

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND SPONSORED PROJECTS



ANNUAL REPORT



FISCAL YEAR 2025



MESSAGE FROM THE AVP

Brian Mosier, PhD

Associate Vice President of Innovation and Research

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs is committed to serving as a catalyst for transformative research and innovation that directly enhances student success. Our mission is to support a culture rooted in integrity, compliance, and collaboration, ensuring that each opportunity contributes to the growth and achievement of our students. Guided by principles of responsiveness, ethical leadership, and reliable service, we strive to provide a supportive environment where faculty and students feel empowered to pursue meaningful research endeavors. Through transparent communication, teamwork, and a solution-oriented approach, we are dedicated to fostering a climate that inspires success, ultimately advancing UWG's mission to transform lives through research and scholarship.



FACULTY FROM THE TANNER HEALTH SCHOOL OF NURSING SECURE MAJOR GRANT FOR SIMULATION TRAINING

Drs. Cindy Johnson and Katie Morales from the Tanner Health School of Nursing (THSON) was awarded a \$483,000 grant from the Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce (GBHCW) Nursing School Grant program, which will bring cutting-edge simulation equipment and immersive learning tools to campus – bridging the gap between classroom theory and clinical practice while helping more students step confidently into the scrubs of tomorrow's nurses.

“This grant is a game-changer that elevates UWG's commitment to experiential learning,” said Dr. Katie Morales, associate dean of nursing and professor. “With these funds, THSON can invest in modern equipment, materials and supplies that promote student engagement, provide timely feedback and ease faculty workload. Ultimately, this means more nursing graduates entering Georgia's healthcare system.”



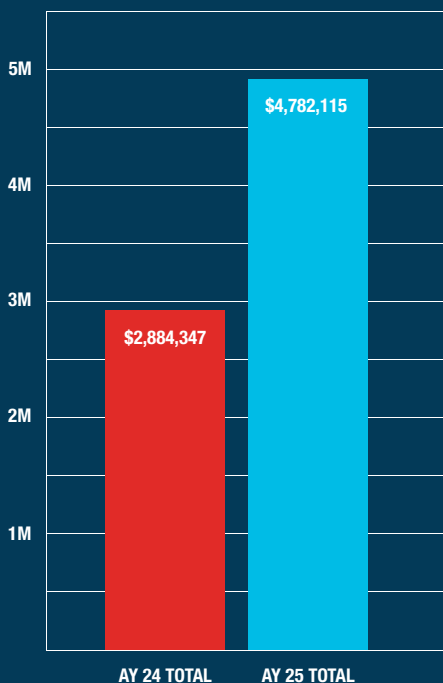
AFFORDABLE LEARNING GRANTS

Three UWG faculty were awarded Affordable Learning Grants (ALG) in FY25 for a total of \$43,850. Since the University System of Georgia's (USG) inception of ALGs in 2014, over 20,000 students have saved a total of \$3.7 million. This amounts to \$10.28 per dollar awarded by the USG.

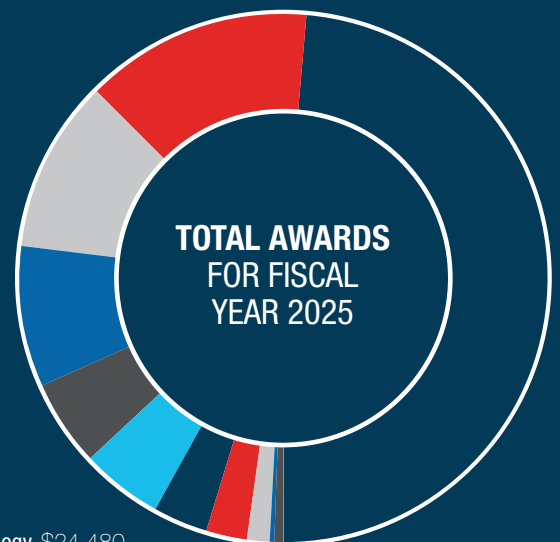
FY 25 Affordable Learning Grant Awardees:

- Dr. Agnieszka Chwialkowska – Awarded a Transformation Grant in the amount of \$10,600 for the creation of Consumer Behavior course materials.
- Dr. Alexander Claussen – Awarded a Continuous Improvement Grant in the amount of \$13,250 for the development of new audiovisual and text materials, including both scripts and recordings for Elementary German I. Additionally, the funds will be used to create ancillary materials to reinforce essential grammar and situation-specific vocabulary for German students.
- Dr. Toni Franklin – Awarded a Transformation Grant in the amount of \$20,000 for the creation of Ethics, Policies, & Procedures in Special Education course materials.

