Kennesaw State University
The Graduate College Magazine

Fall - Winter 2017

Dr. Charles Amlaner
A KSU Legacy

Bridging Big Data at KSU
Preparing tomorrow’s biomedical Ph.Ds

EMBA Program receives national recognition

Remembering Precious Williams
The Graduate College
Magazine

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Dr. Charles Amlaner

Dean of The Graduate College
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### ON THE COVER

Dr. Charles Amlaner

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**Kennesaw State University**

The Graduate College
A NOTE FROM THE DEAN

All - It is with great pleasure we introduce our new publication, The Graduate College Magazine. The magazine is a bi-annual publication produced by The Graduate College's Communications and Strategic Planning Office.

It is our vision that The Graduate College Magazine will become a relevant news source for the Graduate Faculty, alumni, students, and the Kennesaw State University community. It will report on our faculty and students’ research, scholarship, professional practice, and engagement, recording the many exceptional things happening in graduate education at Kennesaw State University.

The cover story for our inaugural publication is a tribute to Dr. Charles Amlaner. Dr. Amlaner served as the University’s founding Vice President for Research and fourth Dean of The Graduate College. During his tenure at KSU, he led the exponential growth of the University’s graduate and research profile, culminating in the February 2016 Carnegie reclassification of KSU as an "R3" research university. Particularly relevant for graduate education, the number of students enrolled in graduate programs beyond the master’s degree increased from less than one hundred to over six hundred. Dr. Amlaner was particularly committed to graduate students, championing a multi-year increase in the University’s budget for graduate assistantships, which grew from approximately $50,000 to over $3 million annually. It is more than fitting that The Graduate College Magazine's first edition honor his legacy.

Going forward, each edition will feature both a student and faculty spotlight section. This current issue features student Preeti Aggarwal. Aggarwal is enrolled in the Master of Science in Information Technology program. Our featured faculty member is Dr. Jennifer Priestley. Priestley is associate dean of The Graduate College and executive director of the Analytics and Data Science Institute.

This issue also includes articles that share information about the University’s involvement with big data, the success of the Peach State Bridge to Doctorate Program, the national recognition of our Executive MBA program, Bagwell College’s partnership with a Polish university, and an article dedicated to the service and contributions of Ms. Precious Williams.

As Dean of The Graduate College, I would like to specifically thank Loretta Daniels, executive director of Communications and Strategic Planning, and her assistants for their work in making this publication a reality.

We hope you enjoy reading The Graduate College Magazine!

Mike L. Dishman, J.D., Ed.D.
Professor of Education Policy & Governance
Dean of The Graduate College
The Center of Statistics and Analytical Research receives a $98,000 research grant from ERMAS

Dr. Jennifer Priestley, professor of Statistics and Data Science and associate dean of The Graduate College, received $98,000 from ERMAS for the Center of Statistics and Analytical Research to research banking and insurance customers in anti-money laundering and fraud analytical models. ERMAS Consulting has been a leader in business intelligence solutions and data integration since 1990. Their consultants specialize in databases and data warehousing, analytics and risk management, and marketing automation solutions.

New Partnership with Poland’s University of Rzeszow provides global learning experiences for BCOE graduate students and faculty

A partnership between the Bagwell College of Education and University of Rzeszow in Poland has resulted in BCOE faculty and students traveling to Poland to teach English to university faculty and teacher education candidates, and University of Rzeszow’s faculty visiting KSU’s campus to learn about education in the U.S. and to explore opportunities for collaborative research. The BCOE-University of Rzeszow partnership provides an opportunity for students in both initial and advanced education programs and education faculty to be involved in global learning. Read the entire article on page 24.

Twelve Woodrow Wilson fellows to enter STEM teaching pipeline at KSU

Twelve recent graduates or career changers among the sixty-three newest Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellows will pursue graduate degrees at Kennesaw State University where they will prepare to teach STEM subjects at Georgia schools. Governor Nathan Deal announced the new class of fellows June 29th at the State Capitol.
Unsupervised Dimension Reduction

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By Bailey McAlister

BRIDGING BIG DAT
"It's about raising the profile of the University in the business community, contributing to the economic drivers of our state. Ultimately, it's about creating a return on investment for the taxpayers."

It is evident that KSU’s data science programs are focused on producing graduates who stay locally to use their skills to build the economy of Atlanta-area companies. Dr. Jennifer Priestley, associate dean of The Graduate College believes this has been the focus of the programs since their inception, "It's about raising the profile of the University in the business community, contributing to the economic drivers of our state. Ultimately, it's about creating a return on investment for the taxpayers," says Priestley.

Data science has not always been a prevalent field at KSU. In fact, before the launch of these programs, the concept of graduate students using real-world data to apply to their studies was merely an idea.

