

# Academic Affairs Excellence Awards

## Application Form



Name:

Rank:

Department:

Award applying for:

(Check one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Excellence in Teaching Award*
<input type="checkbox"/>	Excellence in Online Teaching Award*
<input type="checkbox"/>	Excellence in Scholarship & Creative Endeavors Award*
<input type="checkbox"/>	Excellence in University Service*
<input type="checkbox"/>	Excellence in Scholarship of Teaching & Learning Award*
<input type="checkbox"/>	Department/Program Excellence Award^
<input type="checkbox"/>	Irene Rose Community Service Award^
<input type="checkbox"/>	Laurie Hendrickson McMillian Faculty Award^

\*college selection required before being forwarded to university

^university awards

College nominees' final applications received by Center for Teaching and Learning ([ctl@gcsu.edu](mailto:ctl@gcsu.edu)) by March 1.

Please insert the required documentation in the pages below for the award category you have noted above. Detailed information associated with each award is available online at the [Center for Teaching and Learning website](#).



**DEPARTMENT OF  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE**

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GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY

Teaching Excellence Award for Department or Program

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26 February 2024

Dear Academic Affairs,

I write to nominate one of the strongest academic departments within the College of Arts and Sciences, and, no doubt, within the entire university, for the Department/Program Excellence Award. This nomination is for the Department of Psychological Science, chaired by Dr. Lee Gillis.

This is a medium-sized department that punches far above its weight when compared to other departments within the College of Arts and Sciences. Comprised of twelve strong faculty members, this department has many majors for the moderate-sized number of faculty members within. With 422 declared majors, the department is the largest program within the College. This department always shines with excellent students and talented faculty, thus making Psychological Science one of the premier destination programs of choice for incoming students.

The department puts much effort into making its students feel at home here at a place where they can follow their academic dreams. They offer high-quality teaching and excellent mentoring opportunities within the department and their success with their students is exhibited each year with the large number of excellent GCSU student presentations held at the Southeastern Psychological Association (SEPA) annual conference. The faculty clearly want their students to leave this university with abundant experience from the professional side of the discipline. Psychology celebrates its student success with their annual end-of-year Psyc-Con research and recognition day ceremony. Having served as a judge at this event multiple times, I have witnessed the strong bonds between faculty and students formed in this department each year. The department encourages the students to get involved with the community and I have heard the students often speak fondly of their positive experiences engaged in helping the local community at places such as the Women's Center, the Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy, Comfort Farms, and Benchmark Human Services.

The department sends many graduates to pursue graduate degrees and thus begins these conversations early in their psychology major timeframe at GCSU. Some of their graduates have even pursued the pathway of their faculty and have earned doctoral degrees and post-doc and permanent teaching positions at such esteemed academic institutions as Yale University and Johns Hopkins Medical Center. As such, it is my honor to nominate this lively and engaged department for the Department/Program Excellence Award for all the right reasons at this university.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric G. Tenbus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "T".

Eric G. Tenbus, PhD

Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia College and State University

## **Program Narrative**

The vision of the Department of Psychological Science is to offer courses that serve as crucibles of intellectual inquiry, challenging students to question assumptions and providing them with the skills and experiences necessary for success in both their personal and professional lives. The Department aims to produce graduates who possess not only a deep understanding of psychological science but also the maturity, cognitive sophistication, and adaptability that are the hallmarks of a liberal arts education.

To achieve this vision, we have outlined several key goals and strategies:

**High-Quality Teaching and Mentorship:** We are committed to supporting faculty in delivering high-quality instruction and fostering close mentorship relationships with students. Our faculty members are not only experts in their respective fields but also passionate educators who continually strive to innovate and improve their teaching practices to best serve students with diverse career goals. Our course offerings integrate many high-impact practices advocated by the American Association of Colleges & Universities and the American Psychological Association's Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major. As a result, our graduates develop a mastery of both content knowledge in psychological science and career-ready skills that prepare them for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce (e.g. data interpretation, critical thinking, effective oral and written communication, and collaborative problem-solving).

