Successful alum cites time at GSC as a turning point in her life

Taylor Lauren Miller is a graduate of GSC who grew up in Cobb County. She is the oldest of eight siblings and is a remarkable success story. Encountering numerous challenges as a youth, Taylor dropped out of school at age 16. She lived with her parents and held a variety of jobs - working locally as a waitress, office manager, and hair stylist. Between the ages of 16 through 24, she travelled and worked to support herself. By her mid 20’s, the instability of funds and lack of direction left her wanting more out of life. Taylor has always had a passion for international affairs, gender issues, and political discourse, and knew from a young age that she wanted to help others on both a local and global level.

At age 24, Taylor received her GED and went back to school. She briefly attended Georgia Perimeter College before transferring to Gainesville State College in 2006. Once she put her mind to a college degree, and focused on the goal at hand, academic success became a reality. After enrolling in 2007, Taylor joined the on-campus organizations Students for Environmental Awareness and the GSC Writers Club, rising to the offices of Secretary/Treasurer and Vice-President for the two clubs, respectively. After serving as a literary editor for The Chestatee Review from 2006-2007, she was offered the job of Editor-in-Chief for GSC’s literary magazine, a position she held for the 2007-2008 school year.

When Taylor talks about her time here, she makes it clear that GSC was a turning point in her life, stating that she was successful, in large part, because of the enthusiasm and accessibility of her professors. When asked why GSC was such a motivating force, she replied, “I had amazing professors who were completely devoted to teaching and consistently open to new ideas. I took advantage of every opportunity given to learn from them.” She stated, “My professors jump-started the confidence I gained to pursue my dreams and led me to the belief that I could do anything!”

While in her second year at GSC, Taylor took advantage of an opportunity to study abroad in Paris for five weeks, where she fell in love with overseas travel; her journeys there have inspired her current plans to pursue international work. Upon graduating from GSC in 2008, she wished to continue her education at one specific school: Wellesley College in Massachusetts. Although it was the only school she applied to, Taylor didn’t think she would actually be accepted to Hillary Clinton’s alma mater. Upon receiving her acceptance letter, her professors at GSC were some of the first people she told. “I owe my success to the professors at Gainesville who inspired me to go after what I wanted out of life.” Now a Davis Scholar at Wellesley, she will complete her B.A. degree in Political Science in the spring of 2011.

Fly Me to the Moon

Join us for the 2011 GSC Foundation Gala on Friday, February 11, at the Chattahoochee Country Club. This fundraiser will be an amazing evening with live entertainment, as well as an impressive auction, pre-reception hors d’oeuvres, and a seated dinner with complimentary beer and wine.

Tickets are $75, and all proceeds will be used by the Foundation to support students and educational programs at Gainesville State. Tickets can be purchased online at www.gsc.edu/foundation or by calling 678-717-3409.

There will be alumni reunion tables so that you can sit by your classmates and colleagues, network, and talk about old times and how exciting it is to continue to be part of GSC. You might just be greeted by a member of the Rat Pack (or a look-a-like anyway!).

Hope to see you there!

For more information, contact Amy Lancaster (alancaster@gsc.edu).
This has been another great fall semester for GSC. Enrollment continues to rise, but at a slower rate that is much easier to handle. You will see students around our campuses all day and evening, as we make efficient and effective use of our limited facilities. The good news is that the Gainesville Campus Academic Building is coming along on schedule and will be ready for fall 2011. In October, Potts Construction Company held a “Topping-Out” celebration to mark the milestone of having the fifth (and highest) floor roofed. It was a beautiful autumn day with lots to celebrate, and I was even presented with a pink hard hat.

GSC’s Oconee Campus has a new CEO, Dr. Margaret Venable, who came to us from Georgia Perimeter College. She has a wealth of experience and has participated as an American Council on Education Executive Leadership Institute. She is dealing effectively with the challenges of the Oconee Campus, which is severely space-limited. The spirit there, however, continues to be healthy, and the campus is thriving.