"If we go back to 2005, there were no statistics courses or analytics courses at KSU. However, there were a couple of faculty who had strong backgrounds and education in statistics—all of whom had work experience outside of academia. This made us a very unusual group of faculty. As we started to reflect on the courses we were teaching, we all recognized the opportunity and were charged with launching a master's program and undergraduate program in statistics," says Priestley.

She explains what steps the University had to take to create a successful data science program, "First thing we did, we took a look at what other universities were doing. Then, we also looked more regionally to try to understand better what the academic landscape looked like for statistics. There were some pretty good programs already out there. However, no university in the system or the region was training students to take massive amounts of data and translate that data into information to solve problems. It's incredible to think about now. However, back in 2005, no one was doing that. We recognized that this was our strength. Not only was it a gap in the offering of the system, but, in addition to that, we had a group of faculty who knew how to do this."

KSU currently offers three programs within the department of statistics and data science. These include the 15-credit minor in statistics and data analysis for undergraduates; the Master of Science in Applied Statistics, which seeks to prepare a diverse student body to utilize cutting-edge statistical methods and the Ph.D. in Analytics and Data Science, which was developed to meet the market demand for Data Scientists.
Priestley’s Ph.D. program is especially popular now due to the $75,000 Equifax grant that funds the data science research lab. The grant resulted from a longtime partnership with Equifax and addressed a need for a nationally competitive Ph.D. stipend. She explains, "Back in 2011, there were no Ph.D. programs in analytics and data science. We did not even know the term ‘data science’ - it was just starting to emerge. Rather than do a Ph.D. in statistics, we created this proposal in analytics and data science, and it was formally proposed to the Board of Regents in 2012. It took three long years to get it through the Board of Regents. What took so long? First, we were going be the first one in the country, and we had to explain why this was important. Second, we did not want to be anyone’s second choice. We have an excellent brand in the market as it relates to our master’s program, so the worst thing would be to put out a schlocky Ph.D. program. If we could not do this right, then we would not do it at all." Since real-world data has always been at the core of these programs, there was a need for a data textbook. From the beginning, science research lab has always existed. Priestley states, "Theoretical data science does not make sense. Data science only makes sense in the context of application. It’s questions, real-world challenges, real-world data, so we worked hard to integrate with the business community in Atlanta. As we were working with these companies, we asked, “What are your BIG questions? What are the unstructured questions related to your company that our Ph.D. students could address?” Priestley says the close relationships between KSU and local companies led to the Equifax donation, "The hallmark of any incredible Ph.D. program is the research, the contributions back to the discipline." Equifax soon recognized that there was a mutually beneficial opportunity in funding the data science research lab.
KSU’s Ph.D. program now has a nationally competitive stipend that attracts students from all across the country. Admission into the program is highly competitive with an average of 80 applicants for only five available slots.

Equifax is not the only well-known organization focused on KSU’s data science graduate programs. DataTrend named Priestley as one of their People to Watch in 2016. She is the only woman among twelve statisticians listed, and one of only two academics on the list. Value Colleges ranked KSU #34 on their list of Top 50 Best Value Big Data Graduate Programs. Their explanation of this ranking states, “KSU offers a rare Ph.D. in Analytics and Data Science, a specialized terminal degree designed to meet the demand for big data experts and instructors, as well as an MS degree housed in the Department of Statistics and Analytical Sciences.”

Kennesaw State’s biggest benefit, however, may be its location in suburban Atlanta, with access to the same booming tech economy that favors Georgia Tech.

The master’s program is also beginning to gain recognition. In addition to DataTrend placing KSU on their map of best big data university programs, students in the MSAS program recently won the 2017 SAS Global Forum Student Symposium.

It is not only the dedicated faculty who have been working diligently to expand and develop these programs; the students are also doing innovative work, which has garnered a national reputation for KSU in this area. Clearly, the success of the data science programs at KSU is the product of experienced faculty members’ passion for teaching and talented students’ passion for distinguishing themselves within the field of data science.

What’s in store for these already well-known programs? Priestley says that the strong foundation of the programs can only lead to more success. “The incubation of the programs has enabled us to achieve this success. For that, we are thankful. However, I do think that if the programs are going to continue to progress up the continuum towards consistent top recognition as a nationally competitive program, the University will have to increase the resources and infrastructure allocated to the program. We need to transition from start-up mode to nationally competitive mode. However, I certainly think that we have the right foundation. We have the foundation that we need to continue to skyrocket through the rankings.”

The Data Science Department will have no problem securing the University’s resources they need to expand because these programs have already proven their worth as an invaluable asset to KSU. The students are winning national competitions, the program is catching the attention of respected companies, and prospective graduate students are pouring in from prestigious universities such as Emory, Georgia Tech, Texas A&M, and Virginia Tech.

