20by%20Date/)

Voices from Our Graduates



ATHANASIOS KOLOVOS
*MA in Political and Social
Justice Studies*

I had such a fantastic experience as an undergraduate student. It was a no-brainer for me to choose GSU for my graduate program! Members

of surrounding communities often refer to GSU as “the hidden gem of the south suburbs.” I’m certainly going to miss the unique community we have at GSU. I don’t think any other public university has a student body as diverse and dedicated to community engagement as we are!



SHANNON PORTER
BA in Business Administration

I am a middle-aged mother of three boys, who didn’t know what the road ahead would be like going back to college, but once I made the decision, I was all in! I chose GSU because the Dual

Degree Program was very encouraging. I can’t stress enough what the excellent business program has to offer. I will be starting the Master of Science in Human Resource Management in the fall at GSU. I will have the fantastic opportunity to learn much more and experience new courses and professors.



ERIN SCHISLEY
MS in Biology

I chose GSU because it is the only University in the area with a biological field station on campus and an environmental biology program at the graduate level. GSU gave me the opportunity

to work hands-on with plants and animals. My favorite memories are the outdoor labs and trips. There is nothing better than being able to have a class outdoors and enjoying the nature around you.



ERIK KAY
BA in English

GSU has given me confidence. I had just gotten through a long string of personal failures when I got here, and I was nervous to even try to succeed. Honestly, coming back to school gave me sweat-soaked

nightmares. I’ve enjoyed my classes, and several professors have really had a hand in guiding me towards my educational and career goals. I gradually built the confidence I’m graduating with. I feel as though I’m capable of achieving a career, a future I’ll love.

SARAH WIORA

MA in English

On the last day of the semester in Dr. Muhammad's class, when everyone brings snacks, we all discuss our final papers and talk about the class overall. It's one of my favorite memories and something I will really miss! I loved late-night lectures that always turned into a group of us walking to the parking lot together and continuing to talk about the class for at least twenty more minutes! Some of my favorite moments took place at random on the library balcony, studying and talking and getting to know friends even better. I have never attended a school like GSU before, and I am so grateful I went to school here!



JAMES ZUMHAGEN

BS in Biology

I've met incredible professors who have been assisting me on my journey through higher education and I've built a superb support system with classmates in both the psychology department and the biology department. I participated in the Dual Degree Program with its monthly community service and am a member of the Social Development Lab run by Dr. Cipra. GSU helped me complete my bachelor's degree, gave me some great new friends, and gave me more knowledge and skill to be invaluable in my career.



ZHAMARR THOMPKINS

BA in Media Studies

GSU has given me a chance and a place to flourish. I have learned so much about myself, and being here allows me to tap into my potential. I got a chance to be the director of the sports broadcast here

at GSU. Also, I got a job as a production assistant in Digital Learning and Media Design. Working here gave me a chance to meet other like-minded individuals and form friendships/relationships that are very important to me.



ALEX PAVLOSKI

BFA Independent Film and Digital Imaging

What I will miss most about GSU is the people. From Nancy at the front desk greeting me every morning to the Department for Digital Learning and Media Design staff, the crew in the center for performing arts, the professors, organization leaders, bookstore and cafeteria employees, I was always running into someone I previously met. It was a nice feeling to be recognized, everyone I met was always kind and welcoming.



MALIK A. DAVIS

BS in Biology

I wanted to build a network of like-minded individuals who were passionate about helping others and giving back to the community. Through the university, I was able to study abroad. I participated

in the 2019 Global Public Health Brigade to Panama to assist an indigenous community. This experience would open me up to a Physical therapy internship in Costa Rica the following summer. To top it off, I built a strong connection with many of the biology department staff and throughout the university, something I think I could not have done at a bigger university.

MADELEINE NALIWKO

BS in Biology

The study group I found within the biology department (Shout out to the A-Squad!) have become lifelong friends who will support me through every academic and personal hurdle I come to. The professors inspired me and showed me how intelligent, creative, and capable I am. They are the ones who have altered my path for the better and are instrumental in me finding who I want to be. I am fortunate that I don't have to miss anything about GSU because I have chosen to stay here to complete my master's degree. I have no doubt that when I leave I will miss the environment of the biology department that has shaped my goals, but for now, I'm happy to stay.



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