**Research Opportunities:** We believe that active engagement in research is essential for a psychology major to gain a comprehensive understanding of psychological science. Therefore, we provide ample opportunities for our students to participate in research projects alongside faculty members, allowing them to apply theoretical concepts to real-world problems and develop valuable research skills. Most faculty members in the department have developed their undergraduate research lab based on their own areas of expertise. As a result, students have ample opportunities for exploring psychological research topics under a faculty member's direction. Most students in these research labs have presented or will present their work in academic research conferences.

**Interdisciplinary Exploration:** The field of psychological science is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing upon insights from psychology, neuroscience, sociology, and other disciplines. Our curriculum is designed to encourage students to explore these diverse perspectives fully, fostering a holistic understanding of human behavior and cognition.

**Respect for Diversity and Inclusion:** We recognize the importance of diversity and inclusion in both our academic community and the broader society. Through our teaching, research, and mentorship, we strive to create an inclusive environment that values and respects individuals from all backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences.

**Continuous Improvement:** We are committed to an ongoing process of review and revision to ensure that our curriculum remains responsive to the evolving needs of students and society. We use data-driven assessment methods to evaluate student learning outcomes and inform decisions about teaching practices and curriculum development.

To realize these goals, we engage in a range of strategies and initiatives:

**Student Support Services:** We offer opportunities for mentoring and supporting students both inside and outside the classroom. These include academic advising, undergraduate research labs, peer mentoring through clubs and organizations designed to enhance students' academic and personal development.

**Assessment and Evaluation:** We have developed a system for assessing student learning outcomes and program effectiveness that follows guidelines from the American Psychological Association (APA). These departmental efforts include pre- and post-assessments and capstone projects, among others.

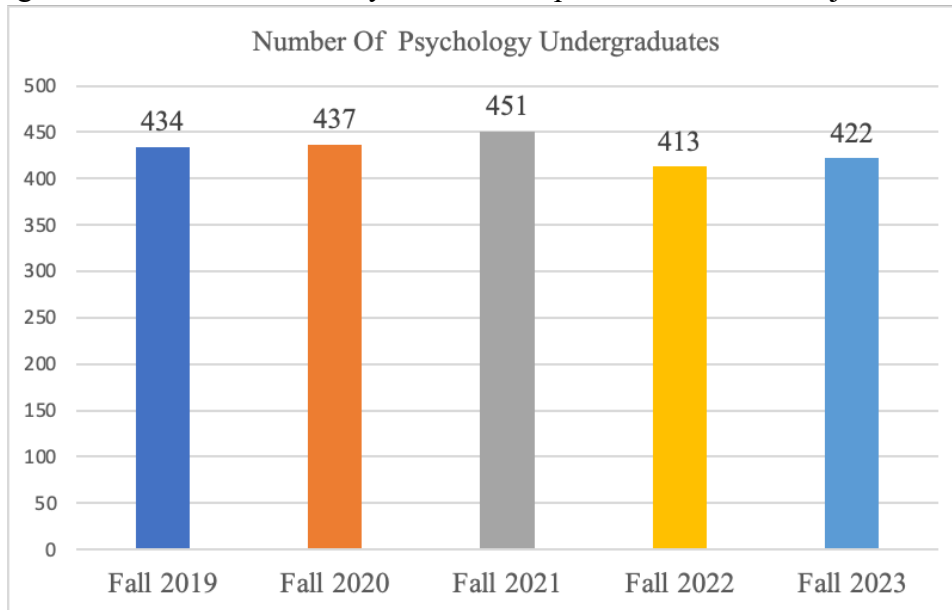
## Departmental Fact Sheet

**#1 Psychology Program in Georgia**

**2024 US News & World Report**

Georgia College was founded in 1889, and a required course in psychology for all students was part of the college curriculum starting in 1891 when classes began. The “Department of Psychology” was listed in the course catalog in 1948. In 2009, the name of the department was changed to the “Department of Psychological Science” in part to emphasize the curricular focus on research. In 2013, the department's CIP code was approved as a STEM discipline (42.2799; Research and Experimental Psychology).

