

Higher Education That's  
Worth It

PRESIDENT'S  
ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2022



# Middle Georgia State University - Higher Education That's Worth It

Is higher education worth it?

Discussions of higher education's value are occurring widely across the nation – at the dinner table as individuals contemplate their futures and in conference rooms as government and higher education leaders address eroding public trust. There is much to consider. The investment of students' time and money to achieve a degree must have an outcome that is deemed worthy of their investment.

So, then, I ask this: Is higher education worth it when it comes to Middle Georgia State University, not only to its students but to the communities and region the institution primarily serves?

I believe that the answer, resoundingly, is yes.

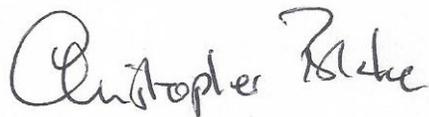
As our vision statement makes clear, MGA is committed to delivering “extraordinary higher education” without cost being a prohibitive factor for students. Our tuition and fees are and will remain well below the national average. As the most affordable of all public universities in the state, we are also creating more scholarships – nearly \$500,000 last year – and robust financial aid packages to further break down financial barriers to learning for our students.

MGA's strength of value also accounts for another national metric of significance. In the most recent U.S. News & World Report rankings, compared to 600 institutions in the Regional Universities South category, we were ranked 14th in “Least Debt” for graduates.

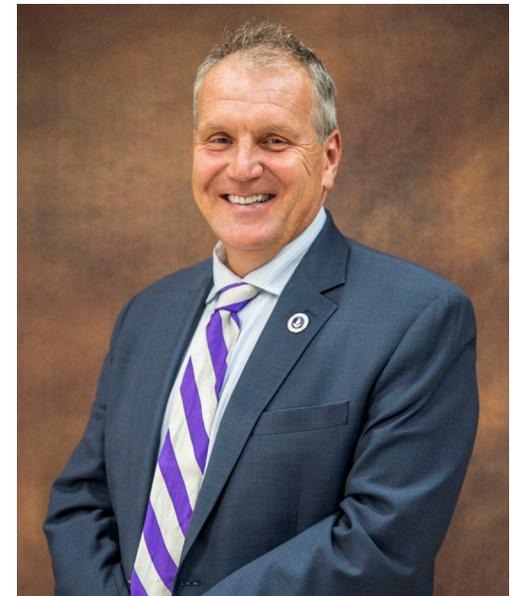
I am also encouraged by a recent initiative from the University System of Georgia, the *Georgia Degrees Pay* website. The website presents a wealth of compelling data on the income potential from a degree within Georgia's public colleges and universities. In general terms, a bachelor's degree produces an estimated \$1 million in extra income over a lifetime – double that of a high school graduate. That dollar return on investment can make a remarkable difference in the lives of our students.

A college degree is more than creating a robust livelihood, it is also a clear pathway to building a fulfilling life. A degree increases opportunities for career flexibility and mobility, and it benefits graduates' families and communities. In terms of personal health, civic engagement, and prospects for home ownership and work-life balance, an MGA degree contributes to both the graduates' experiences and more broadly to the public good.

As MGA begins working on its next strategic plan – visualizing the University's next five years of growth, engagement, and service – our track record of access, affordability, and value of a degree will remain at the core of our future commitment to the residents of our region and the state of Georgia.

