

ArtSci

Governors State University
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

SPRING 2025



Education of the Future with AI

Photography and Photo editing by Michael Scalzo for
"The AI Vanguard Fellows Program" article.

Letter from the Dean



Jason Zingsheim
*Dean, College of Arts
and Sciences*

Welcome to the ninth annual issue of *ArtSci*, a showcase of what happens when imagination meets action in the College of Arts and Sciences. This year's issue offers a glimpse into the vibrant, purposeful work of our faculty, students, and alumni—those who are shaping not only their own futures, but the future we share. The stories in these pages invite us to think boldly, act locally, and embrace the full power of education to transform communities. Whether you're encountering *ArtSci* for the first time or are a long-standing member of our CAS community, I hope you see yourself reflected in the energy, diversity, and ambition captured here.

We are especially grateful to *ArtSci*'s faculty advisor, Prof. Laura White (English), and her remarkable student editorial team—Jasmine Ferral (English BA), Victoria Gomez (English BA), Alexander Randak (English BA), Paul Tucker (English MA), and Camille Younger (Interdisciplinary Studies BA). Their work brings forward compelling stories that show how the liberal arts and sciences at GovState prepare students not only for careers but for leadership, creativity, and contribution.

In this issue, you'll read about hands-on research ranging from drone delivery technology to ecological fieldwork in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. You'll learn how students are building leadership through the College Advisory Board, and how new faculty roles—including assistant deans—are shaping the next phase of CAS. Our AI Vanguard Fellows are charting a path into the future, while the Southland History Collective is preserving and interpreting our past. And through a new partnership with the Art Institute of Chicago, we're placing art—once again—at the center of civic life.

As we look to the next academic year, we're expanding our efforts to bolster student success, developing more opportunities for community-engaged research, and welcoming new partners into our classrooms, studios, and labs. GovState's mission is to provide an exceptional and accessible education that equips students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed in a global society. That mission lives in the classroom—but also in the galleries, forest preserves, neighborhoods, and communities surrounding us. From the [Center for Community Media](#) and the [Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park](#) to the [Center for Performing Arts](#) and the Biological Field Station, the College of Arts and Sciences remains deeply rooted in the region we serve.

Whether you're attending a community event, considering a return to your education, or looking to give back, we invite you to stay connected. You can support our students by offering internships, mentoring, or scholarship funding—or simply by sharing what GovState has meant to you. Please reach out (CASdean@govst.edu). I'd love to hear from you.

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Partners in Art

GovState's New Partnership with the Art Institute of Chicago Brings Students Closer to the Works They Study

By Jasmine Ferral

When Art Appreciation professor Woodman Taylor initially discovered the Art Institute of Chicago's University Partnership Program, he envisioned more than a list of advantages. With many other schools within the state having an opportunity to have free admission to the museum, Prof. Taylor wondered why Governors State was not on that list. "We wanted our students to see the art we are talking about."

Prof. Taylor initiated the idea, and with help from Associate Professor Dr. Rebecca Siefert and many other faculty and staff, their proposal was accepted by the Office of the Provost to become a part of the partnership.

What did it lead to? Free admission to all GovState students with a valid school ID, ticket availability for faculty and staff, special University Nights, chances to meet students from the other universities in Chicago at yearly events like the University Partner Fest, and the opportunity to immerse yourself in the art the museum has to offer.

University Night, held in November, allowed students and faculty to take a guided tour around the museum. In April, students chose the exhibits to see and explore with their Art professors at GovState. The museum was open late for any GovState student with a valid ID to join the festivities, with faculty, staff, and even family members welcomed to join with free admissions on university nights.



DIGITAL ART BY SPENCER KICK



Prof. Taylor and Dr. Siefert pushed for this partnership so their students, as Prof. Woodman says, could “see the works they are studying. It’s an amazing resource.” Dr. Siefert emphasizes there is a sense of belonging for the Governors State students with this opportunity. “GovState students feel like they are underdogs in relation to University of Chicago students and many other big name universities.” With many different exhibits to view in the museum, students can actively engage with the art being taught in class. Not only do students get to see the art they are studying, but the library from the Art Institute is also open for students, giving them even more resources.

