



This
is what it's all about

★
PRESIDENT'S
ANNUAL REPORT
2021

And it starts here

Peyton T. Anderson Enrollment Center



Letter from the President

In last year's annual report, I wrote of how our community returned to campus following the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how we "Armored Up" – physically and metaphorically – to help keep our campuses safe and thriving. Twelve months on, we can see the effects of that armoring, and I can confidently say that despite the continued ravages of the global pandemic and the myriad challenges that have arisen from it, Middle Georgia State's armor remains solid, and that our University has continued to thrive and grow in a very uncertain world.

One of the biggest success stories from the past twelve months is the launch of our institution's first-ever doctoral degree, a Doctor of Science in Information Technology, providing a pathway for current and future IT professionals to take on top leadership positions in this ever-growing field. With elevation to Level V by our accrediting body, SACSCOC, we are now eligible to continue expanding our doctoral offerings, further cementing our status as a home for both exceptional undergraduate and career-focused graduate education.

Growing not only academically, MGA has also worked towards growing a more inclusive, shared campus culture over the past year. Initiatives looking at our institution's diverse population and providing a space for the sometimes difficult but always necessary conversations about how we live, work, and study together have been a major focus for 2020-21.

As we weather the ongoing pandemic, the mental wellbeing of our students and employees remains a priority, and the past year has seen a number of fruitful partnerships working towards that end. With wellness programs designed to provide students with on- and off-campus resources to help them weather the storms of not only the pandemic, but also life in general, we hope to help ensure that our students are able to focus on completing their studies and earning their degrees.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the support from our communities, and 2020-21 has been another banner year, with both public and private investment in our mission allowing us to provide more scholarships, better facilities, safer campuses, and more engaging programs for our students. Completion of a number of capital projects across our campuses have made us a more welcoming presence for both students and visitors, and the success of our ongoing *Building a Legacy of Greatness* campaign will ensure that we can continue to do so in the future.

I hope you will enjoy reading about these and other highlights from the past year. I hope you will join me in celebrating the triumphs of 2020-21, and that you will find the same inspiration that I find in seeing the results of a dedicated team's efforts. And, I hope you will continue to support our mission of graduating lifelong learners who will use their talents and skills to make the world a better place.



Christopher Blake, Ph.D.
President



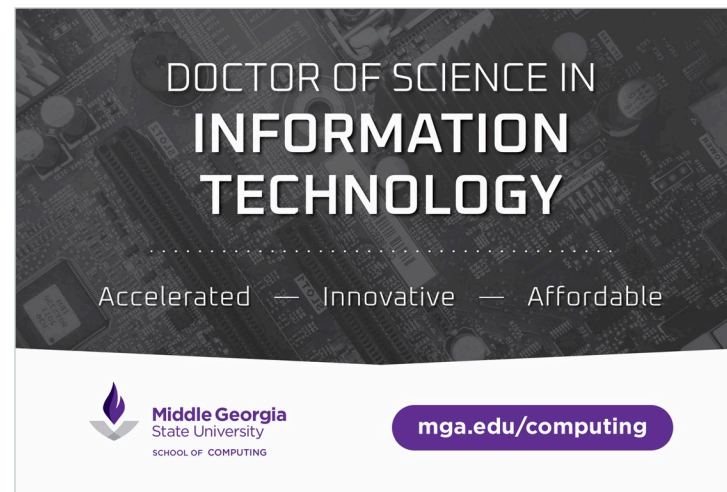
MGA Elevated to Level V, Offers First Doctoral Program



In late 2020, Middle Georgia State University became a Level V institution following approval from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The new status, which SACSCOC announced on Dec. 8, 2020, meant that the University could move forward in offering its Doctor of Science in Information Technology (DSIT) beginning in June 2021. (SACSCOC designates institutions by levels that reflect the kinds of degrees those institutions are approved to offer.)

The new DSIT is the first doctoral degree in MGA's history. The Doctor of Science in Information Technology is designed to prepare graduates to assume leadership roles and manage information technology and systems within organizations. Doctoral students study quantitative analysis and research, strategic planning as it relates to information technology, data science and analytics, leadership and management, and more.

Becoming a Level V institution is a significant milestone for MGA, which has historical roots as a two-year institution. MGA became a state university in summer 2015 and began offering master's degrees shortly thereafter, with a longer-term goal of developing doctoral degrees specifically for professionals in certain career fields.