As of Fall 2023, the Department supports 422 Psychology Majors; there are no longer any Minors in Psychology as we eliminated that option due to excessive waiting lists for prerequisite courses, which was reducing the department’s capacity for allowing students to stay on track to graduate. We have established the track record of being among the most popular undergraduate majors at the university for several years. In the last five years, we have been ranked as high as 1 or 2, but consistently within the top 5 of all declared majors.



Currently: 12 faculty total and 1 staff member (administrative assistant)

Tenure Track Faculty with terminal degrees: 11: Full Professors= 5, Associate Professors= 2

Assistant Professors: =3; Limited Term Lecturer = 1

### Graduation and Retention Rates

According to Fall 2023 data provided by the Georgia College Office of Institutional Research, the median percentage of students enrolled or graduated 2 years after entering having earned 60 credit hours (taking major courses) is 84.6%; only Management Information Systems has a higher percentage at 89.7%. The median percentage of students enrolled or graduated 4 years after entering with 60 credit hours is 86.1%, above Management Information Systems at 81.8%

## **Evidence to Support Award Nomination**

### **Assessment**

The department employs pre-post testing based on the American Psychological Association's Recommended Learning Outcomes for Undergraduate Psychology Majors. These assessments occur in various psychology courses, including Introductory Psychology, Psychology Statistics, and Research Methods. Students in 3000-level major classes are evaluated at the start of each semester on statistics and research methods. Graduating seniors complete a self-assessment using the Academic Skills Inventory, Revised. Assessment results are shared during Fall meetings, fostering discussions on methods, course-specific outcomes, and the overall departmental assessment plan. Ongoing conversations throughout the year address curricular adjustments based on needs and decisions.

### **Annual Peer Review of Individual Faculty Reports**

The department's annual peer review of individual faculty reports (IFRs) ensures that faculty are evaluated based on objective and measurable criteria, and not in comparison to the work of others in the department. We utilize an evaluation procedure that is evidence-based and includes items directly tied to supporting student success and professional development. Our process includes a three-tiered rating system. Each faculty member provides a self-evaluation of their yearly progress based on established departmental criteria. A committee of three tenured faculty, who rotate yearly, perform a blind review of each faculty member's materials using the same criteria. Finally, the department chair performs their own review of faculty members' performance and compiles information from both faculty members' self-reports and committee reviews. This system provides a balanced approach to yearly evaluations, one which allows faculty members ample opportunity to reflect on their performance and advocate for their progress throughout the year. This process also contributes to our department's culture of collegiality. We acknowledge the importance of using evidenced-based and innovated practices that fuel student learning, such as the infusion of technology in the classroom, cooperative learning activities, and problem-based teaching methods, and therefore reward faculty for their efforts in engaging in these activities on their yearly IFR. Likewise, departmental criteria places great emphasis on professional development activities, acknowledging the need for professional development opportunities to maintain standards of excellence in teaching and scholarship. Our review system clearly rewards faculty efforts in these areas, as IFR scores are directly tied to promotion and merit raises.

