



ARMOR UP



PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Letter from the President

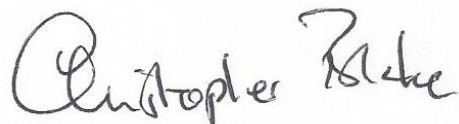
When students and employees returned to campus in August, following five months of studying and working remotely, we began using the phrase “Armor Up” to reinforce the importance of taking new health precautions to help prevent the spread of coronavirus on our campuses. Looking back, I find that our simple message has taken on a deeper meaning. I am proud to see that Middle Georgia State University has truly donned its armor in countless ways, both literally and metaphorically.

As we have faced the threats and disruption caused by COVID-19 – both physical and fiscal – we have also directed our efforts towards becoming more intentional in ensuring that our University is a place where all are treated fairly and equally. We continue to grow and evolve, listening to one another, working together to increase our understanding of one another, recognizing the strength that is found in our diversity of experience and thought, and relying on that strength to fortify this place where we grow, learn, and stand strong as one.

We have established partnerships with local government and businesses, creating new opportunities and better experiences for our region and state. We’ve continued expanding and adapting our academic offerings to ensure that MGA graduates are prepared to become the leaders of tomorrow. We’ve seen an ever-increasing number of learners coming through our doors to become Knights and scholars with us.

We’ve done all of this looking to our shared values - stewardship, engagement, adaptability, learning - to guide us. Our sacrifices, hard work, and tenacity have forged our character, which will allow us to emerge from this time of turbulence stronger than before. To carry out such remarkable work takes the confidence that can only come from being part of an exceptional community, one that is united and prepared to meet any challenge – a community that has truly Armored Up.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher Blake". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Christopher Blake, Ph.D.
President



STEWARDSHIP

Shaping the future of our campuses

This year saw significant changes to our campuses. Through collaboration with state and local government, as well as through private investment, these projects improve student experiences and advance learning opportunities.

A \$2.5 million project to improve safety and create a “walkable” community around the Macon campus was funded by Macon-Bibb SPLOST revenue. This project involved multiple road changes, including a new roundabout and main entrance to the campus.

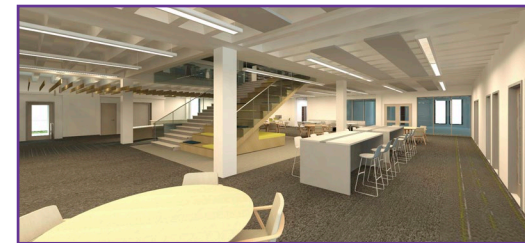
Near the roundabout, construction began on the new Peyton Anderson Enrollment Center, a privately funded facility on the Macon Campus designed to ease and streamline enrollment for prospective students.

The roads and access project was completed at almost the same time as the construction of Lakeview Pointe, a three-story residence hall that houses 300 students. The \$18.5 million project is the first newly built residence hall on MGA's Macon Campus, which opened in 1968 as a small commuter college.

In other partnerships related to capital improvements, MGA is using \$11 million in project-based funding appropriated by the Georgia General Assembly in 2020 to 1) expand space, equipment and faculty at the Dublin Campus to admit and graduate more nursing students; 2) buy new trainer aircraft and aviation equipment and build a new hangar for the Eastman Campus-based School of Aviation; and 3) fund completion of renovations at Roberts Memorial Library and Dillard Hall on the Cochran Campus.



Lakeview Pointe residence hall on the Macon campus



From left to right: renderings of new Romeiser entrance and traffic circle (Macon), Dillard Hall (Cochran), Roberts Library (Cochran)

STEM Grant expands undergraduate research opportunities

Middle Georgia State University (MGA) undergraduates pursuing science and math degrees are getting opportunities to do more research, thanks to a \$50,000 grant.

The funds will allow faculty in those departments to expand independent research projects or student apprenticeships and to embed research opportunities in science courses. The University System of Georgia's STEM IV Initiative recently awarded the grant, which is recurring and expected to continue through 2022, to MGA's departments of Natural Sciences and Mathematics & Statistics.



"The current model of undergraduate research at Middle Georgia State University impacts those students who seek out research opportunities and work individually or in a small group with a faculty member through, for example, apprenticeships," said Dr. Dawn Sherry, chair of MGA's Department of Natural Sciences. "The grant will help continue to fund these efforts, but a new emphasis will be on research in major courses. Given the many benefits of undergraduate research, making these research experiences available to all students in the program could have a significant impact on increasing student success in their courses and ultimately in their programs."

STEM is an acronym that generally refers to an applied, interdisciplinary approach to teaching science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Among the primary goals of the University System's STEM initiatives are to increase the number of students majoring in those subjects to help the U.S. remain a viable innovator and economic competitor internationally.