The partnership has opened up surprising possibilities for students to showcase their work. Among them is Spencer Kick (BFA Sculpture 2025), who was chosen to design the official launch poster. Kick designed a vibrant, digital image of the Art Institute’s famous lion statue composed of over 2,000 different shapes with a 70’s style background.

When asked about what drew Kick to design the

poster, he remarks, “Once I saw the amount of work that was going to go into the poster and the specific design elements that the Art Institute requested, I was much more intrigued.”

The poster features a great design that celebrates the new partnership. It also echoes the belief that teachers have in students and the innovative possibilities that are becoming a core part of the program. Kick’s design will be used in promotional materials and possibly used for future university events.

Prof. Taylor and Dr. Siefert are seeking ways to expand the partnership’s impact by collaborating with other departments and student organizations. As GovState students start to view the Art Institute as a local element of their schooling, the University’s daring step into partnership is already yielding inspiration, opportunity, and a new sense of connection to art.

For more information about limited tickets for faculty and staff, contact Dr. Siefert at rsiefert@govst.edu.

“We wanted our students to see the art we are talking about. It’s an amazing resource.”

Shaping the Future

College Faculty Take on New Leadership Roles

Victoria Gomez

This academic year, CAS introduced two new leadership positions: Assistant Dean for Faculty Development and Assistant Dean for Program Development. These roles are part of a strategic initiative to expand support for faculty and students across the college, ensuring continued excellence in teaching and learning.



Dr. John Sowa

Dean Jason Zingsheim recognized both the size of the college and the need for more focused support structures, seeing these new roles as a way to enhance academic excellence and build capacity from within.

“We’re the largest of the degree-granting colleges at GovState,” Dean Zingsheim explained. “Time is one of those resources you can’t make more of, and these roles allow us to bring in additional leadership to support our faculty and students. It also provides a chance for more people to develop their leadership skills while remaining active faculty members.”



Dr. Bradley Smith

Rather than create full-time administrative roles, the College opted for two half-time positions filled by current faculty, preserving their connection to teaching while allowing them to lead key initiatives. Dr. Bradley Smith, Professor of English, now serves as Assistant Dean for Faculty Development, and Dr. John Sowa, Professor of Chemistry, is the new Assistant Dean for Program Development.

After a year in his new role, Dr. Bradley Smith reflects on the journey that led him to become the Assistant Dean of Faculty Development in CAS and the meaningful work he’s doing to support faculty at every stage of their career.

With a background in writing and composition studies, Dr. Smith has long been immersed in the intricacies of effective teaching and communication. Before stepping into his current role, he served as the director of GovState’s First Year Writing Program, a position that laid the groundwork for his administrative leadership.

“That role introduced me to helping new faculty navigate teaching and communication strategies,” he explained. “Now, I get to do that work on a much larger scale.”

Dr. Smith’s goals are clear: to help faculty feel supported, connected, and successful. “Everyone here has slightly different goals,” he said. “Some are working on becoming stronger teachers, others are focused on research, and some are just getting acclimated to the institution. My job is to help them meet those goals, whatever they may be.”

A key part of his role involves supporting new faculty in their first and second years. Dr. Smith facilitates meetings and discussions around teaching practices, research support, and navigating the retention and review process. He also helps with sabbatical applications and promotion preparation. Looking ahead, he hopes to build on GovState’s already diverse offerings by identifying gaps in faculty development and creating spaces where colleagues can collaborate around shared teaching interests.

Dr. Smith also hopes to increase collaboration across departments and with other assistant deans. “There are great opportunities to connect our efforts and support faculty as a broader community,” he said.

