



Middle Georgia
State University

CHARTING THE PATH TO EXCELLENCE

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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Dear Friends and Supporters,

As I complete my 10th year as president, it is an opportune moment to reflect on our remarkable journey over the past decade. We’ve successfully transitioned from the merger of two state colleges into a state university that is flourishing, and I am incredibly proud of our collective achievements and ongoing evolution.

The past year has been especially significant, highlighting our commitment to our Vision, Mission, and Core Values. We celebrated a historic milestone as our first cohort of doctoral students graduated, underscoring our dedication to higher learning. In early 2023, we gained approval from the Board of Regents for our Athletics program’s transition to NCAA Division II, showcasing our adaptability and commitment to enhancing the university experience.

On the cover of this report is an image of the maze at Hampton Court, a place where I frequented as a child. This pathway is representative of one of the many paths I have traveled in my lifetime, both literally and figuratively. Our University most recently charted the next path we will travel along together in our new strategic plan, “Middle Georgia’s Path to Excellence” (2023-2028). This plan is the blueprint for our next chapter as a state university and will aim to champion student success, lead in the completion of innovation and economic growth in our region and state, strengthen our University’s culture and identity, and ensure financial resilience in order to maintain our position as Georgia’s Best Value University.

Our Vision continues to inspire every endeavor: “We transform individuals and our communities through extraordinary higher learning.” This vision drives us to reach excellence and impact lives on both individual and community levels.

Our Mission serves as a guiding beacon: “Middle Georgia State University graduates inspired, lifelong learners whose knowledge and careers enhance the state.” Each graduate exemplifies our commitment to nurturing lifelong learners who contribute to the betterment of our state.

At the core of our journey are the values of Stewardship, Engagement, Adaptability, and Learning, shaping our identity as a university. Stewardship ensures responsible resource management, Engagement fosters strong community connections, Adaptability propels us forward in a changing world, and Learning remains the cornerstone of our mission.

This report highlights the successful outcomes achieved by our dedicated students, faculty, and staff. It also underscores the recognition we’ve earned from external organizations, affirming our mission and ongoing potential.

I am confident that the next era and the coming decade will witness our University achieving even greater heights. Let us draw inspiration from our journey thus far and eagerly anticipate the path to excellence ahead of us. Together, there are no limits to what we can achieve.

With gratitude,

Christopher Blake, Ph.D.
President, Middle Georgia State University



THE PATH TO EXCELLENCE

2023 - 2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

Middle Georgia State University's path to excellence continues with solid plans for championing student success, leading innovation and economic opportunity, building culture and identity, and sustaining fiscal resilience and brand value.

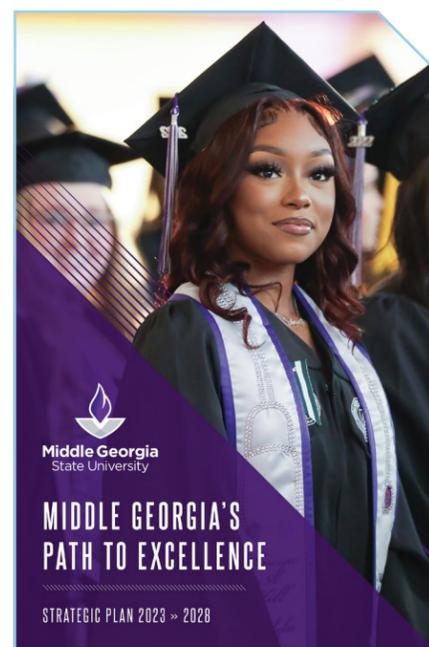
These are the University's top goals for the next five years, as outlined in the newly released strategic plan – "Middle Georgia's Path To Excellence." The plan maps out a vision of where Middle Georgia State (MGA) wants to be by 2028 and how to get there.