Dr. Donna Balding, assistant chair of the Department of Natural Sciences, co-authored the grant application with Sherry. Other team members are Dr. Richard Kilburn and Duane Day from the Department of Mathematics & Statistics, who have also overseen STEM grant activities in previous years and will continue to do so in the upcoming grant cycle. The Middle Georgia State University STEM grant team has been asked to play a leading role in assisting other institutions in the development of similar programs.

"This is a great opportunity for us to help more students find success in science and mathematics and provide them with the experience they need to either enter the workforce or graduate programs," Sherry said.

MGA remains a leader in enrollment growth

MGA continues to rank among the USG's enrollment growth leaders. The University set a summer enrollment record in 2020 - the largest percentage increase in its history - with 4,090 students, representing a 14.5 percent increase over the previous summer. MGA enrolled 8,404 students for fall 2020, an increase over the previous fall by about 4.2 percent.



"During this unprecedented time, our focus has been and always will be on our students," said Jennifer Stenander, vice president for Enrollment Management. "Our team continues to provide encouragement and support by giving students the resources and opportunity to rise to the occasion and persist toward completing their degree. Our students stepped up, faced the challenge, and we could not be more proud."

Dr. Christopher Blake, Middle Georgia State's president, said the University's success with an already established fully online campus, MGA Direct, helped students, faculty and staff effectively pivot to an all-digital format in the spring, which directly impacted summer enrollment.

"By already offering online courses and degree programs, our team was able to transition quickly for the spring semester which allowed students to continue with an even stronger summer and fall enrollment," he said. "It's a testimony to the determination of our students to adapt and stay focused on finishing their degrees."

"One of Middle Georgia State University's defined values is 'adaptability,'" Blake said. "The MGA community's shared value of adaptability has been tested these last few months, but we continue to meet the challenges head on."



ENGAGEMENT

U.S. Poet Laureate speaks at Middle Georgia State

In early 2020, MGA was honored to host Joy Harjo, the current U.S. poet laureate, on the Macon Campus. The event drew the largest number of attendees to an MGA-hosted event in recent memory.

“Joy Harjo’s appearance is a significant event for Middle Georgia State and the region,” said Dr. Mary Wearn, dean of MGA’s School of Arts & Letters, which co-sponsored the event along with the Ocmulgee Mounds Association. “We are honored to host America’s current poet laureate, especially given that she is someone with such close ties to the region.”

Harjo, an Oklahoma-born writer, is a member of the Muscogee Creek Nation, which lived across the Southeastern U.S., including in what is now Macon, until its forced removal to the Indian Territory west of the Mississippi in the late 1820s, according to the Ocmulgee National Historical Park website. The Creek Nation continues to play a vital role in the protection of Ocmulgee.

The author of several poetry collections, including *An American Sunrise*, Harjo has won many writing awards, including the 2019 Jackson Prize from the Poetry Society of America, the Ruth Lilly Prize from the Poetry Foundation, the 2015 Wallace Stevens Award from the Academy of American Poets, and the William Carlos Williams Award from the Poetry Society of America.



Joy Harjo speaks to a standing-room-only crowd



Wi-Fi Macon leverages MGA's technical acumen for a common good

MGA's School of Computing, in partnership with Cox Communications and Macon-Bibb County, developed Wi-Fi Macon, a free wireless internet service now being offered in downtown Macon along Poplar Street between Rosa Taylor Park and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Wi-Fi Macon was funded via a \$39,848 Downtown Challenge grant from the Community Foundation of Central Georgia. Faculty, staff, and students from the University's School of Computing worked with city officials, Cox Business and other community partners to complete the project.

Wi-Fi Macon
Provided by
Middle Georgia State University Foundation &
Middle Georgia State's School of Computing

Middle Georgia State University
DOWNTOWN CHALLENGE
Revitalizing Macon
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF CENTRAL GEORGIA, INC.

COX BUSINESS
MACON-BIBB COUNTY
FORWARD TOGETHER
2013 • 2014 • 2015

FREE
Wi-Fi

The graphic is a vertical purple banner with white and blue text and logos. At the top, it says 'Wi-Fi Macon' in large white letters. Below that, it lists the providers: 'Middle Georgia State University Foundation & Middle Georgia State's School of Computing'. The middle section features four logos: Middle Georgia State University, Downtown Challenge Revitalizing Macon, Cox Business, and Macon-Bibb County. At the bottom, there is a white Wi-Fi symbol and the text 'FREE Wi-Fi'.