### **Student Involvement**

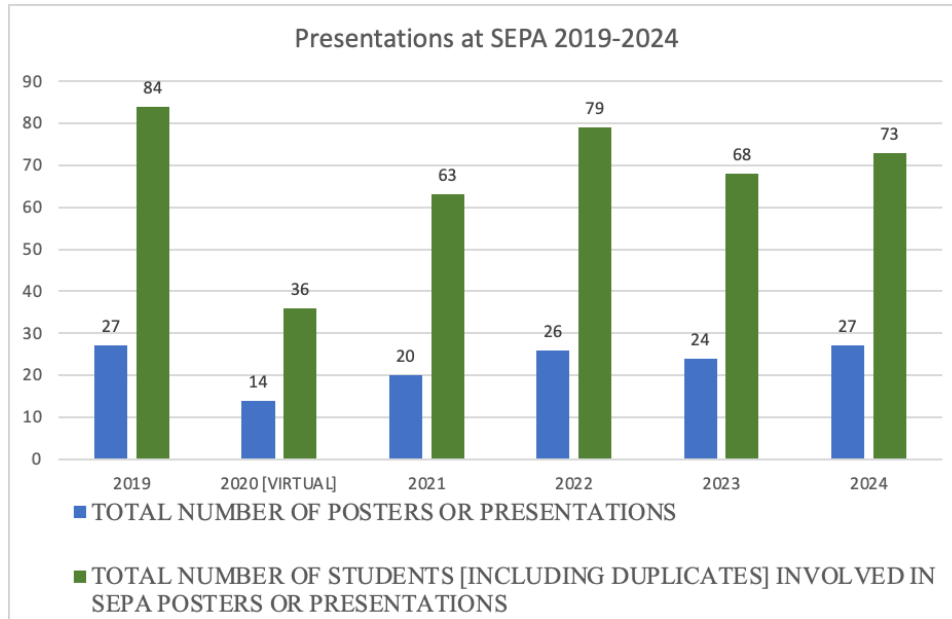
#### **Undergraduate Research**

With the financial backing from departmental travel funds, the College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Development funds, and financial assistance from MURACE (Mentored Undergraduate Research and Creative Endeavors) for student registration and travel to undergraduate research conferences, our faculty receive support and resources. This support enables faculty to actively participate in professional development activities, fostering the enhancement of their teaching

effectiveness and the seamless integration of innovative pedagogical approaches into their courses.

A hallmark of our year has been attendance at the annual conference of the Southeastern Psychological Association (SEPA) by faculty and undergraduate students to present undergraduate research endeavors.

The graph below represents the total number of students involved in presentations at SEPA over the past six years.



### **Psi Chi and Psychology Club**

Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology, was founded in 1929 to recognize and promote excellence in the science and application of psychology. The Georgia College chapter was chartered in 1993. The chapter has 70 undergraduate psychology majors. The department also fosters an active Psychology Club (a registered student organization open to students across majors) boasting approximately 80 current members. Members of Psi Chi and the Psychology Club members meet to partner on events, including philanthropic pursuits to better the local community. Recent philanthropic projects have included fundraising for Relay for Life and collecting donations for the community food pantry (Milly Free Fridge). Before class registration each semester, these organizations also organize a meeting (without faculty present) where 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students share their impressions of courses and offer mentoring advice on sequencing major courses. Mentoring includes sharing opinions of how faculty members structure their classes and how they engage students in their classes. The meeting also provides a chance to highlight the focus of undergraduate research labs and how students can inquire about access to join the labs.



## **Recognizing Student Success: PSYC-CON**

We take great pride in our commitment to recognizing and celebrating the outstanding achievements of our students at our department's annual Research and Recognition Day Ceremony (a.k.a. PSYC-CON). This exceptional event serves as a platform for showcasing the remarkable work conducted across our 11 research labs, providing a valuable opportunity for students to present their research to both peers and faculty.

A highlight of the ceremony is the presentation of awards for the top three research posters, a testament to the dedication and excellence displayed by our students. Beyond academic achievements, we also acknowledge outstanding first, second, third, and fourth-year students, underscoring our commitment to recognizing excellence at all stages of a student's academic journey.

Emphasizing the significance of experiential learning, we commend students for their accomplishments in research, inclusive excellence, and community service. By highlighting these diverse achievements, we aim to instill a broader understanding of the multifaceted contributions our students make to both the academic community and society at large.

To further inspire and guide our students, we annually invite a distinguished alumni speaker who can share insights into their experiences, whether they pursued advanced graduate degrees or entered the workforce directly. This dual perspective provides valuable insights for our students as they navigate their own career paths in Psychological Science.

Recognizing the broader impact of our event, we actively foster community building. This ceremony serves as a unifying force among our majors and faculty, creating a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Moreover, by inviting campus and community organizations to participate, we extend our reach beyond the department, promoting collaboration and mutual understanding.