ANNUAL COMPARISON OF AWARDS



- 1 College of Education, \$2,322,660
- 2 University College, \$656,000
- 3 Tanner Health School of Nursing, \$510,500
- 4 Strategic Enrollment Management, \$413,055
- 5 Dr. James 'Earl' Perry College of Mathematics, Computing, and Sciences, \$251,424
- 6 Richards College of Business, \$230,000
- 7 Center for Integrative Wellness, \$168,362
- 8 Student Affairs, \$117,162
- 9 University Police, \$60,000
- 10 Antonio J. Waring, Jr. Center for Public Archaeology, \$24,480
- 11 College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, \$22,873
- 12 Academic Affairs, \$5,000



FACULTY SEED GRANT AWARDEES

The following faculty members were awarded internal funds through the competitive seed grant process for their innovative research projects in the upcoming academic year. The competitive nature of the submissions underscores the exceptional quality and creativity of these projects, highlighting their potential to secure external funding.

- Dr. Marian Buzon's project seeks to foster research partnerships through X-ray diffraction by acquiring an X-ray Diffractometer, enhancing collaborations in the natural and social sciences.
- Dr. Janet Genz is focusing on advancing regional fish conservation by evaluating how environmental factors impact gene expression, in collaboration with an outside university partner.
- Dr. Gary Van Valen, Dr. Patrick Erben, and Dr. Andrew Ivester aim to deepen the understanding of the Muscogee Nation's history in West Georgia through a partnership with the Library, the Waring Center, and the Muscogee Nation.
- Dr. John Hansen and Dr. Ana Stanescu are planning a synergistic investigation of proton transfer processes using experimental and AI technologies. The collaboration with the chemistry and computer science programs will engage students in STEM career preparation.
- Dr. Collin Brooks and Dr. Okan Arslan will develop the "AI-Physical Education Guide" to enhance physical education teacher training. This project will provide real-time feedback using Apple Vision Pros as a collaboration between physical education and education technology programs.
- Dr. Ryan Currier is employing machine learning to analyze shark teeth tools, with the goal of enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration and attracting future funding.
- Dr. Tanya Naguszewski, Dr. Pam Dunagan, Jenny Tucker, Dr. Lisa Hesser, Dr. Stephanie Belim, and Dr. Sophia Robinson-Harris will investigate the effectiveness of virtual reality versus face-to-face simulation in assessing clinical judgment and simulation effectiveness in nursing education.



ADVANCING RELIABLE AI

Dr. Md Shirajum Munir, a new assistant professor of computer science, was awarded a \$175,000 grant funded by the National Science Foundation's Office of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure titled, "An Evidence-Aided Symbolic Reasoning Framework for Trustworthy Interdependent Multi-Modal Multi-Agent Machine Learning Tasks," which focuses on helping robots and AI agents share, check and act on information together in a way that humans can trust.



Dr. Munir's research examines how complex AI systems learn and retain information over time, much like humans acquire experience. By improving how AI stores and recalls knowledge, the system can make more informed and better decisions on its own. This project is the first at UWG to create a testing environment for AI systems and develop a framework that helps those systems make decisions based on clear, evidence-backed symbolic reasoning. The goal is to ensure AI is reliable, transparent, and ready for real-world use.

Dr. Munir was also awarded the prestigious Oak Ridge Associated Universities Ralph E. Powe Junior Faculty Enhancement Award for \$5,000. This seed funding will support a paid research opportunity for an undergraduate student to assist Dr. Munir in detecting and defending against AI-driven cyber threats, enhancing system reliability, and identifying potential vulnerabilities in complex technological systems.



UWG RECEIVED \$225,000 NISS GRANT TO STRENGTHEN STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES

Dr. Monica Smith has been awarded a \$225,000 grant from the National Institute for Student Success (NISS), a significant recognition of her leadership in advancing student achievement and success. This funding has enabled the Office of Student Success (OSS) at UWG to expand and enhance its efforts to support students academically and personally.

In collaboration with NISS, which offers evidence-based, data-driven strategies to promote student achievement, UWG has implemented targeted improvements across several key support areas, including advising, financial aid, and the first-year experience. This partnership also helped launch a new initiative aimed at enhancing campus presence and fostering meaningful in-person student engagement, with the ultimate goal of improving retention and graduation outcomes.