The new plan includes four strategies:

- Champion student success.** MGA plans to accomplish this multifaceted goal by, among other things, achieving specialized accreditation in certain academic programs, most notably Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business accreditation for the School of Business. MGA will increase faculty scholarship outcomes and develop instructor expertise in A.I. and other emergent technologies. The University will also grow student engagement at all degree levels and boost enrollment (to 8,750 students by 2028) and number of graduates.
- Lead innovation and economic opportunity.** Priorities include ensuring high-demand programs for workforce and career alignment, using the newly developed Center for Middle Georgia Studies to drive University outreach, and coordinate faculty scholarship and grant awards to build the institution's reputation.
- Build culture and identity.** MGA will refine the roles and strengths of each of its five campuses and emphasize the University as a destination workplace for employees. The University will pursue an official great-place/college-to-work designation and transition athletics to NCAA Division II and position teams to succeed at that level.
- Sustain fiscal resilience and brand value.** Middle Georgia State will apply data-driven accountability to all operations and maintain access, affordability, and value for all students. The University will also grow and diversify streams of revenue.

The plan as a whole reflects Middle Georgia State's institutional values of Stewardship, Engagement, Adaptability, and Learning. MGA's updated mission statement is "Middle Georgia State University graduates inspired, lifelong learners whose knowledge and careers enhance the state." The University's updated vision statement is "We transform individuals and our communities through extraordinary higher learning."

The strategic plan was developed, after input from all University constitutions, by an ad hoc committee of faculty, staff, Student Government Association representatives, administrators, and members of the MGA Foundation Board of Trustees.



mga.edu/strategic-plan

ACHIEVEMENT

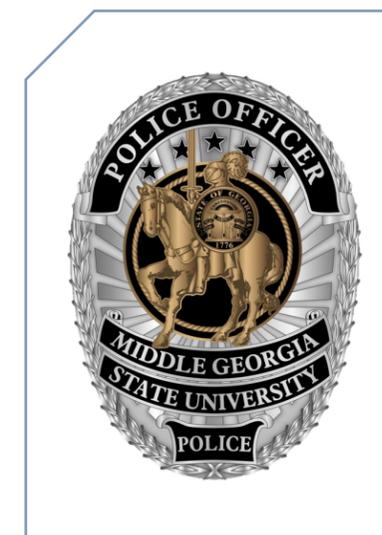
PROGRAMS & DEPARTMENTS

MGA FIRST SCHOOL IN GEORGIA TO ADOPT NEW CAMPUS SAFETY PLATFORM

Middle Georgia State University (MGA) became the first public institution of higher education in the state of Georgia to comprehensively adopt the Infrastructure Visualization Platform (IVP) as a resource to help keep the campuses safe.

"Other universities have used IVP on specific campus areas, such as stadiums, but we are the first and only University System of Georgia institution to take on this project on all five of our campuses as a comprehensive approach for safety," said Tripp Mitchell, MGA's associate vice president of public safety and risk management.

The University collaborated with CISA which is the federal Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency and the operational lead for cybersecurity and the national coordinator for critical infrastructure security and resilience. The platform can be used by law enforcement to monitor and optimize the performance of the security infrastructure over time. By providing a comprehensive view of the campus security infrastructure, an IVP can help to improve the overall safety and security of campuses.



B.S. IN SOCIAL WORK GRANTED CSWE ACCREDITATION

Middle Georgia State University's Bachelor of Science in Social Work was granted full accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in July 2023. This recognition reaffirms the program's commitment to excellence in social work education. Accreditation means that Middle Georgia State's social work degree, offered since fall 2020, has successfully undergone a rigorous evaluation process by CSWE, which assesses various aspects such as curriculum, faculty qualifications, student support, and community engagement.

Founded in 1952, the CSWE is the national association representing social work education in the United States. Its members include more than 800 accredited baccalaureate and master's degree social work programs and their affiliated social work educators, students, and staff, as well as practitioners and agencies dedicated to advancing quality social work education.

STUDENTS

BIOLOGY MAJOR WINS HELMINTHOLOGICAL GRANT

Biology major Zoe Von Holten was awarded a 2023 Bernard Fried Student Research Grant from the Helminthological Society of Washington (HelmSoc) to support her independent research exploring pathogenic parasites of fishes. Founded in 1910, HelmSoc is one of the oldest parasitological research societies in North America. In addition to getting funds for research, HelmSoc provided her with a travel grant to present at the national annual meeting of the American Society of Parasitologists and cover page charges for Von Holten's first authored paper based on this research. Von Holten has been conducting undergraduate research under the direction of Dr. Tyler Achatz, Assistant Professor of Biology.