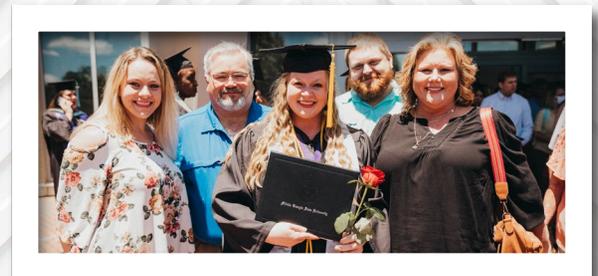
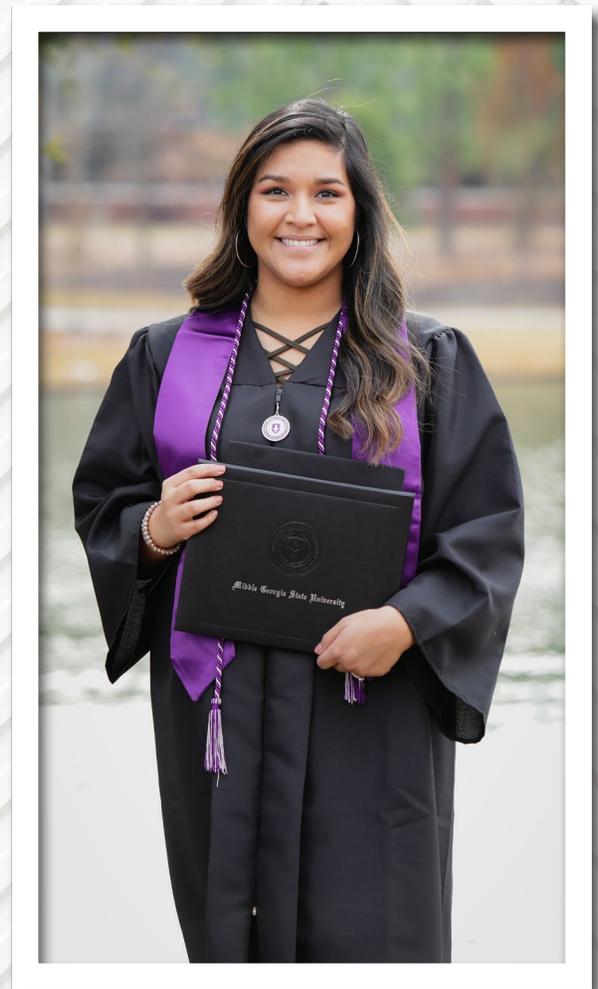
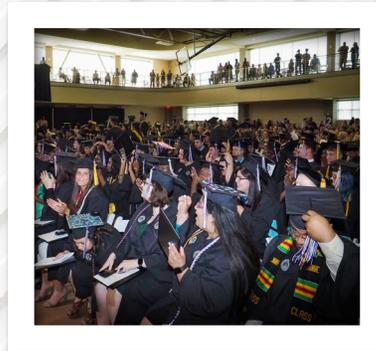


Christopher Blake, Ph.D.  
President



# MGA Sets New Graduation Records for 2022

At the fall 2021 and spring 2022 commencement ceremonies, Middle Georgia State University (MGA) set records for number of graduates. Nearly 760 graduated at MGA's spring 2022 commencement ceremonies, while about 800 students graduated the previous fall. More than 1,000 students received bachelor's degrees over the course of the academic year, while more than 200 received master's degrees. The rest received associate's degrees or certificates in career programs.



## Board of Regents Endorses University Through Eliminating Fee and Adjusting Tuition

In spring 2022, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia approved an undergraduate tuition adjustment plan to align Middle Georgia State University's tuition rate with other Georgia public institutions classified as state universities. This change was effective fall semester 2022.

MGA's per hour undergraduate tuition rate increased from \$113.67 per credit hour for in-state tuition to \$131. For full-time undergraduate students taking 15 credit hours per semester, that was an increase of \$260 in-state tuition per semester. The undergraduate tuition adjustment is the first of a three-year plan thoughtfully crafted to provide much needed wraparound services that support student success.

The increased costs to undergraduate students were nearly offset by the Board of Regents decision to eliminate the Special Institutional Fee. The removal of the Special Institutional Fee resulted in a total fee decrease of \$250 for undergraduate and graduate students taking five or more credit hours and \$125 for those taking four or fewer credit hours.

Middle Georgia State University remains Georgia's most affordable public university, with one of the lowest tuition rates of any public university in the Southeast. The additional resources resulting from the tuition adjustment will range from creating a first-year experience program for freshmen to adding academic success coaches to enhancing residential life for students who live on MGA campuses. These services will ensure students have the academic and enrichment experiences expected of a state university while pursuing their degrees.



## MGA Partners with College AIM to Expand Access to Higher Education

Middle Georgia State University is partnering with an Atlanta-area nonprofit, College AIM, that works to ease the path to college for high school students.

The program's purpose is to provide college and financial aid counseling to under-resourced students in the Atlanta area, mostly in DeKalb County, to help them overcome racial and economic barriers that may otherwise limit their access to college.

Representatives of MGA and College AIM formalized the relationship at a signing ceremony held on MGA's Macon Campus in summer 2022. Dr. Stephen Schultheis, MGA's vice president for Enrollment Management, and Dr. Corey Sheffield, College AIM's program director, forged this partnership to jointly educate, encourage, and support students in achieving their goals.

With MGA's success at providing access and support to first-generation college students, it is pursuing partnerships with other nonprofit organizations that share similar goals of easing access to higher education for more high school students.