The grant funding has enabled OSS to significantly expand UWG's efforts. This includes upgrading the EAB Navigate platform, a student success management system, and initiating its integration with Desire2Learn (D2L), our learning management system. This integration will support real-time academic performance tracking, enabling advisors to proactively identify and assist at-risk students based on course engagement. Additionally, the grant has supported comprehensive training and leadership development for advising staff, a pre-college program for incoming first-year students, and the design of a peer mentorship program. It will also enable UWG to strengthen faculty engagement through collaborative opportunities focused on student success, improve the financial aid office's customer service capacity, and launch new in-person student engagement strategies this coming year.

We are already beginning to see positive results from these efforts. Sixty-six first-year students are enrolled

in our pre-college program, and 90 have expressed interest in participating in the new peer mentorship initiative. The integration of EAB Navigate with D2L is underway and is expected to transform how we support students academically. Our enhancements to financial aid phone support have led to significantly reduced wait times and improved student satisfaction. Additionally, new collaborative efforts among OSS, academic colleges, and Career Services have helped students draw clearer connections between their degree programs and long-term career opportunities.

Through this grant, UWG has laid a stronger foundation for proactive, personalized student support, positioning more students to succeed from their first year through graduation.



UWG RECEIVED \$100,000 GRANT TO SUPPORT TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

The UWG Chief Wellness Office, Bridgette Stewart, in partnership with Judge Michael Key with the Troup County Trauma Responsive Community Collaborative and Resilient Georgia, has received a \$100,000 grant to launch Resilient WEST. This initiative, which stands for Wellness Education and Training to Support Transformation, aims to address critical mental health challenges in Carroll, Coweta, Heard, Meriwether, and Troup counties.

Through proactive early intervention strategies, the program seeks to identify mental health concerns before they escalate into crises and foster resilient communities.

"Resilient WEST is the 17th coalition to be established through Resilient Georgia. This grant marks the beginning of a two-year effort to create systemic, trauma-informed change," said Bridgette Stewart, UWG's chief wellness officer. "In our first year, we are focused on building a solid foundation and will re-apply for funding after year two to expand our impact across the region."

\$1.7 MILLION GRANT AWARDED TO EXPAND SCHOOL COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN RURAL GEORGIA

Dr. Carey Crawford, a new faculty member in the Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Speech-Language Pathology, has been awarded \$1.7 million over four years, titled “Expanding Mental Health Services in West Central Georgia by Increasing the School Counseling Workforce”, to address economic and geographic barriers faced by students in the school counseling program. This funding, provided by the Health Resources and Services Administration, will offer stipends to support students during practicum and internship periods, provide incentives for site supervisors, and expand the program’s reach to serve high-need school districts in rural west central Georgia. This initiative will enhance recruitment and retention of school counselors and expand mental health services throughout the region.



UWG PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM RECEIVED MAJOR GRANT TO ENHANCE RESOURCES, SUPPORT, AND REENTRY INITIATIVES

The UWG Prison Education Program, led by Drs. Tiff Parsons and Abigail Kolb, received multiple grants totaling \$585,000 this year. These funds have facilitated the establishment of UWG library collections at all three of the program’s prison education sites. Incarcerated UWG students now have on-site access to a collection of academic resources covering writing, oral communication, professional development, history, law, general liberal arts interests, criminology, sociology, and public administration. These collections are housed in designated spaces at each facility and are available to UWG students year-round. Additionally, the grant provided more than 300 textbooks and all necessary school supplies for incarcerated students during the 2024-2025 academic year.

The grant funds also enabled Prison Education to create a portable, prison-friendly biology laboratory equipped with microscopes, triple-beam balances, dissecting kits, and beakers, allowing for the instruction of UWG’s BIOL 1010L inside a correctional facility. In conjunction with this portable laboratory, Prison Education developed a Fundamentals of Biology Laboratory Manual, which will soon be accessible to higher education in prison programs nationwide. Students at Hays State Prison became the first incarcerated UWG students to take BIOL 1010 and the accompanying lab in spring 2025.



Furthermore, the funds supported the continued development of the Student Success Model for Incarcerated Students and enabled the expansion of student success services, including academic coaching, peer-tutoring, and supplemental instruction.