B.S.I.T. STUDENT NAMED RECIPIENT OF THE GILMAN SCHOLAR AWARD



Information Technology major Brittany Rambone was a recipient of the Gilman Scholar Award. The U.S. Department of State's Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program enables students to study or intern abroad, providing them with skills

critical to national security and economic prosperity. Rambone participated in the USG Goes Global 2023 summer program in Waterford, Ireland.

M.S.I.T. STUDENT WINS AWARD FOR WORK WITH MUSEUM OF TECHNOLOGY

Ryan Ashford, a student in MGA's Master of Science in Information Technology program, was awarded the Georgia Association of Museums (GAM) 2023 Student Project Award for his work at MGA's Museum of Technology. The award recognizes contributions of student work to the field of museums and galleries. Projects show professional guidance of student effort but clearly demonstrate meaningful work by students in the design, implementation, and promotion of the nominated project.

Ashford is instrumental in the management and restoration of the Museum of Technology's many artifacts on display on the first floor of the Macon Campus Library. He presented some of his work at regional education conferences and at the annual Southeast Vintage Computer Fair in Atlanta. Ashford received his award at the 2023 GAM Conference.



FACULTY & STAFF

PILOT FACULTY RECEIVES WRIGHT BROTHERS AWARD FOR 50 YEARS OF SERVICE

At the age of 79, Fred Houston, an MGA designated pilot examiner, received the Wright Brothers Award from the Federal Aviation Administration in 2022. The Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award is named in honor of Orville and Wilbur Wright, two American aviation pioneers credited with inventing, building, and flying the world's first successful motor-operated airplane. They later invented aircraft controls that made fixed-wing powered flight possible.

Criteria to be eligible for the full award include holding a U.S. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) or Federal Administration (FAA) pilot certificate and having 50 or more years of civil or military experience or 50 or more years of combined experience in both piloting and aircraft operations.

LESTER TAKES LEAD ROLE IN CIVIC FELLOWS COHORT

Dr. Julie Lester, MGA political science professor, led work to re-establish the Stewardship of Public Lands program as a member of the Civic Fellows cohort of the American Democracy Project (ADP). This was one of 10 projects that the cohort developed in the 2022 academic year to serve the ADP community by providing resources, insights, programmatic opportunities, and more.

The American Democracy Project is a network of nearly 300 state colleges and universities, including MGA, focused on public higher education's role in preparing the next generation to be informed and engaged in an equitable civil society. ADP was established in 2003 as a nonpartisan initiative of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) in partnership with *The New York Times*.

MILLER RECEIVES ARCHIVAL RECORDS AWARD

Dr. Monica Miller, assistant professor of English and MGA's coordinator of graduate technical writing programs, received the 2022 Excellence in the Use of Archival Records Award from the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council (GHRAC). Miller used archival records while working on the book, *Dear Regina: Flannery O'Connor's Letters from Iowa*, which the University of Georgia Press published in summer 2022.

GHRAC is the advisory board to the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia with respect to the Georgia Archives and historical records throughout the state.



FACULTY & STAFF (CONT.)

RESPIRATORY THERAPY FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Several faculty members in the Department of Respiratory Therapy achieved significant accomplishments the past academic year. Faculty members Jasmine Brown, director of clinical education, and Nancy Guyse, assistant professor, were recognized for their exemplary leadership and volunteerism by the Georgia Society for Respiratory Care (GSRC) Summer Symposium.

Brown received the President's Award for her significant contributions to the profession here in Georgia and for assisting in the successful transition back to face-to-face symposia for the membership. Guyse received the Morton B. Duggan Distinguished Service Award for her commitment and volunteerism.