The esteemed recognition coupled with the impressive work of the students, as Priestley perfectly phrases it, “This speaks volumes of what we have been able to accomplish, and people all around the country know who we are. We are becoming a flagship for The Graduate College and Kennesaw State University.”
Preparing tomorrow's biomedical Ph.Ds

by Loretta Daniels

Dr. Jonathan McMurry
Associate Vice President for Research and Professor of Chemistry
Jonathan McMurry, associate vice president for Research and professor of chemistry, describes KSU’s Peach State Bridges to the Doctorate Program as cutting-edge.

This unique and innovative program, funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), was designed to increase the number of doctorate-holding scientists from underrepresented groups in the nation’s biomedical research workforce. In his Research Education Program Plan proposal, McMurry explains that Kennesaw State University’s Bridge program ‘hubs’ at the M.S. institution, recruiting participants from a wide range of geographic, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds at a number of baccalaureate institutions and offers participants highly individualized training and mentoring and an array of options for transfer to doctoral programs. While KSU is a diverse institution with a large percentage of underrepresented minority (URM) students at the intersection of urban and rural, Appalachian and African-American populations, the University is not a designated Minority Serving Institute (MSI). Kennesaw State is a transitional environment, not unlike participants’ undergraduate institutions in many ways, yet also very much like a doctoral institution environment. "URM trainees will work on productive, funded research projects and study among small but diverse groups at the master’s level with the design of easing transitions to larger and perhaps less diverse environments in doctoral programs; ours is a walk-then-run approach rather than a sink-or-swim proposition," explains McMurry.

The program creates bridges from M.S. degrees to Ph.D. degrees between Kennesaw State University as the lead institution and doctoral partner institutions: the University of Georgia, Georgia Regents University, and the Georgia Institute of Technology.

McMurry shares details regarding the success of the program along with the progress of the program’s class of 2018 and 2019 students.

Q. Explain the conception of the program.

McMurry: When I was Associate Dean for Research in the College of Science and Mathematics, I was tasked with helping get our masters programs on solid financial footing by working to get increased external funding for graduate stipends. Casting about on the NIH funding page, I found what was then to me an unknown program, the R25 "Bridges to the Doctorate," the purpose of which was to increase the number of URM Ph.D. level biomedical scientists by supporting training and education at the masters level in preparation for transition to competitive doctoral programs. The idea is that we can take bright students who may have had poor preparation or challenges that prevented them from getting significant undergraduate research experience or other hurdles and get them ready for Ph.D. studies and success beyond (eventually, NIH-funded principal investigators).

I conceived of the proposal driving home one day when I realized we were the perfect program to do this: scientifically, we’re small but excellent (i.e. a good transitional environment between perhaps a small liberals arts school for undergrad and a major medical school for Ph.D. studies), we’re within 200 miles of 30% of the U.S. African-American population, and we serve a large Hispanic population.
What is the selection criteria?

McMurry: We partner with the University System of Georgia's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) such as Savannah State, Albany State, and Fort Valley to recruit their graduates, but we also cast a nationwide net to recruit students via personal networks, web presence, and recruiting from other HBCs in the southeast (we have had, for example, recent students from Bethune-Cookman in FL and Miles College in AL). We are looking for intellect, capability, generally some experience and strong desire to become a biomedical Ph.D. scientist. But we also don’t want students who are ready and able to succeed in a doctoral program - we want to be able to provide value in helping promising students.

How many students are allowed in the program per year?

McMurry: We are funded for four slots per year for five years. We'd love additional funding, perhaps through private donors, as we can certainly handle more from a scientific perspective. We're bumping up against the maximum that the NIH mechanism will fund in a given year.

What is the graduation rate of the students?

McMurry: Our first two class years, 5 of 6 students in the program graduated. All five are in competitive Ph.D. programs. This year, we expect that 2 of the 4 who started in Fall 2016 will graduate and transition to Ph.D. programs. We lost the other 2 to attrition but replaced them with second year students who wanted to join. So, we hope to have a 100% 'success' this year as far as NIH metrics go.

What doctoral programs are most of the students attending after graduation?

McMurry: Our doctoral partner institutions are University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, and Augusta University, but so far, our graduates have chosen to go elsewhere. They are at Emory, Vanderbilt, Brandeis, the Medical University of South Carolina and University of Texas at Austin (which gave a presidential-level fellowship to get Aaron).

What are some of the highlighted research activities of the students?

McMurry: Verra's research is pretty spiffy - she helped develop a cell-penetrating peptide-adaptor system that can deliver biomolecules into the interiors of living cells. Her work is being carried on by lab mates who are using it to develop cancer, anti-aging, and other therapeutics. To read more details about her research, please visit our website: http://bridges.kennesaw.edu/participants.php.
The Peach State Bridges to Doctorate Program Participants

Class of 2018

Maleek Montgomery
Project: Synthesis of New tri-Metallic Complexes from Bridging Multitopic Anionic N-Heterocyclic Carbene
Graduating from Savannah State University, Montgomery received a Bachelor’s of Science in Chemistry with an American Chemical Society Certification. His research interest is in organic chemistry due to the fact that this discipline gives a vast view of many physical and chemical features in our world today. His future hopes are to synthesize target compounds that will combat health epidemics. He is currently working under Dr. Daniela Tapu on the synthesis of new tri-metallic complexes from bridging multitopic anionic N-heterocyclic carbene.