DSIT introduced in June 2021, with 29 students enrolling in the program

Middle Georgia State Introduces Two New Graduate Programs

In May 2021, MGA got approval from the University System of Georgia's Board of Regents to launch a fully online **Master of Arts in Public Relations** beginning spring semester 2022, pending SACSCOC approval.

The degree, housed in MGA's School of Arts & Letters, is designed to prepare students to begin or enhance their careers as public relations professionals.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts "faster than average" job growth for public relations specialists over the next few years. Additional federal data points to a "bright outlook" for other jobs related to public relations, including media and communication specialists and managers of artists, performers, and athletes.

In spring 2021, MGA introduced a fully online **Post-Master's Certificate program in Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner**.

The certificate program is geared toward Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN). It allows APRNs who are certified in other advanced nursing practice roles to receive the necessary education they need to take the Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner certification exam.

RNs who can attend to the healthcare needs of the aging baby boomer population and centenarians are — and will continue to be — in high demand.



Student Highlight

Taking advantage of a unique opportunity, eight students on MGA's Cochran and Eastman campuses have taken part-time jobs as City of Cochran firefighters. They join almost twenty others who have taken the same path in recent years. Four MGA student-firefighters were selected as City of Cochran's Employees of the Month for March 2021.

MGA Launches “Be Well” Mental Health Support for Students

The logo for "Be Well @ MGA" is presented in a white, hand-drawn style within a purple speech bubble. The text "Be Well" is on the top line and "@ MGA" is on the bottom line, both in a casual, brush-stroke font.

In partnership with the University System of Georgia (USG), Middle Georgia State significantly expanded mental health services to students. As part of a new initiative called BeWell@MGA, the University introduced the expanded services in spring semester 2021. The services include access to a new app and an online wellness publication with self-help resources and a 24/7 support line for students who need support dealing with mental stresses.

MGA received funding for the project through the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER Fund). Under the GEER Fund, which was established through the federal CARES Act, the U.S. Department of Education awarded grants to state governors for the purpose of providing local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, and other education-related entities with emergency assistance to help deal with the COVID pandemic.

MGA was also the recipient of five mini-grants from the USG, which provided for a number of new initiatives aimed at improving mental health. Among these programs were new training opportunities for students, faculty, and staff on issues such as suicide prevention, peer education, and general mental wellness awareness. Also included were funding for “Fresh Check” days, special mental health check-in events featuring interactive booths, prizes, and other activities. Finally, one mini-grant funded the development and distribution of Knights Care Kits, handouts which provide resources and guidance to assist students struggling with mental health issues as they navigate the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the pressures of college.

In addition, MGA has consulted with the JED Foundation to develop a mental health strategic plan, which will outline institutional goals in the pursuit of improved mental health over the coming years.

MGA Expands Diversity Programming and Conversations



During spring semester 2021, the Office of Student Life gave MGA students, staff, and faculty opportunities to formally pledge to listen to the stories of others, treat all people with dignity and respect, and commit to fostering an inclusive learning environment.

In response to the wave of social movements and protests that followed the violent deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd in 2020, Middle Georgia State University placed a renewed emphasis on diversity, inclusion, and equity-related programs at the institution.

Jenia Bacote, MGA's director of Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity/ Title IX, coordinates efforts

that support MGA's values and commitment to educate and create awareness about diversity, inclusion, and equity across the University's five campuses. Bacote's office and other MGA departments and divisions have planned and offered a full slate of programming to support diversity initiatives and help train, educate, and inform the MGA community. Such programs include the School of Arts & Letters' "Collective Action Series" and the Office of Student Life's "Inclusion Pledge" event during Black History Month.

USG Grant to Help MGA's BROS Initiative

Middle Georgia State University received a \$10,000 grant from the University System of Georgia's African American Male Initiative, a program designed to increase graduation rates of Black male students.



BROS participants Adarius McCoy (left) and Jahmar Davis (right). McCoy pursues a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with hopes of becoming a CPA. Davis, originally an aviation student, discovered his passion for vocal performance at MGA and pursues a Bachelor of Arts in Contemporary Musicianship with the hopes of working in musical theater.

The University also received a combined total of \$31,000 in grants in 2017 and 2019 to help fund an institutional-level version of the initiative Brothers Reaching Out for Success (BROS).

BROS members help each other with coursework, participate in campus life, and attend conferences on male empowerment and diversity and inclusion. They take part in presentations about mental health, creativity, plans for post-college life, and developing leadership skills.