Guyse was also selected to be a Governor's Teaching Fellow for the 2022-23 academic year. A registered respiratory therapist (RRT) and assistant professor of respiratory therapy at MGA, Guyse was one of 12 faculty chosen for the highly competitive program from institutions across the state. In addition, she was elected to the Board of Directors of the Coalition of Baccalaureate and Graduate Respiratory Therapy Education (CoBGRTE) for a four-year term. CoBGRTE is a volunteer group of respiratory therapy professionals committed to the advancement of the respiratory therapy profession.

Teri Miller, chair of the Department of Respiratory Therapy, was elected and sworn in at the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) Annual Business Meeting as the association's vice president of internal affairs. Miller will serve a two-year term on the Executive Committee for the AARC Board of Directors, having recently completed her service as speaker for the AARC House of Delegates.



From top to bottom: Brown, Guyse, Miller

FACULTY / STAFF PROMOTIONS



Amanda Funches, a veteran manager and director for Middle Georgia State University's budgetary and accounting operations, was appointed vice president for Finance & Business in January 2023.



Ember Bishop Bentley was promoted to the position of vice president for External Relations and chief of staff. In her four years at MGA, she has helped transform MGA's governmental and community relations and secured significant resources for the work of the University.



Dr. Loretta Clayton was named dean of Middle Georgia State University Graduate Studies in October 2022. As dean, she coordinates graduate programs, policies, and growth.



Tamatha Lambert was promoted to dean of Library Services. As the University continues to grow, her oversight of the libraries on all campuses has been an invaluable resource to students, faculty, and staff members alike.

NEW DEGREES

FIRST COHORT OF M.S. IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

In Fall 2022, Middle Georgia State University welcomed the first cohort of students in the new Master of Science in Occupational Therapy program. The master's degree in occupational therapy is the first graduate-level program based on the Cochran Campus. The first cohort was made up of 12 students who are expected to complete the six-semester program in Summer 2024. The program is offered in a partially online/hybrid format, with much of the coursework completed online using various technologies, along with supplemental on-campus labs and experiential activities that take place about four times per semester. This program is the only public bridge program in the state of Georgia.

NEW B.S./A.S. IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

Middle Georgia State University launched both bachelor's and associate's degrees in computer science in Fall 2023. With a tremendous need for computer science degrees at Robins Air Force Base, in the region, and throughout the state, the programs will help prepare students for high-demand careers such as software engineering, computer design, computer programming, and coding. Students in the bachelor's program can also opt for an education track that will prepare them to teach computer science at various grade levels.

DOCTOR OF SCIENCE IN PUBLIC SAFETY

Middle Georgia State University will launch a Doctor of Science in Public Safety in January 2024 to help prepare leaders for crucial roles in public safety agencies across the state. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) approved the new program in June 2023.

The Doctor of Science in Public Safety is a practical, professional degree developed specifically for people already working in public safety. MGA's doctorate will focus specifically on law enforcement, fire safety, corrections, and emergency management within an administrative and problem-solving context.

MGA worked closely with public safety agencies to develop the multidisciplinary program. Among the organizations that submitted letters of support to the Board of Regents were the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police, Georgia Department of Corrections, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and Georgia Emergency Management Agency.

This approval followed approval from the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia for the fully online doctorate in May 2023. This is the second doctorate MGA will add to its academic lineup since becoming a university in 2015. Students will participate in a short, in-person residency at the start of the program and complete their coursework online. The program is cohort-based, and up to 20 students will begin the program at the same time and work through classes together building relationships between public agencies and the University. In addition to coursework, all students will complete field-based research projects focused on real challenges faced by public safety agencies.

UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

PEYTON ANDERSON FOUNDATION DONATION FUNDS CENTER FOR MIDDLE GEORGIA STUDIES



The Peyton Anderson Foundation provided MGA with a \$1.2 million grant to help fund an intellectual and creative center designed to take on some of the region's most difficult challenges.

By leveraging the combined power of community assets and University faculty and staff expertise, the Center for Middle Georgia Studies will aim to address issues related to poverty, workforce demands, and healthcare, among other concerns.