The College has received three major grants: one to improve our already recognized student success programs (we were one of only twelve colleges to receive this grant); another to work with eight peer colleges around the country to develop more effective learning support math courses for students who are not going into mathematics and science fields; and the third to work with a few other colleges in Georgia to create better access and success for non-traditional students who want to complete a college degree.

The Board of Regents has approved a sixth baccalaureate degree program to begin next fall, a B.S. degree in Human Services Administration and Delivery. The faculty has developed two additional baccalaureate programs that will be submitted soon, programs that we hope will be approved for fall, 2012.

Our students continue to compliment our faculty and staff for the personal attention and support they provide, and student life on both campuses is vibrant. With energy and enthusiasm, we continue to pursue our vision of being “recognized as the region’s premier teaching institution by building on its tradition of teaching excellence and the strength of its student-focused and learning-centered environment. As a dynamic institution, the College will continue to address the region’s call for accessible, high-quality academic programs in an atmosphere that fosters student success.”

Come back and visit. I think you would be proud of the growth and changes while keeping that special culture that you enjoyed as a student.
We heard that....

David Hulbert (’09)—We are proud to announce that Hulbert’s feature film, “Hullo,” has secured a budget and is in pre-production. Hulbert wrote the script and is producing. Jason Winn will direct. Winn’s latest film, “The Fat Boy Chronicles,” is enjoying a successful festival run, widespread critical praise, and audience cheers. The confirmed cast for “Hullo” includes Ron Lester (“Varsity Blues,” “CSI:NY”), Wilbur Fitzgerald (“Drop Dead Diva,” “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button”), and Jeff Rose (“The Family That Preys”). Former GSC students William Davis (’91), in an acting role, and Tanjina Islam (’08), on the soundtrack, are also involved. Watch for updates as this exciting production develops!

Jayson Waddell (’10)—Jayson was born in Dalton, Georgia and is currently a member of the stage management team at the Tony Award-Winning Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, where he will be assisting on shows such as “A Christmas Carol,” “Carapace” and “August Osage County.” He attended school in Whitfield County, where he acquired interests in technical theatre and management. At Gainesville State College, he earned a BFA in Technical Theatre and Design with an emphasis in Stage Management and Technical Direction. Jayson is the first graduate from this exciting new program. Gainesville State was his first choice due to the extraordinary collaboration between GSC, Brenau University, and the Northeast Georgia community that is the Gainesville Theatre Alliance.

While at GSC, Jayson was happy to be recognized by his peers and by faculty and staff. He was voted the Outstanding Technical Theatre student for the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years. He was also voted the Outstanding Stage Manager by the theatre honors society in 2008, 2009, and 2010. He received, with Brenau graduate Cheryl Smith, the award for the healthiest thesis process for their collaborative thesis, “I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change!”

Jayson is currently working toward joining the union for actors and stage managers as a member of the Actor’s Equity Membership Candidacy program. He hopes to continue his work as a stage manager in professional theatre while working on his second passion, lighting design, whenever possible.

Nicki Rionda (’93)—GSC congratulates Nicki and José Rionda on the birth of their second child, Jack Andrew Rionda. Jack was born on August 20, 2010 and joins his big sister Annie, born November 20, 2008. Jack weighed 6 lbs., 14 oz. and was 19.5 in. The family now lives in Morristown, NJ and is doing well!

Nicki Davis (’83)—We congratulate GSC’s Alumni President, Vicki Davis, on her induction to the Rotary Club of Gainesville. Vicki is incredibly dedicated to the Alumni Association and GSC Foundation. Thanks for all you do for GSC and the Gainesville community.

You are a valued volunteer, and we’re proud of your accomplishment and service to Rotary International.

Vicki Davis (’83)—We congratulate GSC’s Alumni President, Vicki Davis, on her induction to the Rotary Club of Gainesville. Vicki is incredibly dedicated to the Alumni Association and GSC Foundation. Thanks for all you do for GSC and the Gainesville community. You are a valued volunteer, and we’re proud of your accomplishment and service to Rotary International.