Above all, Dr. Smith values the human element of his role, whether it’s supporting long-term career goals or simply helping a colleague troubleshoot a locked computer. “Helping people succeed in their jobs, even in small ways, makes this role incredibly rewarding.”

Just as Dr. Smith focuses on faculty development and support, Dr. Sowa’s leadership centers on the academic structures that guide student and faculty success.

As the new Assistant Dean for Curriculum, Dr. Sowa brings more than 30 years of academic experience to his role. Dr. Sowa has served in various leadership capacities throughout his career, including assistant and associate dean roles, as well as department chair. His background has equipped him with a thorough understanding of both faculty needs and the administrative processes that shape academic programs.

“One of the reasons I was drawn to this position was the opportunity to connect my passion for teaching with the



“By helping faculty bring new ideas into the classroom, we’re directly impacting the student experience.”



larger institutional systems that support it.” Dr. Sowa shared.

Dr. Sowa’s responsibilities focus on program development, including support for faculty in creating new courses, majors, minors, and certificates. Recognizing that curriculum development can be complex, he views his role as a facilitator, someone who can help faculty navigate approval procedures and reduce unnecessary delays.

“My job is to make the process easier, more efficient, and ultimately more rewarding for faculty,” he explained. “We have incredibly creative and innovative instructors, and I want to ensure their ideas are implemented successfully.”

Dr. Sowa is also leveraging technology to improve academic processes. He recently developed an AI-based syllabus evaluator that provides a preliminary review of

new course syllabi. This tool checks for required elements, formatting, and grammar before documents are submitted to curriculum committees, saving time and ensuring higher quality submissions.

Ultimately, Dr. Sowa sees his role as one that benefits students through a strengthened curriculum and more responsive academic offerings. “By helping faculty bring new ideas into the classroom, we’re directly impacting the student experience,” he said. “If any faculty or even students have ideas for courses or programs they’d like to see, I encourage them to reach out. We’re here to build something meaningful together.”

The introduction of these assistant dean roles marks a meaningful step forward for the College. As the new structure takes shape, students and faculty alike can look forward to a more dynamic and responsive educational environment.



Our Communities, Our Histories

By Alexander Randak and Paul Tucker

GovState Professors Work to Preserve Southland History

The Southland History Collective is an interdisciplinary team of GovState faculty and research assistants committed to community-engaged work. It started, according to Dr. Megan VanGorder, Assistant Professor of History, as an idea from faculty who wanted to dive into local histories and get students from across the university involved in meaningful ways. The Collective has taken on multiple projects involving freshman through graduate students in research-based approaches concerning the Southland. Dr. Eliot Fackler, Assistant Professor of History, and Dr. VanGorder were awarded two grants: a DEI mini grant in September 2023, and the NEH Spotlight on the Humanities grant in October of 2023. Dr. VanGorder spoke of the grant's purpose as being, "...so that we could bring on undergrad research assistants and visiting fellows who are teaching in local school districts to help us bring this project to life."

More than History: Research in the Classroom

Drs. Fackler and VanGorder are using their grants to pursue meaningful projects based in the Southland. In Fall 2024, Dr. Fackler's project led his freshman First Year Seminar (FYS) students and junior History majors to research the University Park water crisis with Aqua Illinois. Freshman students researched the history behind

“Once we start to see ourselves more clearly through our own histories, then we start to come up with justice-oriented solutions for our present and future.”



Dr. Eliot Fackler



Dr. Megan VanGorder

the water crisis in University Park and compiled a timeline of every notable event leading up to the present. At the end of the semester, students worked in groups to develop social media posts, a letter to the Governor, an editorial article, and more. FYS students collaborated with Dr. Fackler’s History majors, who were simultaneously working on a more sophisticated timeline on a website. Dr. Fackler noted the importance of the research-based learning that this project concerns, saying that, “I’m committed to trying to get freshmen involved in research from the moment they set foot on campus.”