"The vision of the Center for Middle Georgia Studies matches that of our foundation," said Karen Lambert, president of the Peyton Anderson Foundation. "By taking on our most difficult challenges, it will provide game-changing, placed-based solutions to improve the quality of life and prosperity of our region. We look forward to the partnership, collaboration, and synergy the center will create in our community. Our grant of \$1.2 million demonstrates our confidence that the Center for Middle Georgia Studies will be at the epicenter of education innovating real-world solutions."

The idea for a Center for Middle Georgia Studies, to be based on MGA's Macon campus, has been percolating at the University for several years. As planned, the center somewhat models the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG), which provides education, assistance, research, and policy analysis to help public officials better serve the state's citizens.

"While similar to the CVIOG, the Center for Middle Georgia Studies will provide tailored services to a broader range of partners," said President Christopher Blake. "We will work with community-based organizations, nonprofits, and businesses. Partners will serve as the spokes of this network, extending the University's impact throughout the region."

The Peyton Anderson Foundation's support of education projects at MGA continues through this grant. The center will offer a range of customized knowledge, resources, services, and expertise, Blake remarked, that includes access to University faculty, staff, and students, as well as data, technology, and research support. To ensure its work aligns with the needs of the community, the center will draw upon key community assets and resources, including the strategic plans of OneMacon, Forward Macon, and the Middle Georgia Regional Commission.



DELTA AIR LINES FOUNDATION FUNDS MAJOR EXPANSION TO SCHOOL OF AVIATION

The Delta Air Lines Foundation has awarded a \$3 million grant to Middle Georgia State University (MGA), marking a significant development in the institution's aviation programs. This substantial award, the largest single contribution in the University's history, will help expand and enhance MGA's School of Aviation. It reflects the growing private support that complements public funding for Georgia's flagship aviation school, which plays a vital role in training pilots and aircraft maintenance personnel for one of the state's major industries.



The Delta Air Lines Foundation's award, granted to the MGA Foundation, will be distributed over a three-year period. The largest portion of the grant, \$1.5 million, will be dedicated to long-term initiatives in aviation education, including the expansion of partnerships with K-12 schools across the state and the establishment of satellite flight-training locations in rural areas and around Atlanta. Based in Eastman, the School of Aviation currently operates satellite locations in Macon and Griffin.

To support these new initiatives, MGA will use \$500,000 to procure cutting-edge equipment and \$1 million to hire faculty, including establishing a new Delta Air Lines Endowed Professorship of Aviation.

In addition to a bachelor's degree program in aviation science and management with a major in flight, MGA offers applied associate's degrees in air traffic management, aircraft structural technology, and aviation maintenance technology, along with several certificate programs. MGA also offers an aviation-focused master's program in management and an applied bachelor's program in technical management.



SENATOR OSSOFF VISIT

MGA was honored to have U.S. Senator Jon Ossoff of Georgia visit the Macon campus in February 2023 to announce new resources for the University's School of Aviation. Ossoff secured bipartisan support in Congress for funds to add two simulators to MGA's Eastman campus, where the School of Aviation is based. Aviation is one of the state's top industries and employers.

During his visit, Ossoff met with several aviation students, School of Aviation Dean Adon Clark, MGA President Christopher Blake, and other University representatives. Ossoff also met with Seth Clark, Macon-Bibb commissioner, and Doug Faour, aviation director of the Middle Georgia Regional Airport.



GULFSTREAM AWARDS \$50K

Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation awarded \$50,000 to the Middle Georgia State University Foundation to support technologically advanced training in composites and composite repair at the School of Aviation. The University's aviation school will use the grant to purchase Heatcon composite repair tool kits. Students in MGA's aircraft maintenance and structural technology programs will use the kits to learn state-of-the-art composite repair on aircraft.



Gulfstream formally announced the award on June 12, 2023, in Savannah, home to its worldwide headquarters and largest service center.