Our commitment to community engagement is evident in the diverse range of organizations represented at our event. From the Women's Center to the Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy, and from the Career Center to the Office of Health Promotion, we provide a platform for these organizations to showcase their work and educate students on opportunities for involvement.

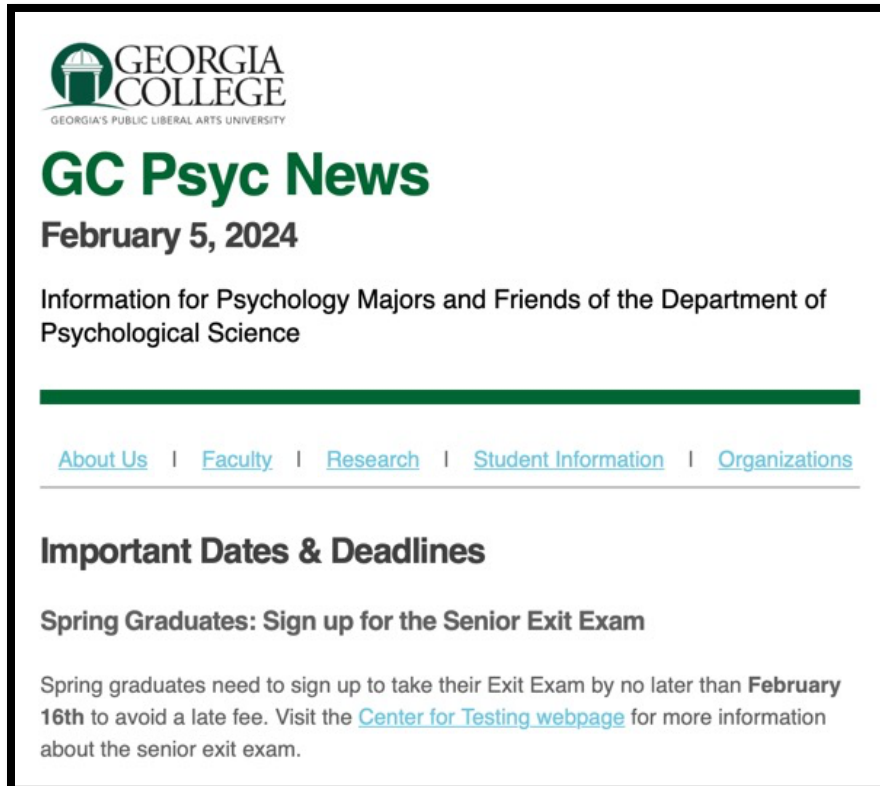
External organizations such as Comfort Farms (a non-profit Acute Veterans Crisis Agricultural center) and Benchmark Human Services contribute to the richness of our event by bringing real-world perspectives and opportunities for students to connect with the broader community. Through these collaborative efforts, we strive to create an inclusive and supportive environment that prepares our students for academic success and meaningful contributions to society at large.

## **Communicating with Current Students and Alumni**

To communicate with students and alumni in various formats. Twice a year, students interested in graduate school are invited to a talk given by psychology faculty as well as faculty from Criminal Justice and therapist from the Counseling Center. the department publishes and distributes an online newsletter, GC PSYC News, with announcements of upcoming deadlines or

events, news, and features from the internet that are related to the field of psychology. An example of the first page of a recent posting is below.

Additionally, we set up a LinkedIn group for Georgia College Psychology Alumni. This group, which currently has 405 members, provides a means for current students and recent graduates to network with one another, share updates, and build community. According to LinkedIn analytics, 50 percent of members had been active in the past seven days.