Amanda Swafford (’07)—In September 2010, Amanda was elected to the Flowery Branch City Council in a special election to replace former Councilman Craig Lutz (who had resigned to run for the Hall County Commission). The term expires at the end of 2011. Amanda graduated from GSC with an ABA Paralegal Certificate. She received her BA in Political Science from Agnes Scott College in Decatur, GA, in 1998.

Russell “Rusty” Tyler Martin (’08)—Rusty participated in the Regents Engineering Transfer Program at Gainesville State. On graduation from the College, he enrolled at Georgia Tech, where he graduated on December 18, 2010, with Highest Honors in Mechanical Engineering. Even though he received various job offers across the country, he plans to stay at Tech and pursue a Master’s Degree in Engineering. Erin Erwin, Rusty’s fiancee, also graduated from GSC in 2008. Rusty’s brother, Nick Martin, graduated from GSC in 2000.

Gainesville State Theatre Alliance

Coming NEXT to the GTA Stage...

Tickets $10-18   GainesvilleTHEATREalliance.org

Intimate Apparel

Lynn Nottage’s beautiful and wrenching story of a 1910 African American seamstress who stitches beautiful undergarments for other women’s intimate moments. PG-15

The Underpants

Steve Martin’s hilarious adaptation of the 1910 farce, where loose bloomers cause instant celebrity for a butcher’s wife. PG-15

February Festival

Two plays in Repertory Feb. 8-19

Tickets $10-18   GainesvilleTHEATREalliance.org

Intimate Apparel

Lynn Nottage’s beautiful and wrenching story of a 1910 African American seamstress who stitches beautiful undergarments for other women’s intimate moments. PG-15

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GSC President, VP address group
— Alumni Council kicks off new academic year

An Alumni Council Meeting was held on October 26th at Chattahoochee Bank to kick off the new school year. Members of the council enjoyed hearing from Dr. Martha Nesbitt, President of GSC, and Mary Transeu, Vice President of Institutional Advancement and CEO of the Foundation. They gave an impressive and motivational overview of the College, its growth, and the importance of the Alumni Council and Association, explaining that in these challenging times, we need our alums to support the College through their time and talents to build future scholarship programs and align with the Foundation Board. Gainesville State College is a prominent structure in the Gainesville area, and the Council and Association members are crucial for future growth of the college and our community.

Ideas that were presented and examined were to bring more alumni back to campus for tours, a pre-reception for Starlight, networking events, and Homecoming events that would be coupled with the Golf Open.

The Association will be directing their efforts to further outreach in Gwinnett and Forsyth counties, building relationships with alums, and increasing annual fund donations. We also will be adding more events in the next year, and hope that you will provide your continued support. Do offer your feedback and new, exciting ideas for alumni events. If you would like to get further involved, please see the article below for further details on the council and committees.

Thanks to all who attended the Alumni Council Meeting, and thanks to Michele Piucci for coordinating the meeting at Chattahoochee Bank. Stay tuned for further meeting dates!

GSC Alumni Council

Vicki Davis
President, Alumni Association
Jennifer Hendrickson
Director of Alumni Affairs
Brenda Adams
Tonya Black
Marie Braswell
Haley Carter
Lesley Congdon
Kimberly Godfrey
Melissa Gooch
Scott Grogan
Crystal Elrod
Halligan
Heather Howington
Kellie Jackson
Jennifer Jacobs

Kristen Latham
Jamila Hunter
Leavell
Kim Leverette
Michelle Lindsey
Alan Louis
Stacy Louis
Chris
McCormick
Kerry Moose
Barry Moore
Sherri Parker
Michele Piucci
Sandi Simpson
Jody Spain
Chris Stenander
Scott Webb
Tracie Webb
Craig West
Patti West

Starlight Concert is scheduled for June 10

Mark your calendar for GSC's exciting Fireworks Show & Concert, Friday, June 10, 2011. Presented by the Alumni Association, the College grounds will come alive with nearly 5,000 alumni, friends, parents, faculty staff and community members for this incredible event. Tickets are $10 per vehicle and $20 for large vans and buses. We're looking for volunteers to help that day—please email or call Jennifer Hendrickson at jhendrickson@gsc.edu or 678-717-3648. We look forward to seeing you there!