ARCHIVES AWARDED \$3K TO PRESERVE HISTORICAL RECORDS

Middle Georgia State University Archives was awarded \$3,000 from The Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council (GHRAC) to develop and/or implement projects to identify, preserve, and provide access to historical records. The archivists have plans to begin digitization efforts for archival materials that include but are not limited to Middle Georgia State College yearbooks; Macon Junior, Macon College, and Macon State College course catalogs; and a myriad of photographs. The biggest undertaking will be for the Macon State Archives currently housed in the Macon campus library to process, organize, and make efforts to preserve the records of the collection.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

CENTER FOR INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In 2023, Middle Georgia State University launched the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CFIE), a collaborative space designed for the University, start-ups, and local businesses to expand technological excellence, help business development, create new career pathways in the region, and support the shifting mission of Robins Air Force Base and the business community at-large. Reviving the city's traditional central business district by helping residents become entrepreneurs is among the main goals of a new collaboration between Warner Robins and Middle Georgia State University (MGA).



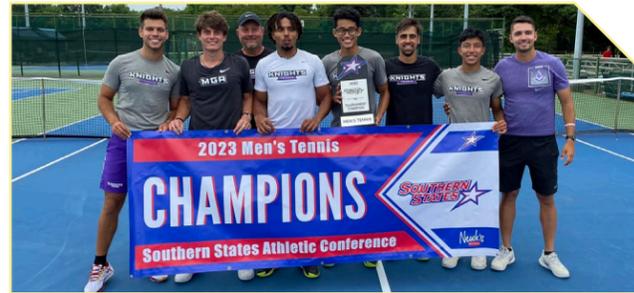
One of the first initiatives launched was the Warner Robins Entrepreneurship Series. This partnership with the city of Warner Robins and MGA aimed to teach participants how to develop small business plans; learn the ins and outs of zoning, building permits, and business licenses; and set up LLCs in free sessions offered on MGA's Warner Robins campus. Additional sessions geared towards providing a better understanding of the changing technological landscape also took place, with a slate of events focused on helping businesses and individuals in the area hone their business and communication acumen scheduled for future dates.



ATHLETICS

MEN'S TENNIS WINS SSAC CHAMPIONSHIP

The Middle Georgia State University Knights Men's Tennis team won the 2023 Southern States Athletic Conference (SSAC) Men's Tennis Championship in April 2023. Their 4-3 defeat of the No. 1 seed team from William Carey University and tournament win gained them an automatic bid to the 2023 National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Men's Tennis National Championship. Gianfranco Germinara earned Championship MVP honors after picking up wins in singles and doubles in the title match.



SOFTBALL WINS SSAC CHAMPIONSHIP

In May 2023, MGA Knights Softball achieved its first championship win in the history of the team, bringing home the Southern States Athletic Conference (SSAC) title after defeating the University of Mobile Rams. Their win secured them an automatic spot in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) National Championship Tournament Opening Round.



WOMEN'S TENNIS COACH NAMED SSAC COACH OF THE YEAR



MGA Knights Coach Tom Bates was named 2023 women's tennis Coach of the Year by the Southern States Athletic Conference (SSAC).



TRANSITION TO NCAA DIVISION II

In February 2023, the Board of Regents (BOR) of the University System of Georgia (USG) approved Middle Georgia State University to enter into a new agreement regarding its athletic conference affiliation. As a member in good standing of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and Southern States Conference, the University will proceed to take the necessary steps toward potential membership in Division II of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), with discussions on future membership of the Peach Belt Conference of the NCAA. That new athletic affiliation will more closely align with MGA as a state university of the USG and its strategic direction.

Prior to the approval, the University conducted a study on the feasibility of such a move. Moving forward, the process will be deliberate and is expected to take several years until full membership. The University will continue to assess its readiness, and the campus community will be apprised of progress along the way.

In addition to conference change, the BOR approved a request to add a new sport, Women's Track (distance events only), to meet proportionality level for women for Title IX compliance.

This transition would not be possible without the support of University System of Georgia Regent Cade Joiner (Athletics Committee Chair), Chairman Harold Reynolds, Chancellor Sonny Perdue, and, in particular, Vice Chancellor Dana Nichols, Director Sabrina Thompson, and the University System Office team.





Middle Georgia
State University

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