The image shows a screenshot of a webpage titled "GC Psyc News" dated February 5, 2024. At the top left is the Georgia College logo, which includes a stylized building icon and the text "GEORGIA COLLEGE" and "GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY". Below the logo, the main heading "GC Psyc News" is displayed in a large, bold, green font. Underneath this, the date "February 5, 2024" is shown in a bold black font. A subtitle reads "Information for Psychology Majors and Friends of the Department of Psychological Science". A thick green horizontal line separates the header from the navigation menu. The navigation menu consists of five blue, underlined links: "About Us", "Faculty", "Research", "Student Information", and "Organizations". Below the navigation menu, the section "Important Dates & Deadlines" is highlighted in bold black text. Under this section, there is a sub-heading "Spring Graduates: Sign up for the Senior Exit Exam" in bold black text. The main body of text in this section states: "Spring graduates need to sign up to take their Exit Exam by no later than **February 16th** to avoid a late fee. Visit the [Center for Testing webpage](#) for more information about the senior exit exam."

### Keeping up with Alumni

Data requested from the National Student Clearinghouse research center identified 260 Georgia College alumni who graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology between 2021 and 2023. Of those, 75 graduates (29%) were identified who had enrolled in post bachelor's education 2021-2023. This percentage aligns with, and perhaps surpasses, what was found in the APA's Center for Workforce Studies 2017 report. That national survey, published in 2019, found that approximately 30% of those with a bachelor's degree in psychology had earned a graduate degree in psychology or another discipline by the age of 30 (well beyond the average age of our recent graduates).

<b>Top 10 places our students attend for graduate study (since May 2021)</b>	
1	Augusta University
2	University of Georgia
3	Georgia College & State University
4	Columbus State University
5	Georgia State University
6	Kennesaw State University
7	Georgia Southern University
8	Mercer University, Atlanta Campus
9	Brenau University
10	Fort Valley State University

<b>Top 10 graduate degrees our students pursue (since May 2021)</b>	
1	Clinical Mental Health Counseling
2	Social Work
3	Applied Behavior Analysis
4	School Counseling
5	Forensic Psychology
6	Law
7	Occupational Therapy
8	Master of Arts in Teaching
9	Master of Science in Psychology, Research
10	Special Education

### **Recent Outstanding Alumni**

Recipients of the last two (2021 and 2022) **Outstanding Recent Alumni Awardees** at Georgia College & State University have been graduates from our department. To be eligible, the graduate must have earned their degree from Georgia College within the past 10 years and demonstrate “notable recognition in a professional or business career and promise for continued success.”

**2021 awardee: Sean Dolan, Ph.D.** (2012 GCSU graduate).

Sean, a distinguished pharmacologist, earned his doctoral degree in Biomedical Sciences from The University of North Texas - Health Science Center in 2017. Following graduation with distinction, he held a three-year post-doctoral position at Johns Hopkins Medical Center, focusing on behavioral economic frameworks for assessing behaviors and interventions related to drug addiction. Currently, he serves as a Pharmacologist at the Food & Drug Administration Center for Tobacco Products, overseeing and contributing to tobacco regulatory science studies.

Since graduating from Georgia College, Sean has authored 23 peer-reviewed publications, including ten as the first author, in esteemed journals such as The Journal of Psychopharmacology and Neuropharmacology.

**2022 awardee: Danielle Davis, Ph.D.** (2014 GCSU graduate)

Danielle graduated from Georgia College in 2014 with a B.S. in Psychological Science, actively participating in undergraduate research. She earned her experimental psychology doctoral degree from the University of Vermont in 2019 and a postdoctoral fellowship at the Yale School of Medicine from 2019 to 2021. Danielle serves as an Associate Research Scientist at the Yale School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry, leading basic and applied research on smoking cessation and regulation mechanisms.

Her recent work includes studying cannabis use among youth who vape nicotine e-cigarettes and exploring the effects of varying water content and flavor regulation of e-cigarettes. Since graduating from Georgia College, Danielle has contributed to 39 peer-reviewed publications (10 as the first author) in esteemed journals such as Drug and Alcohol Dependence and Nicotine and Tobacco Research, along with publishing four book chapters.

**In conclusion**

The Department of Psychological Science is dedicated to nurturing undergraduate minds and fostering futures through high-quality teaching, research, and mentorship. We are committed to equipping our students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to succeed academically, professionally, and personally. By embracing innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity, we strive to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our students, alums, and the broader community.