*Representatives of MGA and College AIM at a ceremony formalizing the partnership*



### MGA Highlight

USG Chancellor Sonny Perdue visited MGA's Eastman and Macon campuses in June 2022 to learn more about the University's aviation, health sciences, and cybersecurity programs. President Christopher Blake, faculty and staff, and impressive students hosted and engaged with Chancellor Perdue at each stop.

# Governor's Funding Award Boosts MGA's Dublin Campus Expansion

Thanks to \$900,000 in new funding the Georgia governor's office awarded in early 2022, Middle Georgia State University was able to substantially bolster an expansion of the Dublin Campus as a healthcare degree program hub, a project that had been underway since late 2020.

MGA used the funds to complete a chemistry lab and add virtual healthcare technology modeled after that developed by Augusta University, home of the state's public medical school, during the COVID pandemic. The funding essentially allowed MGA to complete the full scope of the original Dublin Campus expansion plan, which includes adding a bachelor's degree in nursing to the existing associate's degree, as well as introducing to that location other healthcare programs specific to the needs of rural communities.

"We are grateful for this new funding that will greatly impact Dublin and Laurens County and allow us to help address the critical nursing shortage," said Dr. Christopher Blake, MGA president. "The Dublin Campus expansion will provide the means for our nursing students to learn specific skills to deliver healthcare to rural areas. This funding will allow us to graduate more nurses at a time when they are desperately needed, further fulfilling our institution's mission of providing quality, career-driven education and graduating inspired, lifelong learners whose scholarship and careers enhance the region."

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp allocated the \$900,000 to MGA through the Governor's Education Emergency Release Fund (GEER) II. GEER II is funded under a section of the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act.

In 2020, MGA received \$4.8 million in state bond funding to expand space, equipment, and faculty at the Dublin Campus - located near Carl Vinson VA Medical Center - to admit and graduate more nursing students. The project includes two large nursing lecture classrooms, a 20-bed hospital laboratory, a three-bed nursing simulation lab, a technologically enhanced observation room that connects to the simulation room, and two additional nursing faculty members dedicated to the Dublin Campus.

MGA has long offered an associate's degree in nursing on the Dublin Campus, typically admitting 60 students each academic year. The expansion project will allow MGA to admit 100 students each year and expand the bachelor's nursing degree (BSN) into Dublin.



## Morris Bank Pledges \$100,000 to MGA Health Sciences Expansion

Middle Georgia State University received a pledge of \$100,000 from Morris Bank to fund the new state-of-the-art nursing lab on the Dublin Campus, which the University is transforming into a healthcare degree program hub. The lab is one of the many enhancements of the campus renovation that will play an immense role in the healthcare industry both locally and throughout the state.

“We are pleased to play a part in the institution’s growth and expansion of their nursing program here in Laurens County,” said Spence Mullis, president and CEO of Morris Bank. “This is an outstanding project with such a large impact to our community and all of Middle Georgia, and we couldn’t be more proud to partner with MGA to help make this happen. Healthcare is an essential driver to developing and growing a community. We are firm believers that nursing is one of the most noble professions one can choose to enter.”

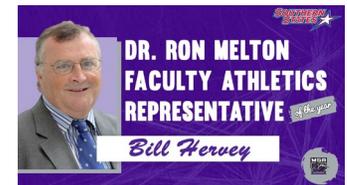
The Dublin Campus nursing lab will be named after Morris Bank and will serve as a valuable resource to nursing students within the MGA program.



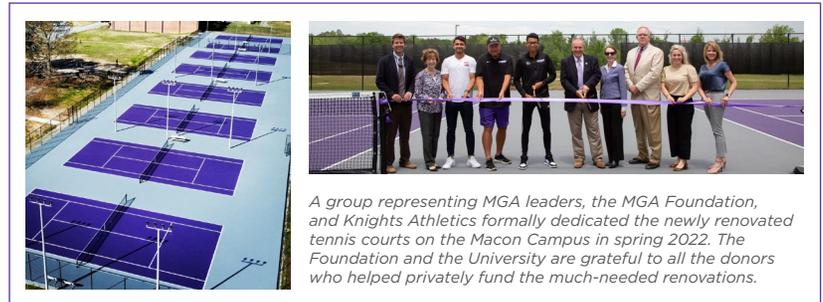
Left to right are Whitney Kilgo (Morris Bank), Spence Mullis (Morris Bank), Mary McDonald (MGA), Ashlee Torpy (Morris Bank), Dr. Tara Underwood (MGA), Julie Davis (MGA), and Roger Miller (Morris Bank)