Student Highlight

Middle Georgia State University current or recently graduated students made up four of the top 10 finalists in the 2020 "Secure the Future" event, a grueling multi-month academic competition where contestants come up with strategies to fight major cybersecurity threats. MGA was the only university in the nation with that many finalists.



MGA Launches \$11M “Building A Legacy of Greatness” Capital Campaign



BUILDING A LEGACY OF GREATNESS

A CAMPAIGN FOR MIDDLE GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

This past spring, the Middle Georgia State University Foundation launched the public phase of its *Building a Legacy of Greatness* capital campaign, inviting donors from around the region to invest in the continued success of the University.



Through the campaign, the Foundation hopes to raise more than \$11 million, which will be used to:

- help fund more student scholarships
- strengthen MGA’s academic programming
- recruit and retain quality faculty
- expand student athletic programs
- enhance professional development

The Foundation expects to reach its targeted goal by the end of 2021.

State Project Funds Assist with Continued Aviation Growth

As home to the only public, four-year school of aviation in the state of Georgia, Middle Georgia State is a key component in the state's efforts to grow the aerospace industry. With industry projections showing unprecedented demand for aviation professionals of all types – from pilots to technicians – MGA's School of Aviation programs remain in high demand.

In order to help meet that demand, and keep our students flying, the Georgia General Assembly, during its 2021 session, appropriated \$250,000 for the School of Aviation. These funds will provide for additional staff and faculty at the Eastman Campus aviation hub, including additional flight instructors, check-ride instructors, and dispatchers for the University's growing fleet of aircraft.



Student Highlight

MGA freshman Marlon Grant was selected as the Boys & Girls Club Southeast Military Youth of the Year, earning a \$20,000 scholarship. His award recognizes his launch of the "You Matter" project, a suicide-prevention initiative wherein affirming messages – "You are loved," "You belong here," etc. – are distributed along with gifts to individuals at churches, local festivals, and other events.

MGA Names New Provost and Vice President for University Advancement



Middle Georgia
State University

MGA welcomed two new vice presidents and members of the President's Cabinet.

Dr. David Jenks joined the University as provost and vice president for Academic Affairs. Mary McDonald joined the University as vice president for University Advancement and executive director of the MGA Foundation.

Jenks heads up the Office of Academic Affairs, leads the University's faculty, oversees the development and implementation of new academic initiatives, and preserves continuity and advancement of existing programs.

McDonald leads the philanthropic efforts of the MGA Foundation to raise funds necessary to significantly advance the University's mission. She also serves as the primary lead for all alumni functions.



Dr. David Jenks



Mary McDonald

Atlanta Gas Light Endows Scholarship for Students in STEM Majors

Atlanta Gas Light established an endowed scholarship through the MGA Foundation to help students pursuing STEM-related degrees pay for their education.

Company leaders presented a \$30,000 check to University representatives in early 2021. The investment by Atlanta Gas Light included two funding components: \$20,000 to establish the endowment and \$10,000 to help students in STEM majors beginning fall 2021.

STEM-related degrees are those that focus on various aspects of science, including health sciences, and technology, engineering, and math.



L-R are Dr. Dawn Sherry, chair of the Department of Natural Sciences; Dr. Christopher Blake, MGA president; Dean Marianos, vice president of operations at Atlanta Gas Light; and Pedro Cherry, Atlanta Gas Light president and CEO.

PEYTON T. ANDERSON ENROLLMENT CENTER

Construction on the \$3 million Peyton T. Anderson Enrollment Center was completed in summer 2021. Funding for the privately funded facility came from The Peyton Anderson Foundation, which provided the largest grant at \$1.5 million, as well as other donors, including the Community Foundation of Central Georgia. The 8,000-square-foot center provides a central location for prospective students to apply for admission, secure financial aid, register for classes, and, as they approach graduation, transition into careers. In addition, it is the centerpiece of the University's significantly transformed front entrance to the Macon Campus. Along with a Macon-Bibb-financed major roadwork and roundabout project, as well as new signage that is highly visible to motorists on I-475 and Eisenhower Parkway, the new entrance serves as a west-end anchor to the area's central business corridor.



Student Highlight

Eleven MGA graduates were selected as "Teacher of the Year" for 2021-2022 at their respective schools. These graduates of MGA's teacher education program were honored by their students and colleagues at schools in Houston, Bibb, and Bleckley counties.





Middle Georgia State University

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