Wendy Aquino-Nunez
Project: Regulation of cmd1, an C. elegansortholog of neuroD, a Kalman Syndrome gene
Aquino-Nunez resides in Puerto Rico, where she obtained her B.S. in Cellular and Molecular Biology with a second major in English Literature from the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus. Her research interests include the molecular bases of neuron and synapse regeneration. She is currently working with C. elegans where she expects to tailor her research to find answers that can be applied in neurodegenerative diseases.

Mareena Whisby-Pitts
Project: Novel Applications of Biolayer Interferometry
Whisby-Pitts is a KSU alumna, originally hailing from Macon, Georgia. Interested in all things microbiological, she began her masters work examining interactions between bacteriophage S16 and its receptor Shigella flexneri OmPA. After wrapping that up along with a few side projects, she is spending her second year working on aspects of DNA-protein interactions in Pseudomonas aeruginosa. She has developed expertise in optical biosensing, particularly biolayer interferometry, piloting the first immobilization of whole phage on probes for analysis.

Shaquanna Young
Project: Delivery of Akirin fragments as inhibitors of chromatin remodeling in cancer cells
Young, a native of Milledgeville, GA, graduated from Albany State University with a B.S. in Biology. Her research interests include disease-specific health disparities (e.g. diabetes, heart diseases) and drug discovery/pharmacology.

Class of 2019

Victoria Mendiola
Project: The use of THC as a therapy for active paralysis caused by disease
Mendiola received her B.S. in Biology from Kennesaw State University in May 2017. She remains broadly interested in infectious diseases and human physiology. Her research involves investigating hyperekplexia, a rare genetic disorder that can be characterized by an exaggerated startle in response to unexpected stimuli. She is currently investigating the effects of Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, also known as THC, on the CB1 receptor of the endocannabinoid system, which is an important system found in the central nervous system and a contributing factor in the maintenance of homeostasis.

Tequila Porter
Project: Rural Health Disparities in Appalachian Georgia
Tequila is originally from Asheville, NC and lived in Winston Salem where she obtained her Bachelor of Science in Biology from Winston Salem State University. Her research interests include rural health disparities and public health outcomes. Her ultimate goals are to create better quality health programs and advocate for the underserved communities across the US. She is currently working under Dr. Evelina Sterling on rural health disparities in Appalachian Georgia.

Xzaviar Solone
Project: Understanding how protein interactions influence the regulation of eNOS through the MAPK/RSK pathway
While a native of Jamaica, Queens, New York, Solone spent most of his young life growing up in the rural town of Manning, South Carolina. He then relocated to Daytona Beach, FL, to pursue a bachelor’s degree in biology at Bethune-Cookman University. His research interests include molecular and genetic approaches to cancer, cell signaling and receptor activation, and human physiology. His work in the Chrestenson lab seeks to better understand the regulation of endothelium Nitric Oxide Synthase (eNOS) by kinases; specifically, how MAP Kinases (ERK, P38, JNK) and AGC Kinases (Akt, PKA, RSK) work together to modulate eNOS activity.
EMBA PROGRAM RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION

by Bailey McAlister

(L to R) Allan Bishop, Director of Recruitment and Business Development and Jake Otto, current student
Jake Otto, a current Executive Masters of Business Administration student, is only midway through his degree and is already on his way to promotion as a result of his participation in the program.

Although Otto graduated with a degree in Marketing, he landed a position in finance upon entering the business sector. His career required a relocation from Ohio to Atlanta, where he is currently working for Pacesetter Steel. A condition of his contract with Pacesetter was that he enroll in a graduate program within two years of hire.

Otto explains, “I knew I wanted to advance into a more strategic role. I talked to Georgia Tech, Emory, and Kennesaw State, and I ended up choosing Kennesaw. The location and the entire format of the program were definitely most appealing.”

Otto possessed many unique skills and experiences that made him an excellent candidate for the program. As he states, “The companies I have worked for have been larger companies. I have worked on multiple teams at multiple different functions. The biggest part of what made me a good fit was the teaming aspect and being able to help those who did not have experience working with teams.”

Otto says the program helped him learn to think about business from a more “executive perspective.” The EMBA program shifted his mindset from focusing on his department to thinking about his company as a whole. “I have been recognized more in a leadership role and been given more responsibilities within my industry. I am the host of one of our bi-monthly meetings, and I am currently working with executives on marketing analysis as we speak,” Otto explains.