## Knights Among 2021-22 Southern States Athletic Conference (SSAC) Individual Award Winners

The Barnes & Noble College Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year was Naufal Kamaruzzaman of the MGA men’s tennis team. Kamaruzzaman produced a 4.0 GPA in the classroom as a business administration major. On the court, he helped the Knights to the quarterfinals of the NAIA Men’s Tennis National Championship. He earned First-Team All-Conference honors after going 12-2 in singles play and 10-3 in doubles, including 5-0 marks in SSAC competition.



The Dr. Ronald Melton Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) of the Year was Bill Hervey, professor of health services administration. MGA’s interim athletics director, Jason Williams, said of Hervey, “He deeply cares for every athlete that we have at Middle Georgia State University. Bill is always available for any questions that our staff has. I’ve worked with FAR’s at other institutions, but no one compares to his level of professionalism.”



A group representing MGA leaders, the MGA Foundation, and Knights Athletics formally dedicated the newly renovated tennis courts on the Macon Campus in spring 2022. The Foundation and the University are grateful to all the donors who helped privately fund the much-needed renovations.

## Student Highlight

Taylor Nelson of Macon said she hopes to help bridge the gap of Black people in the healthcare field by becoming a nurse. “It’s a very hectic time [to become a nurse]... but I feel that now is a good time for the younger generation to come in because we have the energy to do this,” she said. Nelson, primarily based on the Dublin Campus, is finishing up her MGA associate’s degree in nursing and is the class representative for her cohort.

## **MGA Welcomes New VP of Enrollment and School of Business Dean**

This year, Middle Georgia State University welcomed Dr. Stephen P. Schultheis as vice president for Enrollment Management and Dr. Marc D. Miller as dean of the School of Business.

Among other things in his new role as VP of Enrollment, Schultheis is developing the University's short- and long-term strategies to meet or exceed enrollment goals, evaluating new pathways for student enrollment, and developing strategies to enhance the retention of students. He leads a division that oversees the offices of Recruitment and Admissions, Registrar, and Financial Aid and serves on the president's cabinet.

MGA represents a return for Miller to the University System of Georgia (USG) as the University's new dean of the School of Business. Miller said obtaining accreditation for the School of Business through the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) is among his top MGA priorities. AACSB is a voluntary accreditation that is the most recognized form of specialized accreditation that an institution and its business programs can earn. Miller has chaired more than 20 business program reviews for AACSB, mentored schools for initial accreditation, and has been a member of the association's initial accreditation committee (IAC).



Dr. Stephen P. Schultheis



Dr. Marc D. Miller

## Business Master's Degree in Professional Leadership Coming to MGA

Middle Georgia State University will soon launch a fully online master's degree designed for professionals who want to advance as leaders for various private- and public-sector employers. The University System of Georgia's Board of Regents approved the Master of Business in Professional Leadership (MBPL) at its meeting on May 10, 2022. MGA will house the program in the School of Business and begin offering classes in January 2023.



Input from local government and business leaders identified an unaddressed demand for more people-centric leadership in the community and workplace focusing on the human dynamic of management. "We designed the program in consultation with regional employers, and we feel confident the degree will appeal to professionals in any industry who want to harness their leadership potential for their specific career tracks," said Dr. David Jenks, MGA provost.

The Master of Business in Professional Leadership is a business and interdisciplinary studies degree designed for people who wish to advance as leaders and excel across multiple commercial, government, and nonprofit enterprises by inspiring and motivating individuals and organizations. Unlike a traditional business quantitative-centric degree, which is focused on managing processes, policies, and resources, the MBPL is a business degree focused on qualitative leadership with its core instruction establishing a foundation of both business and leadership in the human dynamic of organizations.

## MGA Launches Certificate Programs in Strategic Business Communication and in Nursing

Housed in Middle Georgia State University's School of Arts & Letters, the graduate certificate in Strategic Business Communication is designed to develop students' skills in public relations, marketing, advertising, and social media communication and prepare them to take an active role in any industry in the state, providing organizations with creative, logical, and deliberate communication strategies. The interdisciplinary, 15-credit-hour online program is aligned with the Master of Arts in Public Relations as a stackable credential. With appropriate elective choices, students who desire to pursue the graduate degree can apply all their certificate coursework toward the master's. The program welcomed its first students in fall 2022.

Administered by the Department of Nursing, the Post-Master's Certificate in Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner is a new, 19-hour certificate that includes three courses of fully online instruction. The program is suitable for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (ARPN) who are certified in other population foci, allowing them to receive the necessary professional skills and knowledge to sit for AGACNP certification. The program is now accepting applications for spring and summer 2023.



### Faculty Highlight

Two Middle Georgia State University English faculty published books this academic year. Bram Stoker Award-nominated author Andy Davidson's *The Hollow Kind* received rave reviews, including one from *The New York Times*, and was featured in countless must-read book lists. Dr. Monica Miller edited and co-edited two distinctly Southern-flavored books: *Dear Regina: Flannery O'Connor's Letters from Iowa* and *The Tacky South*.

# State Funding Helps MGA Boost Aviation Industry

Following an investment of resources from the state, Middle Georgia State University is better able to implement plans to bolster Georgia's flagship School of Aviation in ways that will begin to address the long waiting list of aspiring pilots seeking admission.

The funding is part of the fiscal 2023 Georgia state budget that Gov. Brian Kemp signed on May 12. The bond funding is in the budget approved by the Board of Regents on May 10. These funds will allow the University to invest in new aircraft and equipment and create more aviation-related leadership, service, and education initiatives.

"This investment from the state will help students pursuing aviation at our School of Aviation," said Adon Clark, the school's dean. "We have a waiting list for our flight program. These resources will help us speed up the process of moving more students into classrooms, labs, and aircraft so they don't have to leave the state for their aviation education."

The new resources include:

- \$3,530,000 in bond funding, a request made through the University System of Georgia, to be used to pay for aircraft, parts, and equipment (including hangars).
- \$1,920,073 for line-item operations, which will be added to earlier funding for a total of \$2,170,073. These funds will be used to increase safety and create aviation career path programs that focus on leadership, service, and education initiatives.

"We are very grateful for the support of our state leaders and the Board of Regents and are committed to being responsible stewards of these new resources," said Dr. Christopher Blake, MGA's president.

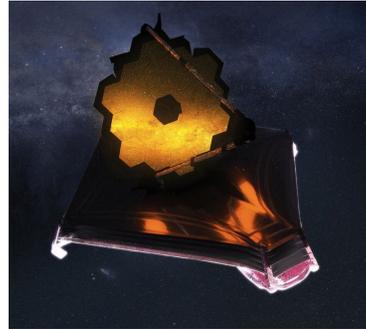


## MGA Played a Part in James Webb Space Telescope Development

Middle Georgia State University was along for the ride when NASA's James Webb Space Telescope launched into the cosmos during the early morning hours of Christmas Day 2021.

From 2008 to 2016, the University's Institute for Applied Aerospace Research (IAAR), based on the School of Aviation campus in Eastman, worked on several major to small assemblies, components, parts, and test articles related to the telescope's development. Over that time, some 30 students served as paid or unpaid interns.

"I actually watched the launch on Christmas with a big smile on my face, knowing that I had contributed to this immense thing that is going to help us learn so much more about our universe," said James Dix, one of the student interns who worked on the telescope's development. "Future generations will benefit from the work that all of us at MGA did during that time."



Artist's rendering of the James Webb Telescope  
Source: webb.nasa.gov



### Student Highlight

MGA School of Aviation graduate Haley Jo Lucas is making history as the first female pilot for the Georgia State Patrol's Aviation Division. Lucas graduated in 2017 with her degree in Aviation Science and Management in the helicopter flight track.

## MGA Raises Record-Breaking \$11.6 Million in University's "Legacy of Greatness" Fundraising Campaign

The Middle Georgia State University Foundation's "Building a Legacy of Greatness" private fundraising campaign – the most ambitious in the institution's history – exceeded its \$11 million goal, coming in at a record-breaking \$11.6 million, school officials announced December 1, 2021.

Funds raised through the campaign, the public phase of which began in March 2021, have already resulted in the construction of the University's new Peyton T. Anderson Enrollment Center on the Macon Campus, the purchase of two new aircraft for MGA's School of Aviation, and enhanced support for health sciences programs, including nursing. The Foundation also will use the private dollars raised to significantly increase the number of scholarships awarded to students, help develop degree programs and other academic programming, and recruit and retain high-quality faculty.



## BUILDING A LEGACY OF GREATNESS

A CAMPAIGN FOR MIDDLE GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY



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State University

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