“This is a win-win for Middle Georgia State and the people of Macon-Bibb. Visitors to downtown now have access to fast, free internet service, and our students and faculty have gotten valuable hands-on experience in developing this service for the community,” said Dr. Alex Koohang, dean of the School of Computing.

“Cox is proud to partner with Middle Georgia State University to bring this great service to Poplar Street,” said Bonnie Lopez-Crowe, market vice president for Cox Middle Georgia. “Public-private partnerships like these demonstrate our commitment to bringing cutting-edge technology to our community in new and innovative ways creating Smart City solutions for Macon-Bibb and its residents.”

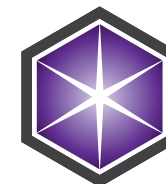
Center for Software Innovation set to assist regional industries with software needs

In December 2019, the School of Computing launched the Center for Software Innovation on MGA's Warner Robins Campus, in partnership with Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex (WR-ALC) at Robins Air Force Base. The Center is designed to identify software development projects that will elevate regional companies, nonprofits, startups, and other organizations.

The launch represents the first phase of the project. MGA and its partners will expand the Center over time.

“Our students will gain the opportunity to help solve real-world problems and connect with public organizations and businesses in an innovative environment and increase their employability,” said MGA president Dr. Christopher Blake. “The community benefits through more high-paying jobs in the area, more employers in the region, and more opportunities for economic development.”

Dr. Alex Koohang, dean of MGA's School of Computing, said he expects the Center to be part of a regional innovation ecosystem that will support the business community and the Air Force through the Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex. “Our business partners, WR-ALC, and service personnel will gain access to innovative solutions to software-focused problems,” he said. “Solutions will emphasize user-centered design and a quick turnaround.”



center for
software innovation

ADAPTABILITY

Office of Strategic Partnerships offers direct connection between employers and MGA

In September 2019, Middle Georgia State University announced the creation of a Strategic Partnerships office to work directly with businesses of all sizes, government, and various community organizations interested in helping their employees grow professionally by advancing their education.

Dr. Melinda Robinson-Moffett is leading the office, part of the Division of Enrollment Management. She and her staff are working to support the workforce needs of employers and help their employees complete their education goals primarily through MGA Direct, Middle Georgia State's online campus.

MGA Direct offers online bachelor's and master's degrees, as well as aviation-related associate's degrees and certificates. Most of the courses are offered in 8-week sessions allowing students more flexibility.

"A major benefit to students and our strategic partners is our degree programs are offered locally and globally," said Jennifer Stenander, MGA's vice president for Enrollment Management. "Students can take classes from anywhere in the world for the same low tuition rate. We have students enrolled from Macon, Georgia, to London, England. Anyone can complete their degree from anywhere."



Dr. Melinda Robinson-Moffett, right, at an MGA Direct recruitment event

Robinson-Moffett said companies that invest in employees by offering tuition assistance and encouraging them to pursue degrees or simply take some job-related courses tend to cultivate higher work satisfaction and a greater sense of loyalty among the people they employ.

"Employers benefit by cultivating on-the-job success no matter how large or small the company," she said. "One of our primary tasks is to make the admission process as smooth as possible and help MGA Direct develop flexible schedules and coursework that meet the specific needs of a given employer's workforce."

MGA's Strategic Partnerships Office is working with various corporate and civic clients, including Delta Air Lines, Bibb County School District, Wal-Mart, Navicent Health, GEICO, Macon-Bibb Government, YKK Incorporated, Coliseum Health System and AT&T.



Middle Georgia
State University

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS



Middle Georgia State University
ONLINE CAMPUS
MGA DIRECT



COVID-19: MGA's adaptability proves equal to the challenge of a global pandemic

The plans we had as we began 2020, both individually and collectively, evolved in ways we could not have imagined. At Middle Georgia State University, we successfully adapted to challenges by shifting academics and operations to a remote format in the middle of spring semester 2020 and then returning to on-campus operations in August.

MGA's students, faculty and staff demonstrated incredible resilience during these difficult-but-necessary adaptations. In the spring and summer, students persevered in their online coursework, despite unprecedented disruption to their personal, professional, and academic lives. The University developed plans for a safe return to campus, and our team worked hard over the summer to set the stage for a successful fall semester.

When we finally joined one another on campus, classrooms no longer looked as they did before, smiles were hidden behind face coverings, and the embraces and handshakes we commonly see on a return to the academic year were replaced with an obligatory six-foot gap between one another. Instead of the usual gatherings and welcoming events, we altered our social interactions to fit our new conditions. These sacrifices, and more, were a united effort to keep one another healthy.