Otto firmly believes that KSU is not only the right choice for him but also for anyone else seeking an EMBA degree. Even his company supports the program, further proving its relevance in the workforce.

Approaching its 25th year, EMBA continues to contribute to the success of the Coles College of Business through its primary focus on helping working professionals advance their careers. The program, which requires at least five years of work experience (preferably managerial), offers most of its courses on the weekends. This structure is not offered at any other comparable programs in Georgia.

KSU’s program-long teaming and dual-international projects are what set it apart from other EMBA programs. Erin McGeary, assistant director of Enrollment and Business Development, describes the program’s international residency, “Every year it’s a different country. We work with a group who lets us know which countries have the best economic climate at the moment, and then we decide which companies we want to work with. The current class is going to Argentina; the upcoming class is going to Peru.”

Director Allan Bishop attributes the EMBA’s recent success on the program-specific faculty. “The fact that our faculty is dedicated to the program is one of the reasons we were ranked higher. When I look at our program versus other EMBA programs, the dedicated faculty and the leadership and teaming components work to get people promoted within the organization, and that’s why we have such a high percentage of people promoted when they are in the program.”

According to Bishop, 53 percent of the students in the class of 2014 were promoted before graduation, and 88 percent of the program’s graduates reported promotion opportunities. The EMBA program was recently recognized by CEO Magazine as a Global Tier One EMBA program for the third year in a row as the best in Georgia and ninth-best in the world in its 2017 Global Executive MBA Rankings. As a result, the recognition contributes to the program’s prestige, “It raises the profile of the program. It’s not only beneficial from a recruitment standpoint—it benefits the alumni,” says Bishop. “It’s going to bring our current students more respect for their degree and ability to find better opportunities because of it.”

"I have been recognized more in a leadership role and been given more responsibilities within my industry."
In Summer 2017, Dr. Charles Amlaner, professor of Neuroscience, informed the Kennesaw State community he accepted the position of professor and Vice President for Research of Oklahoma State University’s Health Sciences Center. Amlaner served as Kennesaw State University’s founding Vice President for Research, Chief Operating Officer of the Kennesaw State University Research and Service Foundation, and Research Integrity Officer from 2009 to 2017. He contemporaneously served as the fourth Dean of The Graduate College from 2009 to 2015.

Amlaner’s professorial career began as a doctoral student of Dr. Nikolas Tinbergen, professor of Biology and Nobel Laureate at the University of Oxford, where he earned his Doctorate in Philosophy. Before coming to KSU, he served as a professor and academic administrator at the University of Arkansas and Indiana State University. As a professor, Amlaner was the principal or co-principal investigator on approximately $20 million of biological sciences research funding. Throughout his tenure as Vice President for Research, he remained one of the University’s most cited research professors.

Following a national search in 2009, Amlaner was selected as KSU’s first Vice President for Research and fourth Graduate Dean. He was specifically tasked with transforming the University’s research and graduate profile, elevating its Carnegie Classification from a master’s institution to a doctoral/research university. KSU achieved this goal in Feb. 2016.

Amlaner’s legacy is a strong one for all the University’s graduate students and faculty. Under his leadership, the University accomplished a number of significant milestones in research and graduate education. Dr. W. Ken Harmon, Professor and Provost of Kennesaw State, recalls, “Each of my one-on-one meetings with Charlie was exciting and reflective of his entrepreneurial spirit. Even if we had mundane tasks to address, we always reserved some time to talk about the ‘big picture,’ innovative things we could do, and ways we could enhance KSU. I was consistently impressed with his intellect, drive, and creativity. He brought great things to our university that are easily measured in research productivity, doctoral graduates, and graduate programs. More importantly, though, I was honored to have worked with him and moreover to consider him a friend.”

Dr. Mike Dishman, professor of Education Policy & Governance and dean of The Graduate College, characterizes Amlaner’s role as determinedly growing the University as a graduate institution, “Kennesaw State University will never fully appreciate its debt to Dr. Charles Amlaner. Charlie was a visionary whose knowledge of graduate education is encyclopedic and exhaustive. He is an effortlessly brilliant polymath. The established record of his success in KSU graduate education speaks far louder than any acclamation. Perhaps more impressively, Charlie is a kind and tireless champion of faculty and students. He was generous with his time, knowledge, and resources, actively suppressing any publication of his role as a steward or teacher. One of the most impressive – if occasionally irritating – things about him was the degree to which he would quietly suffer unfair criticism from those he helped the most, never allowing it to affect his willingness to help others – or, candidly, many of those people when they sought his help again.”