Alumni Council & Committee members needed

There are many volunteer opportunities to take advantage of at Gainesville State! We are looking for alums to join the Alumni Council and Association committees. The following information will give you an idea of what these entail.

Alumni Council members must be willing to promote the Mission and Vision of the GSC Alumni Association, be willing to serve a two year term, believe in the mission of the College, and be an Alumnus of GSC. All members will work directly with the Office of Institutional Advancement staff, Director of Alumni Affairs, and other faculty and staff of the College.

Each member will be expected to:
1. Attend Alumni Council Meetings—two meetings per year;
2. Support the fundraising efforts of the Alumni Association;
3. Participate and/or volunteer his/her time and talents through fundraising events;
4. Serve on an Alumni Association committee;
5. Foster Alumni pride and enhance the reputation of the College;
6. Communicate his/her accomplishments, interests, and practical knowledge with students to enhance their professional and personal lives; and
7. Provide leadership within the community and share best practices for continued improvement of the Alumni Council.

The Alumni Association is in need of adding alums and friends of the College to the following committees: Marketing & Communications, Special Events, Development, and Alumni Awareness & Career Network. If you are interested in joining the council or a committee, please call or email Jennifer Hendrickson at 678-717-3648 or jhendrickson@gsc.edu.

“Like” us on Facebook

Gainesville State College Alumni & Friends
Help us welcome three new members to Alumni Council!

Kellie Jackson ('02)

is a Hall County native and currently resides in Oakwood with her husband, Matt, and her adoring pets: Roxy, a five-year-old boxer, and Chloe, a four-year-old black cat. In May, the Jacksons are expecting their first child and are looking forward to welcoming the new addition to their family.

In December 2002, Kellie earned an Associate degree in business administration from Gainesville State College, and in December 2004, she earned a Bachelor of Arts in marketing, cum laude, from Brenau University. While at Brenau, she was active in Alpha Gamma Sigma Honor Society, Phi Beta Sigma Scholastic Fraternity, Ada Little Business Scholar, and Alpha Delta Pi Sorority. Kellie completed her MBA from Brenau University in December 2010. Congratulations from GSC!

Kellie’s professional career began when she became a marketing coordinator for Cypress Care, a healthcare services company located in Duluth. She is now a marketing manager at the same company. As marketing manager, she participates in the strategic planning, development, and coordination of marketing programs; communication and public relation campaigns; branding; and outreach activities to promote the company’s objectives. Additionally, Kellie serves on Cypress Care’s employee committee, where she leads the company’s employee volunteer initiatives.

Since the age of eight, Kellie has practiced Tae Kwon Do. She is a first-degree black belt from United Karate Studios in Gainesville. Her hobbies include kickboxing, karate, camping, hiking, and spending time with her husband, family, pets, and friends.

As a graduate of Gainesville College and a partner with the College Alumni Association through his employer, Chris was asked to help support the association by volunteering his time. He states, “I realized when I reflected back on my time at Gainesville College just how valuable this experience was at providing a solid foundation for the future.”

Chris’ choice to attend Gainesville College was based on continuing to live and work in the Gainesville/Oakwood area, as well as being a more affordable transition to a larger college or university at a later time. After graduating from Johnson High School in 1989, Chris began his career at Liberty Mutual Insurance. He also was able to attend night classes at Gainesville College and then on to North Georgia College on the Gainesville College campus, graduating with a double major in Accounting and Finance in 1995.

Chris’ career at Liberty Mutual has progressed through many different departments and jobs over the last 20 years. He has been a Senior Branch Manager for the Personal Sales Department for the last 11 years. In this position, he manages a group of 22 sales and service professionals who grow the Personal Auto/Home and Life insurance book of business. They partner with the Gainesville State Alumni Association by offering a 10% discount to all alumni on their personal Auto and Home insurance while giving a portion of the premiums back to the Association.