In response to COVID-19 public health guidance, we were unable to hold in-person ceremonies for 2020 graduates; instead, a single virtual ceremony is planned for all 2020 graduates on December 10, 2020. Celebrating in this unconventional way is less than ideal, but the University is making every effort to ensure this virtual ceremony is a joyful, engaging and meaningful event that honors the remarkable achievements of all 2020 graduates.

We can be sure that our shared value of adaptability was evident in 2020, and we should be proud of our success in adjusting to this year's circumstances.



LEARNING

Two new deans, new organizational structure strengthen MGA's academic community

MGA named Dr. Mary Wearn as dean of the new School of Arts & Letters and Dr. Stephen Morse as dean of the School of Business. They were named deans in 2019 as MGA introduced a new academic organizational structure to help strengthen efforts to create smaller, supportive communities of students, faculty, and others within the University as a whole.

Wearn joined MGA in 2004 as an assistant professor of English. She moved into administration in 2010 when she became chair of the Department of Media, Culture, & the Arts. She also has been assistant provost for Academic Planning and Policy and, most recently, an associate provost. She is a past recipient of MGA's Outstanding Scholarly Activity Award. Wearn is the first dean of MGA's School of Arts & Letters, created when the University recently reshaped the former College of Arts & Sciences. The School of Arts & Letters includes departments in English, History, and Media, Culture & The Arts.

Morse is an economist who has taught courses in airline and hotel revenue management and price strategy, hospitality and tourism, and economic and business demand analysis. He was previously on the faculty and held administrative positions at the University of Tennessee, Western Carolina University, and Reinhardt University. He is frequently quoted as an expert in the U.S. travel industry in leading news sources. He tracks economic trends in the travel sectors in the Southeast and U.S. economies. His research on the October 2013 federal government shutdown's economic impact on the Great Smoky Mountains National Park was used by Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam and North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory in their unprecedented joint decision to fund opening of that park. MGA's School of Business includes departments in Accounting & Finance, Health Service Administration, and Management & Marketing.



Dr. Mary Wearn



Dr. Stephen Morse

New degree programs offer more opportunities for MGA students

MGA continues to add degrees at the baccalaureate and graduate level.

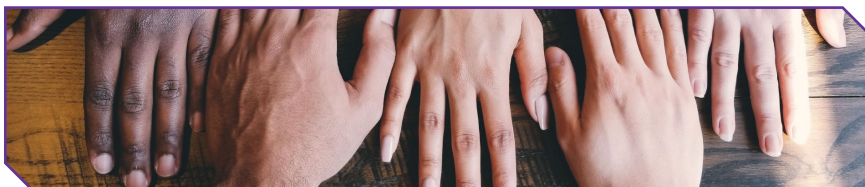
The **Doctor of Science in Information Technology** was approved to be offered by the University System of Georgia. It is pending review and accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. The doctorate is designed to produce graduates prepared to assume leadership roles and manage information technology and systems within organizations.



The **Bachelor of Arts in Applied Art & Design**, a professionally focused degree, was created to serve Georgia's growing art, entertainment, and recreation industry. The degree is the only program of its kind in Georgia.



The **Bachelor of Science in Social Work** is a program that many current and prospective MGA students have long asked for. This degree is designed to help students "learn through doing and caring." Practical experience through fieldwork is a major component. The degree features an advanced standing option so that students wishing to continue on to graduate work will be able to complete a master's degree in social work.



Faculty recognize students for academic excellence

Recognizing students who have excelled academically in the collegiate environment has long been a tradition at University System of Georgia (USG) institutions. At Middle Georgia State University, academic deans, associate deans, department chairs and faculty members work diligently to identify exceptional students, who are recognized during the spring Honors Convocation.

Although in-person Honors Convocation did not take place in April, the names of the more than 50 student honorees were announced via posting of the program on the MGA graduation website. Among those recognized for academic excellence were:



Logan M. Gibbs of Dudley, a senior majoring in English, named 2020 Academic Recognition Day Scholar. Academic Recognition Day, a program sponsored by the USG, honors top scholars from each of the state's public colleges and universities. Nominees for Academic Recognition Day Scholar must be residents of Georgia and display outstanding scholastic achievement. Faculty members nominate students for the honor.



Karolina Philmon of Macon, who received a B.A. in New Media & Communications, named President's Scholar and the representative of the Class of 2020. Each year, the Student Honors, Awards & Graduation Committee, with the approval of the President of the University, designates one student from the senior graduating class to be the President's Scholar. Selection is based on the student's exceptional academic record and involvement in student life at Middle Georgia State University. In addition, the student must demonstrate characteristics indicating the promise of a very successful future.



Middle Georgia
State University

Office of the President
100 University Parkway
Macon, GA 31206

mga.edu

