

# History of the University of West Georgia Newnan Center, a Successful University-Community Collaboration

**1987, June.** Dr. Steve McCutcheon, then Director of Continuing Education for West Georgia College, met with Newnan banker, Bill Williams, to discuss a request for West Georgia College courses to be offered in Coweta County.

**1987, August..** McCutcheon met with the Economic Development Committee of the Newnan-Coweta Chamber of Commerce; and in September, a steering committee was appointed by the Chamber's Executive Committee to guide the planning of a West Georgia College Newnan Center. Another prominent banker, Scott Wilson, was elected chairman of the steering committee. Bill Williams, Inez Slaton, Winston Dowdell, and Bobby Welch served on the committee.

Through the fall of 1987, the committee met, conducted a survey of area business, industry, and private citizens, which resulted in overwhelming support for the project.

**1988, June 23.** Dr. Maurice Townsend, President of West Georgia College, announced at the annual Newnan-Coweta Chamber of Commerce banquet that West Georgia College would establish a center in Newnan.



**1988, August.** Board of Regents approved offering of Bachelor of Arts degree in General Studies at the Newnan Center; and the Center began offering courses in September in borrowed rooms at Newnan High School. The Newnan Center began with 2 classes and 15 students.

**1989.** The Newnan Center Advisory Board was created and consisted of 14 community leaders from local business, industry, government, and education, along with several representatives from the college.

**1989, November.** Georgia Power Company contacted West Georgia College to offer classroom and office space in the proposed Georgia Power Shenandoah Environment & Education Center, located on Georgia Power's 14-acre solar research site in the Shenandoah Industrial Park.





**1990, January.** Dr. Townsend approved a full-time Newnan Center Director position; and in April, Carol Goodson was hired as the Center’s first Director to begin work in July. The Newnan Center opened on 14 acres in the Shenandoah Industrial Park as a collaborative effort between West Georgia College, the Newnan-Coweta Chamber of Commerce, the Coweta County Board of Education, and other community groups and leaders.

**1990, August.** Teri Lewis was hired as part-time secretary to the Director and has become the Center’s most long-time employee.

**1993.** Scott Stallings became the Newnan Center’s second director. He served in that role until 1996.

**1994.** West Georgia College welcomed Dr. Beheruz N. Sethna as its new President. A former Fulbright Scholar, President Sethna instigated a successful period of expansion that directly impacted the Newnan Center through facility and technology upgrades.



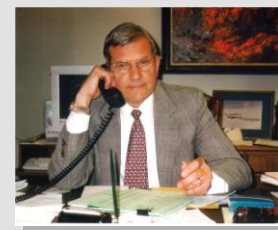
**1996, June 12.** Under Dr. Sethna’s leadership, West Georgia College became the State University of West Georgia. Three undergraduate units became Colleges rather than Schools.



**1996, June.** The responsibility of the Newnan Center was placed under the division of Academic Affairs with Vice President Tim Hynes. As a result, it currently operates under the auspices of Extended Degree Programs with Dr. Don Wagner as Dean and the Associate Dean of Extended Degree Programs, Dr. Melanie Clay.



**1996.** Rob Tornow was named Director of the Newnan Center. He served in this capacity for 11 years. During his tenure, he oversaw the center’s greatest expansion of courses and programs.



**1996.** Georgia Power made the decision to vacate the environmental science center and move its educational staff back to their Atlanta offices.



**1998.** The Coweta County Commission purchased the property for over one million dollars. Under the leadership of President Beheruz Sethna, Vice President Tim Hynes, and Dean Don Wagner, a 10-year lease agreement was negotiated for the amount of \$1 per month. The Coweta

County Commission offered to pay all operational expenses of the Center for the first two years of the lease.

**2001.** The university expanded Newnan Center course offerings to include a Masters in Early Childhood Education and a Masters in Educational Leadership. These were the first full graduate degree programs offered completely at the Newnan Center.



**2001.** The university invested approximately \$75,000 to renovate the Center, adding another classroom, office, a 14-station computer lab, and updated multimedia and computer equipment for all classrooms.

**2002.** UWG added another complete graduate degree program at the Newnan Center with the Masters of Special Education.

**2003.** Under the leadership of VPAA Tim Hynes and Dean Donald Wagner, the University converted an old, unused building into a state-of-the-art lecture hall, the Graduate Education Center. The university's investment of \$400,000 equipped the facility with the latest in classroom technology, and created a 49-seat lecture hall and an additional 15-seat classroom.



**2005.** With Coweta County's investment of \$588,000 for the cost of the first three years of program expenses, UWG added a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing to the Newnan Center program offerings. This was the first complete undergraduate degree program offered in Newnan.

**2005.** Fall semester enrollment reached 465 students.

**2005.** Dr. Sethna announced the institution's name change to the University of West Georgia.



**2006.** VPAA Hynes became interim president at the University of West Georgia for a one-year period, and initiated long-term planning of expanded degree offerings at the Newnan Center, including an undergraduate Early Childhood Education program to meet critical needs of the region.

**2007.** The first graduating class from the Newnan Nursing Program achieved a perfect passing score in the National Council Licensure Examination.

**2007.** The complete Masters of Business Administration program began in Newnan.



**2007.** Cathy Wright became Director of the UWG Newnan Center.



**2008.** The university began the process of prioritizing growth and planning significant renovations at Newnan Center. These included revamping an old auditorium into a state-of-the-art lecture hall with stadium seating; a nursing skills lab; a SITS (Student Information Technology Services) workroom; security cameras; addition of a biology lab; and conversion of room 1124 into a third computer lab. These investments totaled approximately \$250,000. Partial funding for the auditorium was provided by the



Coweta County Commission.

**2008, Fall.** First class of future teachers enrolled in Early Childhood Education program offered by UWG at the Newnan Center.



**2008.** Fall semester enrollment reached 819 students. Undergraduate core curriculum courses were offered not only during the evenings, but during the daytime as well.

**2008, December.** The Newnan Center Nursing program graduated its second class of nursing students.

**2009.** Masters of Arts in Criminology was added to the Newnan Center's graduate degree programs, bringing the total number of complete graduate programs to six.

**2009, May.** The Newnan MBA program congratulated its first graduates.

**2009, August 3.** Newnan Center held a ceremony marking the transfer of ownership of the Newnan Center property from the Coweta County Commission to the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. A large group of community leaders and UWG officials attended the ceremony honoring the Coweta County Commission for its gift. Plaques commemorating the special occasion were presented both by the Coweta County Commission and the University of West Georgia to be permanently displayed at the center. Speakers included President Sethna, County Commission Chair Paul Poole, and Representative Lynn Smith.