Now living in Cumming, Chris is the proud father of two girls (ages 6 and 4), Peyton and Lillie. He is on the Board of Directors for Business 400, serving as the VP of Membership for this networking organization.

Says Chris, “I am eager to spread the word about the growth of Gainesville State and encourage everyone to reflect back on their time at this institution. I personally plan on giving more back to Gainesville College and helping others grow.”

Chris Stenander ('92)

is an attorney and received his Juris Doctorate from the UGA School of Law ('09). He received his Master of Public Administration ('06) and Bachelor of Political Science ('04) degrees from UGA, where he graduated summa cum laude. He is a Gainesville State College scholarship recipient and graduated with an Associate of Arts degree in Political Science. While at GSC, he was selected for the Costa Rica study abroad program and at UGA was awarded a Cultural Scholarship for study abroad in Mexico from Rotary International.

Chris is a member of the State Bar of Georgia, Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, Golden Key International Honor Society, and Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. He has a variety of experience in the courtroom, including hearings in criminal and civil cases, trials, meetings of creditors, and adversary proceedings for bankruptcies.

Chris had the honor of working through an internship with US Senator Johnny Isakson in Washington DC, which further piqued his interest in politics. He has represented county and city government cases, held positions with Wachovia/Wells Fargo and the District Attorney’s Office in Athens and has been at the law offices of Kopecky & Roberts, LLC ('09) and The Carter Firm ('10).

Chris McCormick ('02)

is an attorney and received his Juris Doctorate from the UGA School of Law ('09). He received his Master of Public Administration ('06) and Bachelor of Political Science ('04) degrees from UGA, where he graduated summa cum laude. He is a Gainesville State College scholarship recipient and graduated with an Associate of Arts degree in Political Science. While at GSC, he was selected for the Costa Rica study abroad program and at UGA was awarded a Cultural Scholarship for study abroad in Mexico from Rotary International.

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Meet your new Director of Alumni Affairs

I am thrilled to be joining the Institutional Advancement Team at GSC as the Director of Alumni Affairs. I bring to the table experience with special events, fundraising, grant writing, and marketing and have served in various capacities in the arts.

I want to give you some background information so we can get acquainted. For the past six years, I was the Executive Director of the Rotarian Action Group for Population Growth & Sustainable Development (RFPD). I facilitated women’s health international projects through The Rotary Foundation, coordinated events and managed the organization, along with board development. Prior to that appointment, I was the Special Events Coordinator for The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation and the Program Manager for the University of West Georgia, Department of Music and was the advisor for Sigma Alpha Iota. I am a member of the Gwinnett County Rotary Club and am a Paul Harris Fellow.

For the past ten years, I have been very involved with the performing arts field in the metro area. I have performed with Button Theatre, Atlanta Lyric Theatre, Onstage Atlanta and Theatre Arts Guild, and have been a part of many fundraising cabaret events. I hold a candle for my two alma maters – The University of Michigan and The Florida State University.

It has been an exciting few months for me at GSC! I encourage you to continue or reinstate your involvement with the Alumni Association. There are many exciting events coming up, but we are also looking for new ideas and welcome input from GSC Alums!

—Jennifer Hendrickson

A few words from the Alumni President

Gainesville State College changed my life! When I look back at my story—the friends I made, the opportunities I was given and the knowledge I gained, Gainesville State made all the difference. It gave me a solid foundation. Now it’s my turn—and yours—to make the Gainesville State College experience a reality for others.