One of Dr. VanGorder’s projects is a multi-pronged, multidisciplinary effort called Mapping the Illinois Underground Railroad. The project involves two classes from two different disciplines, a History 4002 course taught by Dr. VanGorder on the Civil War and Reconstruction as well as a Business capstone course led by Dr. Robert Garcia. Students map the Underground Railroad using a software called ArcGIS as well as research individuals involved in the Railroad from the Chicago Southland. Dr. VanGorder notes that while some of the research is digitized and online, other research is being done through interactions with local historical societies, encouraging connections that form a collective Southland community.

The Collective’s Community Connections

In addition to innovative classroom projects about the community, Drs. VanGorder and Fackler are creating resources for the local community, including the Collective’s website. Teachers in the area will then have access to free resources, such as their Underground Railroad digital map, as well as lesson plans focused specifically on the local communities.

To spread the word, their group will be hosting a teaching conference at GovState on June 17. They have invited many regional K-12 teachers to learn about local histories. Most importantly though, this conference will teach attendees how they can implement such histories within their own schools and districts. Drs. VanGorder and Fackler hope this will create new connections and collaboration opportunities.

When looking further into the future, Dr. VanGorder hopes this will result in a strong connection between “the otherwise somewhat disparate communities of the Southland,” and create a narrative cohesion amongst them. She adds, “once we start to look at ourselves and start to see ourselves more clearly through our own histories, then we start to come up with justice-oriented solutions for our present and future.” Dr. Fackler agrees: “That was the goal from the beginning, to see if there is a kind of coherent Southland identity.”

On April 2, 2025, they unfortunately “received notice that our grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities had been terminated” as part of broader government cuts to the NEH. Though it is a major disruption and disappointment, Dr. VanGorder notes that the Southland History Collective “remains committed to its mission....Now more than ever, we believe in the importance of preserving and sharing diverse histories that connect communities and educate future generations.”

If you’re interested in learning more, or joining the Southland History Collective, you can reach Dr. Fackler at efackler@govst.edu.

The AI Vanguard Fellows Program

Leading the Charge into the Future

By Camille Younger

A NEW ERA IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The world as we know it is changing. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming education, offering tools that support work-life balance, administrative efficiency, accessibility, and personalized learning. At the center of this transformation at GovState is the AI Vanguard Fellows program—an initiative launched in the summer of 2024, led by Dean Jason Zingsheim.

“I came up with the idea of creating an AI Vanguard Fellows program after reading the book *Co-Intelligence* by Ethan Mollick,” Zingsheim explains. Inspired by the book and ongoing conversations with the university’s Digital Learning Master Plan Committee, Zingsheim envisioned a group of faculty who would act as early adopters of AI tools. “If I could get a group of employees from across the university...to get in and play around with AI applications and then share what they learned in a useful manner with their colleagues, it would give us a way to do that.”

The program included book readings, stipends for software access and research, and presentations. It created an environment where faculty were encouraged to experiment, share insights, and reimagine what teaching and scholarship could look like in the age of AI.

CREATIVE IDEAS FOR PEDAGOGY AND SCHOLARSHIP

Faculty embraced the opportunity to explore AI tools in their teaching and academic work. Christopher Greiner, a University Lecturer in the Division of Arts and Letters, found the program immediately useful. Though he didn’t present formally, he actively engaged in discussions and read *Co-Intelligence* with the cohort.

“AI would help with lectures, writing prompts, and topic ideas,” Greiner said, pointing to the potential of AI to support creativity in the classroom.

Assistant Professor Dr. Erica Ceka, from the Master of



Dr. Erika Ceka

Public Administration Program, shared a similar excitement. “I love it because it’s a great learning experience,” she said. “I see a lot of opportunities where my knowledge can contribute to improving teaching, research, and everything else.” Ceka, working on the topic of AI, led four research projects and presented at faculty development events and national conferences.



Dr. Taylor Rogers

One faculty highlight included AI-generated video slides to accompany lectures, as explored in a presentation by Ceka. These innovative tools sparked further inspiration among her peers.

ETHICAL CONCERNS AROUND AI IN EDUCATION

Despite the enthusiasm, faculty members didn’t shy away from addressing serious concerns about AI’s integration. Greiner mentioned a common fear among educators: that AI might undermine basic learning processes or be misused by students and faculty alike.



Chris Greiner

Dr. Taylor “Tay” Rogers, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies, echoed this sentiment. A member of the 2024–2025 Vanguard cohort, Rogers is focused on ethical implications. “What does responsible AI use look like? How can we mitigate bias, environmental costs, and issues of copyright?” they ask.

A recent *Washington Post* article deeply impacted Rogers: “The fact that generating just 200–300 words



“AI education is not just about using tools—it’s about fostering literacy and ethics in students.”

of AI content can use the equivalent of a bottle of water ... makes me hesitant to explore without feeling like I’m contributing to harm.” As a result, Rogers began researching alternative, lower-impact tools such as China’s DeepSeek.

TEACHING STUDENTS RESPONSIBLE AI USE

For Ceka and Rogers, AI education is not just about using tools—it’s about fostering literacy and ethics in students.

“We need to go beyond writing,” Ceka argues. “Students should be evaluated on their ability to generate ideas, analyze data, and make informed decisions—skills that align with the demands of today’s workforce.”

To achieve that, she believes AI literacy should include:

- Using AI as a tool, not a replacement
- Writing effective prompts
- Evaluating AI outputs critically
- Combining tools for deeper thinking

Rogers adds, “Teachers are the primary guardrails against AI being used as a replacement for student learning. We need administrative support to explore how AI can enhance, not limit, education.”

Both agree that teaching students how to use AI responsibly is essential. Rogers also noted how *Co-Intelligence* changed their perspective, framing AI as a “co-learner,” not just a tool—a partner in learning rather than a substitute for it.

BUILDING A FACULTY COMMUNITY AROUND INNOVATION

Beyond tools and ethics, the AI Vanguard program created a strong sense of community. Faculty connected through shared readings, Blackboard discussions, and

Friday reading groups. These gatherings cultivated an environment of collaboration and trust.

Ceka described the initiative as a gateway into “uncharted territory.” She emphasized the importance of having institutional support: “I can grow, and I can contribute to the university advancement—and that’s excellent.”

She has since taken on a mentorship role in the second wave of the cohort, guiding others through the ethical integration of AI in the classroom. Her evolving mindset—from cautious observer to AI advocate—reflects the shift happening across higher education.

Greiner also shared the value of conversation: “Jason leading the conversation, the college leading the conversation, and having small groups within departments would help to balance misinformation surrounding AI.”

THE CONVERSATION IS JUST BEGINNING

Artificial intelligence is not going away—it’s evolving. And as it does, so must our approach to education.

While there are valid concerns, the AI Vanguard Fellows program at GovState has shown the importance of experimentation, thoughtful integration, and continued dialogue. Greiner, Rogers, and Ceka all agree: AI should not replace human learning, but it can support it—if guided with care.

“We must stay engaged and try. We can’t put our heads down,” Rogers urges. “The challenge is to stay engaged and keep asking the hard questions.”

AI is a tool, a partner, a conversation starter—and with leadership like Zingsheim’s and the insight of passionate educators across the College of Arts and Science, GovState is ready to lead the charge.



Conquering the Skies of Delivery!

GovState Takes Flight with Drone Delivery Internship

By Alexander Randak





Look up to the sky on GovState's campus in the next few months and you just might see the future of delivery—a (not so) little machine called a drone.

Following a \$75,000 grant from the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN), GovState's Drone Engineering Club partnered with start-up Valqari on an internship involving a three-phase process related to drone development. Grayson Sneed, director of operations at Valqari, stated that the IIN grant was written in the Summer of 2024 and "the wheel started turning" in October of that same year.

Following the grant, Prof. Shukmei Oh, University Lecturer in the Division of Science, Mathematics, and Technology and coordinator of the internship, began to look towards hiring interns. She states that in the first week the internship had 25 applicants. After intern positions were filled, Prof. Oh noted that students still wanted to participate, opting to volunteer just to be a part of it. Since the Fall of '24, students and faculty involved have been working diligently on their projects, with students presenting their progress in weekly meetings at the Social Justice Building on campus. Supervising faculty member Prof. Alex Liu of the Division of Science, Mathematics, and Technology, described the project as divided into "phases" that denote milestones of progression. Prof. Liu describes Phase One as setting the groundwork and installing software, having interns use simulation software Ubuntu, ArduPilot, and Gazebo to make 3D simulations of drone test flights executed through manual code commands. Students started with very little knowledge of these applications, and in between December and February were able to create complex simulations of manually executed test flights.

Phase Two of the project, which concluded in mid-March, concerns automation. Prof. Liu pointed out that initial commands were from manual input, noting that Phase Two would change this to an automated process through Python coding. The project is evolving in a way that requires participants to be adaptable, leading Prof. Liu to describe the final phase as "not knowing what to expect at this point."

"Students started with very little knowledge of these applications, and in between December and February were able to create complex simulations of manually executed test flights."

This internship allows student interns and volunteers to get first-hand experience with coding, engineering, and developing. It also gives students opportunities to collaborate on real-world problems and constraints. One of the many projects in this internship involves a group of three students, Brett Porter, Nathan Rodriguez, and Harshavardhan Datla. "Our current project is a computer vision system running on a drone that will help mitigate risk with drone deliveries," Rodriguez states. "Our objective is to ensure that the drone is able to detect people and cars, so that way, when a drone is en-route to a delivery, if it detects either one of those things, it will halt its operations and wait for a safe opportunity to continue."

This internship offers Governors State students involved a chance to be innovators for the future of the delivery market. Hands-on experience with drones expands students' readiness for the job market, and, most importantly, fosters creativity and collaboration right here on our campus.

For more information about the project, please contact Prof. Shukmei Oh at soh@govst.edu.





Beyond the Classroom

Exploring Ecology with Dr. John Yunger

By Victoria Gomez

For more than two decades, Dr. John Yunger, a professor of Biology at Governors State University, has been taking students beyond the classroom and into the heart of nature. His field-based courses in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan offer students hands-on experience in wildlife biology, ecology, and conservation, an opportunity that is both educational and transformative.

Dr. Yunger's motivation for these trips was both personal and professional. "To be completely frank, I'm not a fan of cornfields and soybean fields," he admitted. "I wanted to go somewhere more remote, somewhere with a rich

diversity of wildlife. And for our students, it was the same, a chance to step outside their familiar environments."

The program takes students to the Keweenaw Peninsula, a sparsely populated region in the U.P. known for its vast wilderness and diverse wildlife. "Most of our students have limited travel experience," Yunger noted. "Many had never even crossed into Wisconsin before. So for them, this is quite an adventure."

For Amanda Lask, a Biology major minoring in Chemistry, these trips shaped her academic and professional trajectory.



“I went into college knowing that I loved the outdoors,” Lask said. It was a chance encounter with Dr. Yunger’s Mammalogy course that set her on a new path. “I was a sophomore when I heard it was running, and I had to request special access to take it early. Thankfully, Dr. Yunger let me in,” she recalled. “That was my first time up in the Keweenaw Peninsula, and I realized, this is the kind of research I want to do.” Her story reflects a broader experience shared by many students who have taken part in the program.

The program blends rigorous scientific study with immersive, hands-on fieldwork, giving students rare opportunities to engage directly with wildlife. Students might track mammals using infrared cameras, study bird migration at top raptor sites, or explore aquatic ecosystems ranging from remote bogs to the pristine shores of Lake Superior. “This region is home to black bears, cougars, wolves, foxes, and bobcats,” Yunger said. “It’s one of the few places in the Midwest where you can experience such a variety of species in their natural habitat.”

With an estimated over 300 students having participated in these trips, the program has had a lasting impact. Dr. Yunger shared that one of his former students has now become a lead ecologist for a forest preserve in Illinois, and this program helped lead them in that direction.

Beyond career inspiration, the trips have also created

***“One year, we had
a day where we
saw over 1,500
hawks of 17
different species.”***



Dr. John Yunger

unforgettable moments in the field. “One year, we had a day where we saw over 1,500 hawks of 17 different species,” Yunger recalled. “The students were overwhelmed, saying, ‘We can’t keep up!’ That’s the kind of day you never forget.”

But the impact goes beyond scientific discovery. In the Fall of 2024, while conducting fieldwork in the U.P. students collected and donated 400 to 500 pounds of food to GovState’s food pantry through Dr. Yunger’s independent research harvest. “Students have offered to help expand that effort,” Yunger recalled. “It’s another way we can give back while learning.”

Reflecting on the impact of the program, Yunger summed it up best: “The goal is to get students outside, to help them experience science firsthand, and maybe, just maybe, inspire a lifelong passion for the natural world.”

Student Voices at the Table

Meet the Two Students Who Influence the Future at GovState

By Jasmine Ferral

When the College of Arts and Sciences Advisory Board gathers to discuss what the future has in store for GovState—be it new initiatives, keeping in contact with alumni, or long-term planning—two people in the room take a hard look: the Student Representatives. The two students chosen to be those representatives were Lanetta Thomas and Brett Porter. Thomas and Porter are both undergraduate students who have accomplished so much in their lives, earning their degrees was just their next step towards greatness. Both are non-traditional students actively involved with not only their academics and extra curricular activities, but are contributing members in society. These factors were the driving force the Advisory Board needed in inviting these students to share their perspectives on the student experience with the committee.

The board started in 2009 as a small, informal committee of “friends of the college,” but it has developed into an important group of alumni, community leaders, and college members. They work together to keep the college connected, responsive, and looking to the future. At the center of everything is the student voice. It was important for the advisory board to choose students to be the internal members within the board. Porter, being a Computer Science major, is a representative of the science population here at GovState, and Thomas represents the liberal arts population.

These student representatives do not sit idly by—

they act. As active participants at meetings and in discussions, they discuss what it is like to be a CAS student today. They pose questions, celebrate achievements, and bring a unique perspective that helps the students even more. From offering comments on career development programs to suggesting mentorship and internships, their role connects planning with reality.

Their participation shows that the work of the board does not merely change the appearance of the college or what it offers—it affects real students today. But sitting on the board also provides the student reps with something valuable: a place at a table where they are not only regarded as students, but as leaders. The experience is excellent for being involved in significant conversations with alumni and staff, assisting in making practical decisions, and observing firsthand how organizations evolve and mature.

At Governors State University, Porter and Thomas personify the College’s values of diversity, community, and inclusion. They help chart the College’s future while inspiring students to be more involved.

“At Governors State University, these student leaders personify the College’s values of diversity, community, and inclusion.”



Lanetta Thomas ***BA Political Science*** **2025**

Thomas is an undergraduate student at GovState but she is also a mother, a veteran, a social justice activist, and a politician in the city of Chicago. Thomas saw this as an opportunity not only to add to her resume, but to be a voice for students when decisions are being made. Growing up, Thomas always sought ways to bring people together; she had always had the passion for social activism and to be a voice for the unheard. When working for Dean Zingsheim, the Dean of CAS, and Stacey Amedeo for the advisory board for center of relations, they saw Thomas' hard work and dedication and offered her a position as a Student Representative on the CAS Advisory Board.



Brett Porter ***BS Computer Science*** **2025**

As a returning student at GovState, Porter leads as Vice President of the Drone Engineering Club, Vice President of the Innovation Club, President and founder of the Software Engineering Club, and Vice President of the Student Senate. Because of his illustrious resume and active involvement, Porter was also asked to join the CAS Advisory Board. Returning to school, Porter wanted a different outcome to what he previously experienced his first time at GovState. So he set out to accomplish everything he could, and ultimately, he did. With different positions in leadership, Porter is a role model to students who are still learning how to be more active on campus, encouraging them to connect and branch out.



LAURA WHITE, M.F.A

FACULTY ADVISOR FOR ArtSci MAGAZINE

Governors State was founded on radical ideas: classrooms without walls, courses without grades. More than five decades later, many of us embrace the spirit of those originating principles: learning happens everywhere, and each student has an inner purpose that fuels their pursuits. These foundational ideas animate the *ArtSci* writer's experience.

For our student writers, *ArtSci* offers a learning opportunity outside of the traditional learning space. Throughout the semester, they work autonomously, researching their stories and interviewing our excellent faculty, students, and staff. They track down the details across campus, meeting professors in their offices and shadowing student clubs in action. And these five writers have undertaken this work not for a grade but to learn, to grow in their craft, and to have a chance to write for real readers—for you.

Working on this newsmagazine, students discover that CAS flourishes through the collective efforts of many people—disciplinary experts, student leaders, community learners, initiators and innovators—all building connections throughout our campus and our communities. We owe gratitude to the faculty and students who generously opened their work and their lives to us for this educational experience. We owe an equal debt of gratitude to our friends in MarCom—project manager Corrie Lee and award-winning graphic designer Michael Scalzo—whose enthusiasm for collaboration and artistic excellence brings these stories to life.

We hope that as you read these stories, you can glimpse the dedication that goes into this effort and the why behind it all.

Our Student Writers



VICTORIA GOMEZ

I am an English major with a double minor in Professional and Practical Ethics and Creative Writing, expecting to graduate in Spring 2026. Outside of class and work, I enjoy going out to hear live music and chipping away at my long reading list.

This is my first year writing for *ArtSci*, and it's been a rewarding experience! I've loved meeting new people and getting more involved on campus. I'm excited to keep growing as a writer and creative voice in the GovState community.



PAUL TUCKER

I am an English graduate student in my second and final year of my master's program. This was my third year writing for *ArtSci*, and I loved every single second of it. As I end my chapter here at GovState, I will always look back at what

ArtSci has given me: new friends, new experiences, and a continued love for writing.



ALEXANDER RANDAK

I am an English major expecting to graduate in Fall 2026. This is my first year writing for the College of Arts & Sciences magazine, and it has been a wild ride! It has introduced me to a new side of writing that I won't forget. Outside of school, I love

playing and releasing music, solo or with my band, and creative writing.



CAMILLE YOUNGER

I currently work in the Registrar's office here at GovState University, majoring in Interdisciplinary studies, and I'm a mother of three broke best friends. This is my first year being a part of *ArtSci* hopefully not my last. I will be graduating

in May with my B.A., and will pursue the masters program with the focus on English. When I'm not working or pursuing education, I'm writing poetry, singing, working on arts and crafts, and finding fun events that are free or discounted. I love eating and trying new things, very open to traveling more, and always willing to be a part of something wonderful. I'm a part of organizations here at the school including NSLS, First Gen, and a few others where I support their mission.



JASMINE FERRAL

I am an English major and I am graduating in Spring 2025. This is my second year in *ArtSci* and I have had the most fun writing my stories as it fulfills my passion for writing. Some of my hobbies include a good

craft like journaling or gardening or I enjoy watching a good movie to take me to another world for a few hours. But writing has always been my passion since I was young. I also love connecting and being open to the world to learn new things and experiencing the world around me.

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