Amlaner played an instrumental role developing KSU and the nation’s first Ph.D. in Analytics and Data Science in 2012, with the degree authorized by the Georgia Board of Regents in 2014. Dr. Jennifer Lewis Priestley, professor of Statistics and chief author of the proposal, offers this comment, “During his tenure at KSU, Charlie was an inspirational leader to all who had the privilege to work with him. While he was instrumental in establishing Kennesaw State University as a research university, he was also a servant leader who cared deeply for those around him.”

Amlaner also served as the founding Chief Operations Officer of the Kennesaw State University Research and Service Foundation, establishing KSURSF as a key driver to the health of research campus-wide. He made KSURSF a true service organization focused on ensuring success within KSU’s growing research community. He led KSURSF’s growth, permitting it to become a funding structure necessary to secure intellectual discoveries by KSU’s faculty and students through early invention disclosure evaluations, provisional and full patenting services, and seed funding for IP development. As a result, this seed funding helped to expand KSU’s research portfolio return on investment by twelve times its original investment. During his tenure, KSU was awarded its first U.S. patents – an important step in the life of a research university.

... I was consistently impressed with his intellect, drive, and creativity. He brought great things to our university that are easily measured in research productivity...
Preeti Aggarwal is currently completing her final semester as a Master of Science in Information Technology (MSIT) student (and is scheduled to graduate in Dec. 2017).

Aggarwal received a Bachelor’s degree in Computer Science and Physics and Math from the Miranda House College, University of Delhi in India and later decided to pursue a graduate degree. She selected the MSIT degree program at KSU because it combines technical and frameworks such as ITIL, COBIT, along with other platforms. It also provides the option of pursuing specialized certifications in fields such as HIT, Data Management and Analysis as well as Information Security. These coupled with the MSIT degree can provide value to her professional portfolio.

Aggarwal’s experience in the program has provided several opportunities to increase her knowledge. One possibility is the invitation to participate in various IT events and competitions. “I have had the opportunity to participate in various competitions such as AITP, Hackathon and ACM ICPC challenges that have added to my knowledge during the tenure of my master’s degree,” says Aggarwal. She became an active member of several technical clubs such as AITP and WIT, where she learned new technical skills.

Additionally, attending various workshops facilitated by speakers from leading IT companies has enabled Aggarwal to become aware of current issues in technology. “The speakers familiarized to us with what is current in the IT field or how to carve out a successful path for yourself in IT. These events, as well as projects collaborated in the master’s degree program, brought immense learning as well as knowledge of project management strategies and policies that are crucial to the success of any organization,” says Aggarwal. She is also preparing an IT Toolkit that will serve as a reference to the articles and projects which she participated in during her studies in the program.

Excited about career opportunities, Aggarwal looks forward to using her learned skills in the workplace. After graduation, she will remain in the U.S. "I have already received an offer from an Atlanta-based company, and I am excited to start work next year," says Aggarwal. She explains that she had a rewarding career in India, and the drive to learn and update her skill set led her to seek admission in MSIT course. "It is exciting to see the practical application of your skills in the workplace, and I want to pursue my career in Software design and development. I am also interested in upcoming technologies such as IoT which is as big if not more impactful than the Internet in its early stages.”

Aggarwal would like to work in technical roles which provides her an opportunity to work in upcoming technologies such as IoT and Machine learning.

“Overall, apart from the day to day job in the workplace, what sets you apart is your drive to learn more, innovate, and bring new ideas to the table as well as enjoying your work!”
Dr. Jennifer Priestley, associate dean of The Graduate College and executive director of the Analytics and Data Science Institute at Kennesaw State University delivered impactful messages at the “Women in Predictive Analytics: Opportunities and Challenges” forum at this year’s Predictive Analytics World Business conference in Chicago. Her participation in the panel that included academics from Columbia University and the University of Chicago places KSU in a prestigious portfolio of universities with top programs in the field of data science.

This forum primarily focused on female leaders in the field of data science. The panelists discussed a variety of topics including what we could learn from programs run predominantly by female leadership, which values are present within the female voices in data science, and how we can ensure that women continue to contribute to the success in predictive analytics.

Priestley is not only an incredible role model for female statisticians but for all statisticians. Her powerful discussions and work ethic reflect her strong voice and belief in asserting one’s place in his/her area of work.

As Priestley gains national prominence in her field of work, she continues to keep KSU’s analytics and data science programs on everyone’s radar. Dr. Jeanne Harris of Columbia University of New York stated it perfectly when she said, “[Priestley’s] program is at the leading edge of the curve.”

It is now more than a decade since Priestley developed KSU’s analytics and data science programs, and her work continues to receive both local and global recognition.

Below are a few examples of the numerous accolades she has received in recent years:

Equifax donated $75,000 to KSU for the launch of a data science research lab in the fall of 2017.

Value Colleges ranked KSU #34 on their list of Top 50 Best Value Big Data Graduate Programs.

DataInformed recognized the MSAS as one of the best big data university programs in the U.S.

Datanami named Priestley one of their People to Watch in 2016.

KSU won first place at the 2017 SAS Global Forum Student Symposium and ranked as 50 percent of the finalists.

Priestley is determined to provide her students with the most rewarding academic and practical experiences through her programs, “[The students] will be aligned with finance, economics, marketing, biostatistics, public health, manufacturing, engineering, and quality control. So that begs the question, where do they go after they graduate? We tend to place predominantly regionally—most students end up in the metropolitan Atlanta area. We place graduates at Delta Airlines, Coca-Cola, The Southern Company, Cox Enterprises, Equifax, SunTrust—and then global consulting firms that have a big presence here: Ernst & Young, Capgemini, and KPMG.”
On Aug. 30, 2017, Ms. Precious Williams was on her way home from her job as Senior Graduate Admissions Counselor in Kennesaw State University. She will no longer have the pleasure of seeing her beautiful smile, she will forever be etched in the minds of those lives she touched.

Precious was an inspiration to all who crossed her path. She had both a welcoming smile and a generous heart. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Education and a Master of Science in Higher Education Administration. However, it was her professional roles in the Bagwell College of Education and her most recent roles as Senior Graduate Admissions Counselor which will be deeply missed.

“I was inspired by Precious’ passion for the Siegel Institute’s annual Phenomenal Women’s Conference which celebrated the successes of women of all nationalities and backgrounds. She enthusiastically engaged me in conversation about this dynamic tribute to women and encouraged me to participate. For the 2017 Phenomenal Women’s Conference, Precious was asked to read Maya Angelou’s poem ‘Phenomenal Woman.’ She was very excited and honored to have been selected for this task. Precious was a natural leader, smart, compassionate, kind and caring. Throughout her tenure at Kennesaw State University, she exemplified high ethical standards and professionalism. Maya Angelou said, ‘I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.’ We will never forget Precious Cherelle Williams. She made everyone feel special, and she was a phenomenal young woman.”

Vickie Lee, M.B.A. Office of Graduate Admissions

“I was blessed with 12 years of having to be a part of Precious’ life. Within those years, I discovered she was an artist, teacher, fashion designer, poet, but most of all, she was a great friend. She was a beautiful young lady, and if you had an opportunity to meet her, you understood why the name Precious was so fitting. She will be missed but will always remain in my heart.”

Melinda Ross, Bagwell College of Education

“Precious had the sweetest smile on campus.”

David Baugher, M.P.A. The Graduate College

“When reviewing the applications for the position of Graduate Admissions Counselor, I saw Precious’ name, looked at my Assistant Director, and said, ‘Let’s do whatever we have to do to hire her.”

Nikki Palamiotis, M.P.H. The Graduate College

“I can still see Precious stepping into our office with a big smile every day and saying ‘Good morning,’ without fail. She was just a very cheerful person all the time; it was her nature. Graduate Admissions frequently called on her when she was with the Education Department for questions concerning applicants; as a result, I have known Precious for a number of years and was quite delighted when she transferred to our department. She had a well-deserved reputation for being a hard worker, and as I found out, she was always upbeat and cheerful. Not only would Precious step in our work area with a big bright good-morning smile and inquire to how everyone was doing, but if a problem came up during the day, she would give us her thumbs-up as she brightened her face with a smile and said, ‘Everything will be all right.’ She had that positive attitude throughout the entire day from the moment she became part of our office family. We all love and miss Precious; she was one of a kind.”

Eve Hail, Office of Graduate Admissions
An Ode to and lessons from

I met you one day while working in another position for our university. You were so very quiet, and I was not sure if I had just run you over with my "big" personality or if you were studying me. I walked away hoping that the task would be accomplished; you were so very quiet and polite.

Later, I became your supervisor and learned a valuable lesson. You were more prepared to discuss a potential applicant's needs and concerns than I could ever have been. You displayed compassion and grace and comedy at all the appropriate times. You prepared for every scenario you faced in the office. When I asked you to lead, you lead. When I asked you to hold back, you held back.

Every time I needed you, you were there for all of us in the Office of Graduate Admissions. And then you weren't.

You left us to go home that night, but you never came back. Unfortunately, we had to move on, and we have tried to do so. We are about to hire someone new who will sit at your desk, but it will be difficult. There is a lesson in this for us—an even more difficult lesson.

I can’t replace your work ethic, your personality, your institutional knowledge, or your abilities. What I can do is to tell the next person to strive to be as professional and on target as you were with our applicants, co-workers, and your supervisors. It is my job to find a person who understands the importance of what we do in OGA and to also encourage that person to realize that your work is what created that influence.

The final lesson, the Office of Graduate Admissions continues to support the mission of KSU every day. We miss doing that with you, but we have to support that mission. Thank you for teaching us how to do that.

With much love and respect

Mark, Lisa, Vicki, Eve, Katherine, Donna Mae, Christina, Katie, and Shkedra
THE LAUNCH OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

by Amelia Queen
The Graduate College at Kennesaw State University is striving to expand the graduate student population by implementing programs that focus on graduate student mentorship, retention, and recruitment.

One of these programs, the Graduate Student Ambassador Program, aims to help graduate students handle the challenges that may occur at the beginning of graduate school. The program provides graduate students with a peer support system that helps them find ways to balance their rigorous coursework with their life outside of the classroom. Graduate Student Ambassadors will mentor fellow students, offering advice about graduate school and their programs of study.

According to Nikki Palamiotis, the assistant dean of Graduate Students in The Graduate College, students will receive a sense of community and ownership of their graduate education by participating in the program.

The main objective of this program is to increase graduate enrollment, to create awareness of the different graduate programs offered at Kennesaw State, and to assist graduate students with the resources needed to complete their graduate programs. The program aims to retain current graduate students by creating a support system in addition to raising awareness of KSU's graduate programs among the undergraduate student body. With this three-fold approach, students will serve their graduate program by acting as a liaison between departmental entities and students.

The process for applying to become a Graduate Student Ambassador begins with a nomination by a faculty member of one of the graduate programs across campus and later completing an online application.

The candidates will go through an interview process.

To be considered for a position in this program, applicants must:

1. Be a current graduate student enrolled in a graduate program at KSU and must have completed at least one semester at KSU.

2. Have an overall GPA above 3.5, and a score of 100 on TOEFL (required for international students).

3. Have a passion for their program and KSU.

Students chosen to participate in the program will receive a $1000 stipend for the year in addition to receiving leadership training as well as a certificate of program completion.

Once hired, ambassadors must attend a training session before beginning the program. The training session is designed to equip ambassadors with the knowledge they need to serve as successful mentors to their fellow graduate students.

The Graduate Student Ambassador program is set to launch in the summer of 2018.

To learn more about The Graduate Student Ambassador Program, visit:

http://gradambassadors.kennesaw.edu
Faculty from the Kennesaw State University’s Bagwell College of Education (BCOE) collaborated with the University of Rzeszow (UR) to develop a program designed to teach English to the university’s faculty and teacher education candidates.

“A partnership between BCOE and the University of Rzeszow in Poland has resulted in our faculty and students traveling to Poland to teach English to university faculty and teacher education candidates. It also resulted in the University of Rzeszow faculty visiting our campus to learn about education in the U.S. and to explore opportunities for collaborative research,” says BCOE dean Arlinda Eaton.

The BCOE-University of Rzeszow partnership provides an opportunity for students in both initial and advanced education programs and education faculty to be involved in global learning.

The partnership was initially requested by Dr. Ryszard Peckowski, dean of the College of Education at the University of Rzeszow (UR), during his visit to BCOE and KSU during fall 2014. Peckowski was so impressed by the BCOE Teacher Education programs and Bagwell’s Global Engagement programs in different parts of the world that he wanted his university to be part of BCOE’s global network. This program also met the needs of the faculty and students in the College of Education at UR.

The partnership was first implemented in summer 2016 when KSU faculty and students traveled to Poland and then in spring 2017 when faculty from UR traveled to Kennesaw, based on the needs of the College of Education in UR. Upcoming exchanges have not yet been finalized.

For BCOE faculty and students, UR provided round-trip airfare, food, lodging, a small stipend, and cultural activities for participating KSU faculty and students. For UR Polish faculty, BCOE provided similar accommodations during their visit at KSU.

Colleagues from Bagwell College of Education and University of Rzeszow collaboratively developed a new Teaching English program to serve faculty and students at the University of Rzeszow and to afford a unique English-as-a-foreign-language teaching opportunity for KSU students. Three KSU students, (Christine Loomer, Teaching English as a Second Language; Kaitlin Maginnis, Elementary and Early Childhood Education; and Christopher Reynolds, English Education) were selected to inaugurate the month-long program with the supervision of Dr. Binbin Jiang, former director of BCOE Global Engagement, and to teach English during their stay in Poland to education majors and a group of education faculty. At the same time, the Polish university colleagues planned educational and cultural activities for the KSU participants to experience Polish education and culture.

In February and March 2017, four faculty from the University of Rzeszow traveled to Kennesaw, where they visited college classes and local school districts, met with BCOE faculty to explore common interests and possible research projects, and visited local attractions, including Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, and the Georgia Aquarium, among other activities.
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graduate.kennesaw.edu/admissions
Graduate Student Association

The Graduate Student Association is the only current Registered Student Organization fully dedicated and committed to graduate students at Kennesaw State University. Our aim is support graduate students by funding their attendance to international and domestic conferences to present research papers, posters and presentations. GSA also funds students who aim to attend conferences out of interest to represent Kennesaw State University.

Contact us
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