While you and I were busy growing our businesses and raising our families, GSC never slowed down. Today, with almost 9,000 students on two campuses, it’s full of life and creativity. If you haven’t visited the campus lately, I challenge you to come by; see what’s new. Join the Alumni Association @ www.gsc.edu; “friend” us on facebook; make a financial contribution; send us your story—we want to hear all about how GSC changed your life! Until then, goose be with you,

—Vicki B. Davis

GSC Alumni Association holds graduation receptions

The Alumni Association held four graduation receptions. On Nov. 29 and 30, 2010, over 80 summer/fall semester graduates attended the receptions to learn about the Alumni Association, pick up their caps and gowns, and receive flash drives as our special gifts to them. They also had an opportunity to discuss their future plans with alumni and staff members and network with Alumni Council members.

The Education graduates gathered on Dec. 6, and for the first time we held a graduation reception and student appreciation day on Dec. 3 on the Oconee Campus. This was an exciting event that included an appearance by Laker T. Goose, discussions with our President, Dr. Martha Nesbitt, giveaways, music and further advocacy of the Association and its importance to the College.

Thanks to those alumni who participated this year; it means a great deal to our future alumni. For next spring, we hope more will come back to make the reception a real hit!
I’m proud to support Gainesville State College!

Please accept my gift to the Gainesville State College Alumni Association. Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of:

☐ $25  ☐ $50  ☐ $100  ☐ $250  ☐ $500  ☐ $1,000  ☐ Other $___________

Name ________________________________ Maiden Name ________________________________
Address ________________________________ City __________ State __________ Zip __________
Phone (Daytime) ________________ (Cell) ________________
Email ________________________________

☐ Alum of GSC, ______(year)  ☐ Friend  ☐ Parent  ☐ Faculty/Staff

Please send this form, along with your check payable to GSC Alumni Association, to:

GAINESVILLE STATE COLLEGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 1358
GAINESVILLE, GA 30503

I prefer to charge $___________ to my ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX ☐ Discover

Name as it appears on the card ________________________________ Card No. ________________________________

Expiration Date ________________ CVS Code ________________ Signature ________________________________

You can also give securely online at www.gsc.edu—click on “Giving to GSC.”

☐ I am interested in receiving ad rates for Anchors Away.

☐ I am interested in serving on the Alumni Council or volunteering for alumni events.

Successful alum (Continued from page 1)

Next semester, Taylor will finish her B.A. in the International Honors Health and Community Program; a multiple destination study that will afford her the opportunity to research global health topics such as hunger, sanitation, and HIV/AIDS, in Switzerland, China, South Africa and India. In addition to being one of only twenty-five students chosen to participate, she has won a prestigious Gilman Scholarship for this program.

When asked about the future, Taylor responded that one day she plans to attain a Masters Degree in Conflict Resolution from Georgetown and then, perhaps, a PhD. Next year, she hopes to work with Teach for America encouraging underprivileged youth in their own quests for academic success. GSC is proud of this student who is making an impact in many places of the world. We wish her the best!
Association hosts annual Golf Open

The GSC Alumni Association held the 24th Annual Alumni & Friends Golf Open on Friday, October 15, at the Chattahoochee Golf Club. The event was a huge success! With 92 players and many generous sponsors, GSC raised over $17,000.

Alumnus and golf pro Jason Chester raised over $200 with his Long Shot Drives, and we were lucky to have two alums come over from Augusta. Other notables included the alums and owners of Dorks Books, our friends at North Georgia College & State University. Even our President, Dr. Martha Nesbitt, enjoyed a sunny day of golf.

Breakfast was donated by Loretta’s Restaurant, and lunch was provided by McDonald’s of Hall County. We thank our corporate sponsors and players for their participation and support. All proceeds directly benefit our scholarship fund for GSC students.

We appreciate your continued involvement and hope you will join us in the fall for our 2011 Golf Open. Check our website (www.gsc.edu) in a few months for details!

Foundation holds President’s Reception

The Gainesville State College Foundation held a President’s Reception on October 19 at the Smithgall Arts Center Depot. Over 90 donors attended and enjoyed a short presentation by Dr. Martha Nesbitt and Mary Transue. Displays were available from student groups and various GSC Departments to create awareness of the important programs funded by generous sponsors.

This was a token of our appreciation and an opportunity to show our donors they are making a difference at GSC!