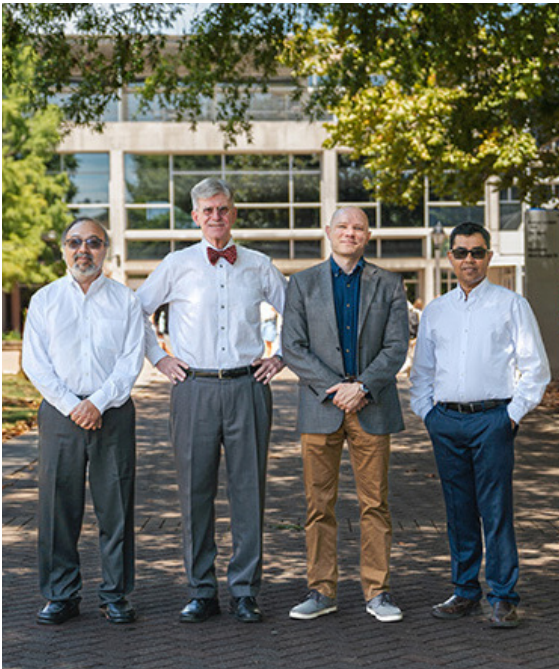
The most recent allocation will be used in the upcoming year to support UWG’s programs at the Coweta Prison and Work Release Site. These funds will allow UWG to supplement the Site Coordinator’s salary to offer one to two classes at Coweta during the summer, as well as provide a faculty stipend and hire two community-based students to research and strengthen UWG’s Pathways to Campus and Reentry programs.

Prison Education Grants Received in FY25:

- \$120,000 from the Laughing Gull Foundation
- \$321,000 from the Sunshine Lady Foundation
- \$10k from American Library Association
- \$135 from Common Good Atlanta through the Bureau of Justice Assistance

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AWARDS UWG LARGEST INSTRUMENTATION GRANT IN DECADES

Bearing witness to the University of West Georgia's excellence in undergraduate research, the newly named Dr. James 'Earl' Perry College of Mathematics, Computing and Sciences recently received the university's largest instrumentation grant in more than 25 years.



The United States Department of Defense (DoD) announced a \$413,000 award to UWG to support the purchase of major equipment to increase current and develop new research capabilities. As part of an overall package totaling \$161 million across 120 higher education institutions, UWG joined the Georgia Institute of Technology as the only universities in Georgia to receive the highly prestigious award. UWG was also the only undergraduate institution among awardees.

The project, "Subnanosecond Time-Resolved Emission Spectrometer for Investigating Nanomaterials, Soft Materials and Self-assembled Systems," was spearheaded by principal investigator (PI) Dr. John Hansen, professor of chemistry, whose team included co-PIs Dr. Farooq Khan, professor of chemistry; Dr. Martin McPhail, associate professor of chemistry; Dr. Ajith DeSilva, professor of physics; and Dr. Swamy Mruthinti, professor of biology.

The instrumentation purchased with this grant will give students access to cutting-edge research in condensed matter and materials science. This award not only elevates our academic and

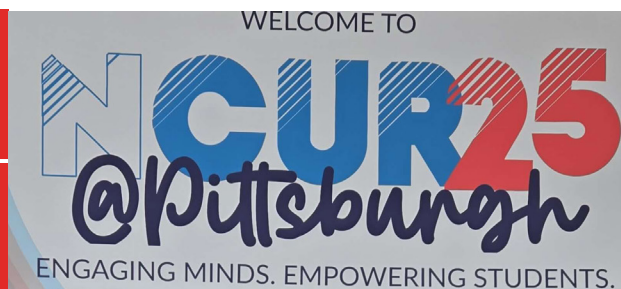
research programs but also paves the way for future competitive funding opportunities and collaborations with the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, the National Science Foundation, and regional institutions and industries, further establishing UWG as a leader in innovation and regional development.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

The National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) is dedicated to promoting undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activity across all fields of study by sponsoring an annual conference for students. This year, UWG had 10 students accepted to present posters and papers at NCUR in Pittsburgh, PA, this past April.

Students and Faculty Mentors:

- Maggie McNealy, mentored by Dr. Christine Simmonds-Moore
- Carter Reed, mentored by Dr. Javier Hasbun
- Jacob Rivera, mentored by Dr. Patrick Erben
- Raleigh Pritchard, mentored by Dr. Nathan Lawres
- Kennedy Ragin, Famatta Barjobo, and Madison Blackerby, all mentored by Dr. Sal Peralta
- Jewell Burson, mentored by Drs. Isabel Maggiano and Marjorie Snipes
- Delight Okere, mentored by Dr. Mautusi Mitra.





UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA