We can’t wait to show you what’s next

► Headquarter hotel project located on the former site of the Georgia Dome
► Flooring updates improving common area aesthetics throughout the Georgia World Congress Center
► Strengthening the Olympic legacy with Centennial Olympic Park updates
► Contiguous exhibition facility creating 1 million sq. ft. of contiguous exhibition space
PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE

Campus Free Expression for All

REFLECT ON WHAT A PROMINENT LIBERAL—Fareed Zakaria, a CNN host and Washington Post columnist—said after radicals at Middlebury College shut down a speaking event by political scientist Charles Murray. “Freedom of speech and thought is not just for warm fuzzy ideas that we find comfortable, it’s for ideas that we find offensive.” Then, noting that some Notre Dame students walked out on Vice President Mike Pence at their commencement, Zakaria took liberals to task.

“There is also an anti-intellectualism on the Left. An attitude of self-righteousness that says we are so pure, we are so morally superior; we cannot bear to hear an idea with which we disagree. Liberals think they are tolerant—but often they aren’t,” he said.

His remarks prompted me to recall those eighth graders from South Orange Middle School in New Jersey who came to Washington, D.C., on a field trip earlier this year. They got to meet U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan, but when 100 students stood with Ryan for a group photo another part of the group waited on the other side of the street. They refused to be in the picture! The Daily Mail reported that one child declared, “Half of us stood across the street including me because we hate you.” It’s a sad day our children can’t even be excited to meet the speaker of the House regardless of party.

All too many kids are being brainwashed in all too many schools to hate people who disagree with them, as well as to despise a Western society that is “capitalist,” “racist,” “heterocentric,” etc. They haven’t learned basic respect for others. They haven’t been taught basic American values: i.e. our individualism that was invented by the ancient Greeks, the Christian doctrine of the equality of all people in the eyes of God and the European exaltation of reason. All of these and more enabled democratic ideas and societies to flourish.

If you’re truly open-minded and tolerant, you’re willing to discuss your opinions—not yell out that “we hate you.” That’s a main reason why the “Chicago Principles” were born. It is a declaration released by a committee spearheaded by University of Chicago President Robert Zimmer. It heralds free expression as a value essential to the mission of higher education—and a growing number of other institutions including Purdue, Princeton and the University of Wisconsin system have adopted them. While the University System of Georgia hasn’t formally adopted the “Chicago Principles,” I know from talking with various Regents and university presidents that their commitment to protecting open campus discourse and inquiry is strong.

Zimmer says, “It is important to recognize that the university’s support for academic freedom is deeply driven by the faculty culture. Commitment to free expression needs to be embraced by most of the faculty to sustain a culture that supports it.” Students who feel this commitment is being undermined in the classroom by a faculty member ought to get out their smart phones, record those who hate free speech and abuse students they disagree with, and then report them to, if not a sympathetic university administrator, a sympathetic journalist.

A FINAL NOTE ON THIS ISSUE

James is gratified that parents and students especially appreciate our annual rankings of Georgia’s colleges and universities. We commend to readers two new categories as well as information on how our staff compiles the ratings. As for K-12 progress, check out an assessment by the Georgia Board of Education chairman in staff writer Cindy Morley’s feature. For some interesting insights on college football, don’t miss staff writer Cosby Woodruff’s feature. We’re also pleased to present the views of new University System Chancellor Steve Wrigley, columns relating to Augusta becoming the “cyber capital of the country,” some political pieces and much more!

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Democrats and most pollsters anticipated, Republican Jon Ossoff defeated Democrat Karen Handel 53% to 47% to win Georgia’s 6th Congressional District. Former Secretary of State Handel rode a stronger-than-expected performance in Democrat-dominated DeKalb County to victory, pairing those results with strong finishes in GOP strongholds East Cobb and North Fulton. The 30-year-old Ossoff, who emerged as a liberal hero after nearly winning the 18-person April special election, couldn’t overcome criticism for ties to U.S. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, his lack of experience and for living outside the district. His ship SANK – but could be repaired to rise again on the political waves...

It is not a new stadium, but the home of the Atlanta Hawks is getting a major facelift. The Atlanta City Council voted for a $192.5 million renovation of downtown’s Philips Arena, with the money coming from a combination of an extension of the city’s rental car tax, the sale of Turner Field and money from the Hawks themselves. A deal to renovate the arena had already been agreed to, but the money wasn’t officially set until recently. Construction began immediately, and the arena will be closed for the rest of the summer before re-opening for the start of Hawks season. For the Hawks and one of the capital city’s crown jewels, this renovation has their ships RISING...

A federal contractor accused of leaking classified information from the National Security Agency to media outlets has Georgia roots. Reality Leigh Winner lived in Augusta where she had top-secret clearance for her job with Pluribus International Corporation. The openly radical left-wing activist is charged with “gathering, transmitting or losing defense information” which could result in up to 10 years in prison. National security leaks are never good, and for a major one to come from Georgia is embarrassing. Winner’s ship is SINKING...

The Fulton County Commission unanimously voted to reject the 2017 county residential property tax assessments that were mailed out in June by the county board of assessors. That means residential properties within Georgia’s most populous county will be taxed based on the 2016 property tax digest. The commissioners also agreed to work with legislative leaders in the Georgia General Assembly to develop new property tax policy. In the meantime, the County Commission, the Atlanta City Council, the Atlanta Board of Education and the Fulton County Board of Education are scrambling to set a millage rate for 2017 based on the 2016 tax digest. Drifting.

Tyson Foods, the world’s second largest processor of chicken, beef and pork, announced that it is investing $59 million to expand its distribution center in Macon. The project will include a 152,000-square foot facility in addition to the existing facility. The distribution center in Macon serves retail and food service customers in Georgia as well as North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida and Alabama. The expansion is expected to be completed late next year and add more than 100 permanent jobs (in addition to the work on construction of the facility)— bringing total employment at the distribution center to almost 240. Tyson and Macon’s ship is RISING.

This year’s honoree as Georgia Teacher of the Year is John R. Tibbetts, an economics teacher from Worth County High School in Sylvester. The Georgia Teacher of the Year Award is a great honor— but isn’t merely a trophy to display. Tibbetts will be working with the Department of Education over the course of the next year as an advocate, ambassador and consultant for public education in Georgia. As he speaks to the public about his profession, conducts development activities for other teachers, serves on committees and participates in education conferences, his professional reputation will obviously be RISING.

Beginning April 1, Georgia required food stamp recipients in 21 counties to find employment or lose food stamp benefits. As a result, roughly 62 percent of the 11,779 food stamp recipients in the state no longer qualify to receive the taxpayer-subsidized benefit. Under the new law anyone getting these benefits must work at least 20 hours a week—and these work requirements are expected to be extended to all 159 counties by 2019. So with an estimated 7,251 recipients having dropped out after just one month, Georgia’s (and its taxpayers’) ship is RISING.

At the recent Charter System Foundation annual luncheon, Warren County Schools received “The Charter System School of the Year Award” and won a $10,000 grant by the Georgia Association of Realtors. The county was the state’s first charter system with 630 students. Their size likely increased their ability to implement innovative policies but also handled financial challenges. The system used the flexibility of their charter model to shuffle personnel and expenditure controls helped overcome a $2 million inherited deficit and build a $1 million-plus reserve fund. All Warren schools are RISING— they are designated by the state as “schools that beat the odds” and its middle and high schools have an 89.5 percent graduation rate.
For many the election results on June 20th were a disappointment, if not a surprise. Taking a gerrymandered, ruby-red 6th U.S. Congressional District and turning it blue was always going to be an uphill battle. Democrats were able to accomplish a great deal in a short amount of time, but it simply was not enough to overcome the demographic and electoral realities in the 6th district.

Even without a victory, the race between Jon Ossoff and now-Congresswoman Karen Handel provided valuable lessons for both Democrats and Republicans. For Democrats, the main takeaway should be that every seat is competitive. Georgia’s 6th is a seat that former Congressman Tom Price routinely won by double digits. Handel won by less than four points.

The fact that Ossoff, his campaign team, and the legion of passionate volunteers could close such a wide margin in so little time is nothing short of incredible. It should be clear now that with a good candidate, a strong message and an engaged voter base, any one of the 435 Congressional seats can be made competitive in the 2018 midterms. Of course, not every race will be made competitive in the 2018 midterms. Of course, not every race will involve a record-breaking sum of $60 million, but most voters will be able to make up their mind without 50 flyers in their mailbox or 500 ads on their television.

However, the result of the election did not provide concrete guidelines for future races in every aspect of a Democratic campaign. Perhaps most importantly, it is still not clear if Democratic candidates would be better suited to running as moderates or as outspoken liberals. Ossoff unabashedly ran as the former, with his frequent mentions of bipartisanship, cutting government waste, and focusing on job growth in the technology sector. Without more concrete data, it is impossible to say if that strategy helped him by encouraging disaffected Republicans to cross over and vote Democratic or hurt him by discouraging more strongly liberal Democrats from showing up on Election Day. It will be difficult to know which strategy is best until the 2018 midterm results offer a broader sample size.

What is clear, however, is that the Ossoff campaign and the Democratic Party missed an opportunity to effectively go after President Trump and Handel on health care and the American Health Care Act (AHCA) in particular. The AHCA is rightfully one of the most reviled pieces of legislation in recent memory, yet there was little effort made to tie the GOP’s desire to strip 22 million Americans of health care to the Republican Party or Handel, despite Handel coming out and saying she would have voted for it. Given that the legislation passed the House of Representatives by a slim margin of 217-213, there would have been a compelling point to make that every vote counts and that Handel would vote with the GOP instead of voting against the wishes of moderates or as outspoken liberals.

The inability to harness the energy around health care is just one of the reasons turnout among the Democratic base was less than ideal. Republicans heartlessly are trying to do.

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Losers and Lessons Learned

A Democrat Perspective

By Tharon Johnson

With offices around the state of Georgia, Hall Booth Smith, Government Affairs is a well-connected team of lawyers and professional lobbyists who understand your federal, state and local legislative and regulatory objectives.
District 3

Campaigning with a moderate message may have helped convince some disaffected Republicans to vote for Ossoff, but those crossover votes did not do enough to offset the lack of enthusiasm from progressive Democrats or the lack of crossover among the older, white voters in the 6th who remain staunchly Republican. If there were to be any hope of victory, Ossoff would have needed to solicit enough early votes to counter the traditionally stronger GOP turnout on Election Day, but Handel’s campaign did a better than expected job of attracting early voters. In the end, overwhelming millennial support and anti-Trump sentiments just were not enough to carry Ossoff over the finish line.

In the meantime, Trump and Republicans will continue cheering their victory, and they should enjoy it while it lasts. In each of the special elections this year, Republican margins of victory have dwindled by at least 10 points. Given that Trump is one of the least popular presidents in modern American history and that the president’s party tends to lose seats in the House in midterm elections, Republicans are almost certainly concerned about what could happen next year. With those elections over 16 months away and Trump’s predilection for degrading the GOP brand, it is not so far-fetched to think that Republican control of the House is at serious risk as popular opinion spirals downward. If Republicans hope to fully stay in power, they will have to better learn how to bear the burden of the Trump albatross.

Right now, Democrats should focus on renewing their resolve and learning from the experiences of losing these elections in order to win in the next ones. Democrats absolutely have the potential to regain control of the House in 2018, but only if they learn from their experiences in Kansas, Montana, South Carolina and Georgia.

Nothing is more essential to putting a stop to Trump’s dangerous agenda than winning the House in 2018. Most Republicans have made it clear that they are perfectly willing to go along with what Trump wants, so it falls to the Democrats to be a check on his power. All it takes is 25 seats.

Tharon Johnson is a Democrat strategist with Paramount Consulting Group in Atlanta.

Leaving the way West


The University of West Georgia is more than a nationally recognized educational institution.

UWG connects with local schools to create synergy in preparing students for college. UWG also works closely with area employers to ensure our graduates are prepared to meet the region’s workforce needs.

The university is itself one of Carroll County’s largest employers and generated more than $518 million for the regional economy in 2015.

UWG’s leadership – in online curriculum development, the expansion of services for veteran and adult learners, and UWG Newman – creates opportunities for more members of our community to Go West, earn degrees, and change the directions of their futures.

Learn more about how UWG is leading the way West at westga.edu.
For this year’s education issue James has researched more criteria in compiling our ratings system. We analyze U.S. News & World Report and other national and regional rankings, as in years past. And we continue to look at admission standards such as standardized test scores. But we’ve added two important categories—the completion/success rate and the freshman retention rate—as a special guide for Georgians as well as for out-of-state and foreign students evaluating our colleges and universities.

Our James staff can evaluate fresh data due to the Complete College Georgia initiative launched in 2011 to increase the attainment of a high-quality certificate or degree. For six years Georgia’s University System and Technical College System have partnered on strategizing, planning, and implementing efforts to improve student access to, and graduation from, institutions of higher education. We are now able, after several years of data, to effectively analyze the CCG focus in four key areas:

- **College Readiness**
  - Mending the P-12 pipeline to increase the number of high school students graduating and ready to begin higher education work.

- **Improving Access & Completion for Underserved Students**
  - Identifying and removing barriers for minority, part-time, adult, military, disabled, low-income and first-generation students.

- **Shortening the Time to Degree** Improving current, and developing new, paths for students to earn a high-quality degree in a timely manner.

- **Transforming Remediation**
  - Improving remedial education practices to remove barriers and increase success.

This year we put more emphasis on data collection that identifies strengths, areas for improvement and the needs of regions and populations served by Georgia’s institutions of higher learning. One area of weakness we’ve identified is that all too many of Georgia’s public (and private) institutions of higher learning don’t collect job placement data regarding their graduates.

We remind readers, too, that four Georgia universities that place a heavy emphasis on faculty research meet the Carnegie Classifications for doctoral universities with the highest level of research activity. We further learned during our research an interesting fact: Georgia State University graduates more African-American students than any other university in the country.

Our ratings are also based on consultations with prominent education and business leaders around the state—and we thank them for their input.

— Phil Kent, on behalf of the staff
Colleges focus on undergraduate education and offer limited, if any, graduate programs. Our rankings are based on criteria that include admissions standards such as standardized test scores, career placement after graduation, and more.

Top colleges:
1. Agnes Scott College
2. Berry College
3. Spelman College
4. Covenant College
5. Brenau University
6. Piedmont College
7. Oglethorpe University
8. Wesleyan College
9. Young Harris College
10. Morehouse College

Raising graduation rates is one of the biggest priorities for Georgia schools. These rankings list which colleges and universities are tops for making sure their students have the tools to graduate and succeed.

Success rate:
1. Emory University
2. University of Georgia
3. Georgia Tech
4. Spelman College
5. Agnes Scott College
6. Savannah College of Art
7. Mercer University
8. Berry College
9. Georgia College
10. Wesleyan College
Our rankings of Georgia's top freshman classes are based on a combination of available data including acceptance rate, GPA, retention rate, and standardized test scores.

1. Emory University
2. Georgia Tech
3. University of Georgia
4. Berry College
5. Mercer/Agnes Scott (tie)

Our rankings of Georgia's top technical colleges are based on available data including graduation rates, teacher-to-student ratio, accreditations, and job placement rates.

1. Ogeechee Technical College
2. Lanier Technical College
3. Southeastern Technical College
4. Wiregrass Technical College
5. Savannah Technical College
6. Gwinnett Technical College
7. Atlanta Technical College
8. Augusta Technical College
9. Chattahoochee Technical College
10. Southern Regional Technical College

Our rankings are based on overall net price and return on investment along with relative quality of education to determine which Georgia schools offer the best value to students.

1. Clayton State University
2. University of West Georgia
3. Albany State University
4. Columbus State University
5. University of North Georgia
Technology Square and Beyond

Located in Midtown, Atlanta, Tech Square is a 1.4 million-square-foot take-inancy, urban mixed-use development encompassing education, research, hospitality, office, retail, and residential areas. It is a destination for startup firms, incubators, established technology firms, major corporate offices, corporate innovation centers, venture capital investors, and business service providers.

SOLVING THE EDUCATION CRISIS

By Duncan Gibbs & Margaret Stagmeyer

Transiency is defined as not lasting, enduring or permanent. As it relates to the Georgia and Atlanta public education system, the problem involves students missing classes which hampers the ability of teachers to teach. One can have the best teachers and facilities in the world— but there needs to be students to learn and teachers to educate!

A reduction in transiency is at the heart of Georgia’s education problem, and a central component to this crisis is the availability of affordable housing.

Atlanta lost over 5,000 affordable apartment units and gained almost the same units in luxury apartment with rents over $1,500 per month between 2010 and 2014. Because of urban blight and gentrification, this is the trend among many Southern urban and rural areas— and it doesn’t seem to be slowing.

Consider this: The average income for many neighborhoods in the city of Atlanta is $25,000 and translates to a rent affordability rate of $690 per month. Many of the largest employers such as the grocery stores and other retailers pay $9-12 per hour, which translates to $18-22,000 per year. This leads to an affordability of about $650/month for a family of four with a single income earner.

Historic solutions involved the government creating public housing. But it failed its residents by congregating the poorest of the poor into areas with limited social support and no vision for an exit. According to the U.S. Census, new construction accommodates less than 1 percent of the affordable housing needs for working poor families.

Modern day solutions seek to mix income levels in new development. This model uses government tax credits to fund developers to build units and allocate 10 to 15 percent of them for “affordability”— which may serve the working class but not the working poor.

Recently, in one case, a developer received $7 million in tax credits and allocated 10 percent of the rental units to “affordability”— which translates to apartments at $1,000-1,200 per month. This works for those making $35-45,000 per year but the demand for “affordability” far outweighs the supply demand regarding the 85-90 percent of those in units who will have to pay $2,500+/month in the newer portion of those developments.

After studying the interdependency of housing and education, there is a better solution— and we believe it is fostered by the work of 3Star Communities (www.3starcommunities.com), an Atlanta-based 501 (c3) foundation.

Let’s begin by noting that the majority of working poor families reside in apartments built before 1980. This “naturally occurring” affordable housing is where investment needs to focus. In other words, why are we building new apartments with government tax incentives, when dollars can be spent renovating well-located properties to provide good living conditions at affordable prices for a greater number of people? This is where 3Star enters the picture by buying existing apartments next to failing schools.

One of the founders of 3Star Communities and TriStar Real Estate Investment, for example, developed a solution to transiency in a Cobb County apartment community called Madison Hills. When purchased in late 2006, this blighted property experienced high crime rates. The complex had 35 percent of the students of Brumby Elementary School. It suffered 67 percent transiency rate and it was one of the worst performing Cobb County schools. But the owners renovated the complex, provided off-duty police officers for safety, created an after-school program and stabilized rents at the affordable level. Brumby went from a failing school to a Title I school of distinction as transiency fell to 41 percent.

Sad to say, though, that the investor group pushed for a sale and the next owner fired the security, closed the after-school program, raised rents and caused Brumby to fail again. As this is written, the school will be closing and moving to another area.

Here’s the bottom line: The conventional investor strategy isn’t the answer because the goal is to get the highest investment returns possible for their partners in a model that increases rents and promotes transiency. This is a vicious cycle that ends in foreclosure, blight, poor school performance and a failing educational system.

The good news is there are for-profit and non-profit real estate organizations being created that bypass conventional returns and short holding periods of the common investor model. Their success is reliant on holding properties for the long run, using donated or foundation or social-impact money with little to no returns and implementing wrap-around social programs. These programs include after-school, summer camps and wellness programs with local health clinics. The stabilization of the communities gives neighborhoods the chance to keep their residences in place, and hence reduce transiency.

We are proud that 3Star Communities developed a proven affordable housing/education model that provides a stable housing environment and allows children— and ultimately their schools— to improve. The multiplier effect of this simple solution is creating a “Compassionate Capitalist” model that is changing the way we think about education, housing and the ability to grow working families into success stories that benefit our entire state.

The authors, Duncan Gibbs and Margaret Stagmeyer, are founding board members of 3Star Communities.
Jacob Dietrich’s goal is to become a Foreign Service Officer, and he is well on his way thanks to opportunities he received at the University of North Georgia.

Jacob’s interest in International Affairs and the Middle East was sparked at UNG, where he was in the Corps of Cadets and earned his bachelor’s degree in modern language with a concentration in Arabic.

While at UNG, he earned two scholarships to study language and culture in Oman and then received a Fulbright fellowship through which he studied the Omani economy and worked with the country’s government.

Today, Jacob is serving as a Congressional intern in Washington, DC., and is one of only 30 students selected for the highly competitive Rangel Fellowship, which provides two years of graduate study, internships and entry into the Foreign Service.

Discover where UNG can lead you.

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**FORT GORDON IN RICHMOND COUNTY** has had many missions since its establishment in 1917, but today it is home to the U.S. Army Signal Corps, the Army Cyber Center of Excellence and is headquarters for the U.S. Army Cyber Command. It is also home to a significant role within the National Security Agency (NSA).

The Signal School at Fort Gordon graduated its first class of 10 students from its power equipment maintenance course in the fall of 1948. Today the Signal Center of Excellence trains more military personnel than any other Army branch training center. The post now has a population of more than 15,000 military and nearly 8,000 civilians and has an annual economic impact of $2.2 billion on the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA).

NSA’s first move to Gordon (NSA Georgia) was in 1994 when it started with a workforce of some 50 employees. During the first several times I visited the facility it had a larger employee base but was still located in World War II-vintage quarters. But the mission at NSA Georgia has always been to gather timely and accurate intelligence from across the globe and to provide that information to the warfighter.

NSA Georgia has grown significantly over the years and new facilities were badly needed. In March 2012, we cut the ribbon on a new state of the art facility—a $286 million, 604,000-square-foot Gordon Regional Security Operations Center on 160 acres in the heart of Fort Gordon. As the war on terror expanded and with the emergence of activity in cyberspace, the work done at NSA Georgia has grown in sophistication and volume. The workforce continues to do an exemplary job of delivering information to the warfighter. As I traveled around the world during my 20 years of public service visiting combat troops in some places I can name and some I cannot, it was rare not to find someone from the civilian side of NSA Georgia who was forward deployed and in harm’s way assisting with the mission.

In October 2010 an Army Cyber Command (ARYBER) was established at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, with part of the command being located at Fort Gordon. Its mission is to plan, coordinate, integrate, synchronize, direct and conduct network operations and defense of all Army networks. When directed, ARCYBER will conduct cyberspace operations in support of full-spectrum operations to ensure U.S. and allied freedom of action in cyberspace—and to deny the same to adversaries.

In the 2012-2013 time frame, a decision had to be made about the permanent location of ARCYBER. By this time, NSA Georgia had expanded and ultimately moved some civilians from Fort Meade. These civilians could attest to the lifestyle in Augusta and the entire area and their testimonials turned out to be very important.

Needless to say, Sen. Johnny Isakson and I were very pleased to get the call from Army Secretary John McHugh in 2013 telling us that Fort Gordon had been selected as the ARCYBER headquarters. But make no mistake about it, Augusta, Richmond County and the CSRA sold itself. Without the community leadership and support from then-Mayor Deke Copenhaver and CSRA Alliance for Fort Gordon Director Thom Tuckey, as well as many others, this would not have happened. Our job was made much easier by their commitment.

While ARCYBER continues to operate in overcrowded and inadequate facilities, the Army broke ground in November 2016 on a $180 million Army Cyber Headquarters Complex alongside NSA.
Gordon will create significant synergy, allowing for the immediate incorporation of lessons learned and operational knowledge into our training curriculum.”

A group of business leaders has also been working to create the Augusta Innovation Zone, a combination of co-working, incubator, office, restaurant, retail and residential spaces to be housed in the historic Johnson and Woolworths buildings comprising one block of 8th Street in downtown Augusta. All this activity means quality jobs are moving to the CSRA. Companies like Securworks, Unisys, Janus Research Group, Sabre, Booz Allen, Raytheon, Intelligenesis, and BAE have either located new facilities or expanded existing facilities. Many of these jobs will be filled by individuals coming out of colleges and universities in Georgia.

Georgia Tech has an outstanding cyber program and produces some of the brightest minds in the field annually. Augusta University has seized on its geographical location and, under the leadership of President Brooks Keel, AU has been designated as a Cyber Center of Academic Excellence. AU has already received nine NSA grants for Gen Cyber camps to educate high school teachers and students. AU has also executed an Articulation Agreement with NSA and a MOU with the CCOE at Ft. Gordon. In October, AU will host Cyber Georgia for the 4th year; past keynotes include top leadership from Intelligence and Cyber Agencies.

I was pleased to be at the groundbreaking on June 19th of the Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center located on the Riverfront Campus of AU. Gov. Nathan Deal showed great leadership in committing $60 million to its construction. This new state-owned building will bring together academia, private industry and government to establish cybersecurity standards across state and local agencies to develop and practice protocols for responding to cyber threats. This facility and range will be used for training, education, research and development, and will act as an incubation/acceleration hub for cybersecurity startup companies.

Indeed, Augusta is the heartbeat of the golfing world for one week every April. Now, the CSRA is becoming the epicenter of cybersecurity for both the U.S. military and Georgia. Fortune magazine included Augusta as one of “Seven Cities That Could Become the World’s Cybersecurity Capital” alongside London, San Francisco and Tel Aviv. The community is working to meet the critical needs of our nation’s workforce and continues to be another source of pride for our great state.

“Seven Cities That Could Become the World’s Cybersecurity Capital” alongside London, San Francisco and Tel Aviv. The community is working to meet the critical needs of our nation’s workforce and continues to be another source of pride for our great state.
Phil Kent: When I arrived in Augusta in the 1970s, then-Augusta College was a small campus in the Summerville section. It’s remarkable to witness the expansion of now-Augusta University during those decades. Let’s break down this growth. Please address the consolidation of the Summerville and Health Sciences campuses. What has it meant in terms of student recruitment, higher student retention rates and increased measures of student success?

Dr. Brooks Keel: Augusta University now offers 142 programs leading to degrees and certificates across nine colleges. Our robust academic program offers students rigorous coursework with high levels of faculty engagement, hands-on learning opportunities, internships, and study abroad programs.

Enrollment for new freshmen has increased 11.5% since 2013, and all indications are that we will see continued growth in our Fall 2017 class. The quality of those freshmen has also increased, as is reflected in our steadily rising Freshman Index scores. Our students are progressing toward degrees at a greater rate than ever, thanks to our 4 Years 4 You initiative. This initiative has increased our freshman-to-sophomore progression rate from below 15% prior to consolidation, to 53.4% last fall. We’ve also put in place very intentional programs to increase retention and have seen a retention rate of nearly 75%—9 percentage points higher than in 2012. These efforts will lead to more degrees conferred, which is our ultimate goal.

PK: That’s impressive. And, since you are a graduate of the Medical College of Georgia, please expand upon the university’s MCG partnership campuses in other Georgia cities and what they offer.

BK: To help address the need for physicians in Georgia, over the past decade MCG has markedly expanded its clinical footprint across the entire state, and significantly increased its class size. In 2006, MCG opened its first clinical (years 3 and 4 of the medical school curriculum) campus in Southwest Georgia, based at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital in Albany. The Southwest Campus is strategically located in a relatively rural area of the state where physician shortages are most acute. In 2007, MCG announced the Southeast Campus, which is based at St. Joseph’s/Candler Health System in Savannah, and the Southeast Georgia Health System in Brunswick. In January 2008, the University System of Georgia Board of Regents accepted a medical education expansion plan calling for MCG to expand statewide, including opening the four-year Augusta University/University of Georgia Medical Partnership in Athens. The first 40 students started at the Medical Partnership in fall 2010, increasing MCG’s class size from 190 to its current 230 students. Later in 2010, officials from Rome and Augusta University announced the establishment of the Northwest Campus, which became operational in 2012. The campuses accommodate residential students as well as numerous students who come to the campus and region for short-term, individual clinical rotations.

Today MCG’s diverse educational clinical experiences include more than 230 urban and rural sites across Georgia where students experience the full spectrum of medicine. If you include all the sites that our health professions programs (Dentistry, Nursing and Allied Health Sciences) use, we have more than 1,400 partner sites across the nation! We currently depend upon 2,000 volunteer faculty in those communities to further the training of our students outside of Augusta.
PK Even patients with the most intractable diseases find new hope at Augusta University, thanks to a thriving research enterprise. Could you detail some of the impressive research that has been occurring in recent years?

BK Yes, our researchers address state and regional societal needs through research across multiple disciplines and in many areas. In the last fiscal year, sponsored research at AU totaled over $107 million. We have aspirations to increase that number substantially over the next decade.

It is difficult to single out any one particular area because we have so much exciting work taking place on our campus. As the home of Georgia’s only public medical school and the state’s only dental school, we are likely most known for our work in biomedical sciences. Some of our most exciting research is taking place in areas that tackle the challenging public health issues that Georgians face: cancer, cardio-metabolic diseases, diabetes and neurological diseases and stroke.

The best news is that because we are a fully integrated academic medical center, we can move discoveries in the biomedical sciences out of the laboratory and into patient care more readily. Our new M. Bert Storey Cancer Center Expansion is a visible example of how we integrate our missions of teaching, research and patient care as it physically connects our educational, research, and clinical facilities.

The Augusta University Cyber Institute will be homed in the GCITC and our rapidly growing degree and certificate programs will benefit tremendously from access to this facility. Cyber experts will develop scenarios based on an industry or topic and then attack a computer. Students will have to take what they have learned in the classroom and put it into action. It’s the best way to train a growing workforce in cybersecurity without doing any real-life damage.

As part of our commitment to building a cyber workforce for Georgia, we are reaching out to K12 students and teachers. This summer we held our third annual NSA-NSF sponsored GenCyber Summer Camp, a five-day residential summer program created for rising junior and senior high school students to introduce them to the field of cybersecurity. We also host a Gen Cyber Middle Grades Teacher Camp to provide cyber training to local educators with middle school students in attendance as well. The goal is to give teachers cyber skills that they can take back to enrich the curriculum on their campuses. In the last three summers, we have hosted almost 250 students and teachers to help develop this critical part of the workforce pipeline for the state and our nation.

PK Augusta and Fort Gordon are rapidly becoming known nationally as a “cybersecurity campus.” What is Augusta University now doing in this vital area?

BK In June construction began on the new Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center (GCITC) located at the Augusta University Riverfront Campus. We are grateful to Governor Deal and the state of Georgia for having the foresight to fund this state-owned facility designed to promote modernization in cybersecurity technology. It’s one of the largest investments of any state that we’re aware of specifically targeted toward cybersecurity and training the workforce that’s going to be associated with it. This facility has the potential to be transformative in our community.

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PK Science, technology, engineering and mathematics need to be stressed in our nation’s universities. What initiatives have you been pursuing in these vital areas?

BK Clearly, with our legacy as a health sciences university, biomedical sciences are a particular strength of Augusta University, and we continue to grow in these disciplines and in related areas. We have initiated a five-year dual degree program in which a student can earn both a B.S. in mathematics and an M.S. in biostatistics. We are developing master’s degree programs in biomolecular sciences and in biological and computational mathematics. We also are deeply committed to developing and expanding other STEM areas. In addition to our strong focus on cyber security, we have nuclear science tracks in our chemistry and physics bachelor programs aimed at producing graduates to meet the growing workforce needs in the nuclear industry.

Our science students have opportunities for scholarship support from industry partners such as AOP as well as internships that give them real-world experience. In addition to our focus on the traditional STEM disciplines, we recognize that Augusta University has a unique opportunity to leverage its strengths in science programs, in addition to leveraging our growing strengths in the arts, in the development of the so-called “STEAM” programs. STEAM education is an approach to learning that uses science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics to guide student inquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking. Our College of Education, in collaboration with our Art Department, is leading the way in these efforts.


Left or right of the aisle, we can all agree on cold beer, stiff drinks and great food at a bargain.

Manuel’s has a proud history in Atlanta for being a true neighborhood bar, in fact we are celebrating 61 years! We’re a place to enjoy a great meal, craft beer with a side of politics. We also offer meeting spaces and in-house A/V Equipment — Manuel’s is a magnet for politicians, community activists, students and artists as well as media, cops and working men and women.

We’re newly renovated and conveniently located next to the Carter Presidential Library, and we’re open 7 days a week, including an increasingly popular brunch on the weekend.

As many of our friends say, “Manuel’s is not just a great bar, Manuel’s is an experience.” Come visit us.
A quarter-century ago, college football in Georgia mostly meant pointing the car towards Athens or at least tuning the dial to listen to Larry Munson go on about how difficult things were sure to be for the Bulldogs.

Now, while Athens may still lay claim to being the college football capital of the state, Atlanta has a strong case for being the national center of college football. Nothing symbolizes Atlanta's place in the college football landscape quite like the almost-complete Mercedes-Benz Stadium. This season it will host four major college games, and no fewer than three figures to have national championship implications.

Alabama and Florida State meet in the first of two Chick-fil-A games at the new stadium. Then the SEC Championship Game— a de facto national quarterfinal game— comes to Atlanta in early December. Finally, the playoff championship game will be in Atlanta in early January.

The stadium also should be packed in the other Chick-fil-A game between Georgia Tech and the College Football Hall of Fame CEO DENNIS ADAMOVICH

The Hall is more than just a place to honor the game's greats who have been enshrined there. In fact, the section that honors them is a relatively small part of the building. Visitors who wish to do so may immerse themselves in the game from a perspective of their favorite team.

“We are the illuminati of college football,” Adamovich said. And he doesn’t mean just the big power schools. A wall of helmets that welcomes every visitor and records their presence with lights represents 774 schools. That includes the popular such as Alabama. It also includes the obscure, such as tiny Huntington College in Montgomery, Alabama, with barely 1,000 students.

The game’s growth in Georgia is similar. While Atlanta has grown in national stature regarding the game, the Peach State’s smaller communities have become a part of the game as well. In the past dozen or so years, no fewer than seven schools in the state have added college football. They range from one of the state’s largest— Georgia State University— to one of the newest— Point University.

Football at the smaller level doesn’t mean city-sized crowds or regular appearances on national TV. It means growing the school’s brand, giving students and alumni a new outlet for school pride and it means appealing to a broader base of students, not just student-athletes.

Mercer had just those things in mind when it added football to its program a few years ago. Jim Cole, athletics director for the Bears, wants a football program the school’s community can be proud of— but also one that pays dividends for the school.

He points to a freshman class that is 80 percent larger than it was before football was added. And that larger class has a better academic profile. Many of those students, Cole believes, applied to Mercer because they wished to play football, just as a way of entering the game. The chance for a more complete college experience is attractive to prospective students.

“We did not have grand illusions that we are going to beat Alabama for the national championship,” he said of adding football. “We did it to bring everything together.”

Mercer has plenty of athletic history. It may not hold its own in several sports, and every now and then the school makes a big splash. The Bears made such a splash a few years ago when the men’s basketball team upset Duke in the NCAA tournament. Cole compared the exposure from that game to football with a cooking metaphor.

“Football is kind of like your cake recipe,” he said. “You have your flour, your sugar and your butter. Beating Duke, that was like the icing on the cake.”

Mercer’s football team will have a chance to make a similar splash— or two— this fall. The Bears visit Auburn early in the season, then go to Alabama late in the season. Those games, especially if Mercer pulls an upset, are a chance for exposure across the Southeast and nationally.

The school also uses its program for exposure on a state level. Mercer’s new stadium hosts games as part of the Corky Kell Kickoff Classic, and it is host to the state championship games for a small league made up of private schools called the Georgia Independent Schools Association.

“We are exposing this campus to as many people as we can,” Cole said of inviting high schools to play on its field. Here are the Georgia universities that have added college football over the past dozen or so years:

LaGrange College Began playing in 2006, LaGrange currently is a member of the Division III USA South Athletic Conference. The team is coached by Steve Pardue, who led LaGrange High School to three state championships.

Shorter University Shorter plays in the Division II Gulf South Conference with in-state rivals Valdosta State and West Georgia. The Hawks are coached by Aaron Kelton.

Berry College Began football in 2013. The Vikings are part of Division III Southern Athletic Association. Berry, which went 9-1 in 2016, is coached by Tony Kunczewski.

Mercer University Began play in 2013. The Bears are part of the FCS Southern Conference. Mercer is coached by former Furman coach Bobby Lamb.

Georgia State University Began play in 2010. The Panthers are part of the FBS Sun Belt Conference with in-state rival Georgia Southern. The team is coached by Shawn Elliott.

Kennesaw State University Began play in 2015. The Owls are in the FCS Big South Conference. Kennesaw State is coached by Brian Bohnann.

Point University Began play in 2012. The school, formerly known as Atlanta Christian College, moved to West Point and became Point University. The school is in Georgia, but plays games at a stadium in Valley, Ala. Plays in the NAIA Mid-South Conference. Coached by J. Julius Dixon.

Rheinhardt University Began play in 2013. First game was against Mercer, in that school’s first game. Plays in Mid-South Conference. Coached by James Miller.

Cosby Woodruff is a staff writer for James.
As we move toward finalizing our new state plan for education under the Every Student Succeeds Act, it is worth noting that the Georgia strategy places the “Whole Child” at the center of our public education system. When thinking of the whole child, the first component of care is to assess a child’s well-being: that state of being comfortable, healthy, and happy. One of the key factors in achieving health and comfort is good nutrition. Though schools are not solely responsible for the nutrition of students, thanks to our National School Lunch Program (NSLP), many students receive daily meals at school— and research shows a key link between nutrition and student learning.

Our country’s federally assisted meal program, the NSLP, was founded in 1946 to provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to students each school day. Today this program provides meals in over 100,000 public and non-profit private schools and child care institutions. Students from families with income levels between 130 and 185 percent of federal poverty levels are eligible for reduced price or free meals, and in Georgia this group accounted for 60% of our student body in 2016— over one million students.

SCHOOL IS A PRIMARY SOURCE OF GOOD NUTRITION

For some students in this group, school lunch is one of their primary sources of nutrition. These are all good reasons that policymakers across the country are concerned with how healthy meals provided by schools are for students. In 2010, the United States Congress passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act with the intent of raising minimum nutrition standards for public school lunches. This act was passed in part due to the growing concerns surrounding a nearly 20% obesity rate among America’s children, but there was little discussion at the time regarding the effect nutrition has on student learning.

In years when a school contracted with a healthy lunch company, students at the school had higher scores on their end-of-year academic tests. On average, these scores were 0.03 to 0.04 standard deviations higher than average, and the test score increases were nearly 40 percent larger for students who qualify for reduced-price or free school lunches. It costs approximately $80 more per student per year to make a big difference in student learning.

LINK BETWEEN NUTRITION AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

The links between diet and cognitive function and development are well known, but research has not shown how nutrition affects educational achievement until recently. Earlier this year, the National Bureau of Economic Research released the results of a study covering five academic years. That study measured the effect of healthier school lunches on end-of-year academic test scores for California public school students. It included all public schools in the state that reported test scores, over 9,000 schools— mostly elementary and middle schools.

Nutritionists at the Nutrition Policy Institute analyzed school lunch menus using the 100 point “Healthy Eating Index”— a well-established food component analysis that determines how well food offerings match the Dietary Guidelines for Americans published by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The average American’s diet receives an HEI score of 63.8, and the median HEI score in this study is a 59.9. While most California public schools prepare their school lunches in house, 12 percent contract with private companies to provide school lunch. Some of these companies had above median HEI scores, and the test scores of students receiving these healthier lunches were the basis for comparison.

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Can Make a Big Difference in Student Learning

by Caitlin Daugherty Kokenes
year to contract with a healthy school lunch provider instead of preparing all meals in-house, thus providing healthier school lunches could be a very cost-effective way for a school to improve student learning and to increase student well-being.

**POVERTY A BARRIER TO GOOD NUTRITION**

Over 1.4 million children in Georgia are living in households with income levels below 250% of the poverty line. These children are some of our most vulnerable citizens in terms of hunger, and they are also more likely to live in what the USDA calls food deserts—areas more than one mile from a supermarket or other reliable sources of fresh fruits and vegetables. This makes the need for these children to receive nutritious, quality food at school even more dire.

Many of these Georgians are considered food insecure, which indicates they cannot afford to buy healthy food on a regular basis. As of 2014, close to 30 percent of Georgia children were living in food insecure households, and a new analysis indicates that number is on the rise. A University of Georgia researcher recently found that areas with increasing food insecurity have less public transit access. As poverty spreads to more areas of the state, food insecurity follows.

**FOOD INSECURITY WIDENS SUMMER LEARNING GAPS**

Children in food insecure homes are found to also experience summer learning gaps much more severely than others. Summer meal programs are another important step in combatting child hunger and, in turn, summer learning loss. USDA publishes a map on their website to help those in need find summer food providers, but as with many resources, access remains a challenge for citizens in the highest levels of poverty, including children.

**IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING IN STUDENT NUTRITION**

It is those children who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, however, that showed the greatest gains in academic performance when receiving healthier food at school. For this reason and so many others, it is paramount that we all take note of the gains that are possible when nutrition is improved in school meals. When students are healthy, they are more likely to be happy and to perform to the best of their abilities in school. Investing in student nutrition today will help lead students to improved academic performance and a brighter tomorrow.

Caitlin Daugherty Kokenes is a Project Associate with the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education.
Within the next decade some 60 percent of the jobs in our state and nation will require some level of college. With this reality, under Gov. Nathan Deal’s leadership and together with our partners in the Technical College System of Georgia, we embarked in 2012 on Complete College Georgia with the No. 1 goal of increasing college attainment levels. We are part of a national movement through the Gates Foundation’s initiative, Complete College America.

For us, this means ensuring more Georgians enter the workforce with a college degree, and the challenge is clear: Currently in Georgia only 47 percent of our workforce meets this requirement.

Long gone are the days when public higher education can focus solely on enrolling more students. We must graduate more students while maintaining our commitment to academic quality.

The good news is we are making progress. Since 2011, we have increased the number of students annually earning degrees by 14 percent, from 34,000 to more than 62,000 last year. To meet our target, we need to increase that number by about three percent a year. It will not be easy, so we are making changes to how we teach, with more attention to student success.

For example, our advisors are providing “degree roadmaps,” so students avoid spending time and money in courses that do not count toward their degree. As part of our 15 to Finish effort, campuses encourage students to take full course loads of 15 credit hours a semester, thus shortening the time it takes to graduate.

Our institutions also use an early-alert system to monitor student performance so that a low-test grade may signal a counselor to provide tutoring and enable the student to complete the class successfully.

These initiatives, brought to life every day by our faculty, are moving students in the right direction. They are beginning to graduate in a shorter timeframe and, as a result, save money by avoiding extra semesters and unneeded classes.

To improve access, we are expanding online courses to provide flexibility for students, especially those who are juggling the demands of a job and family. Last fall, we were offering 6,000 online undergraduate courses. Six years ago, we offered only 1,500 online courses.

Meanwhile, the Move On When Ready initiative continues to surpass our expectations. This initiative allows high school students to get an early start on earning a college degree. Last fall, we had more than 10,000 high school students enrolled, a 30 percent increase from the previous year.

We also recognize the costs of college alone can present a roadblock, so we are making changes to how we teach, with more attention to student success.

Increasing College Attainment will Strengthen Georgia’s Economy

affordability is critical to achieving our Complete College Georgia goals. We realize that the ultimate focus of affordability is tuition and understand that it is a source of concern for people in our state. We share this concern and are committed to providing an affordable, high quality college education.

Over the past five years, the University System has kept tuition increases at an average of 2.2 percent. We have also reduced the number of fee increases in the past six years. For example, the number of fee increases dropped from 67 in Fiscal Year 2012 down to 12 in Fiscal Year 2018. In addition, the state auditor found the University System’s tuition and fees averaged 25 percent less than what institutions in peer states charge.

So, we have made some strides in serving students better by cutting time to graduation, providing more support, offering expanded access and trying to make college more affordable. But why does having more college graduates really matter to Georgia?

There is a direct relationship between education attainment and economic competitiveness and thus quality of life. We will not compete with other states, let alone other countries, if our college attainment levels lag.

And lag behind we do. According to the World Economic Forum, about 45 percent of the U.S. workforce has a postsecondary degree of some kind, ranking us 21st in the world. According to census data, Georgia ranks 23rd in the nation in the percentage of its workforce with at least a bachelor’s degree.

More striking is the disparity in attainment levels within our state. In one county, 49 percent of people 25 or older have a bachelor’s degree or higher. At the other end of the spectrum, another county has only 6 percent of its citizens with a bachelor’s degree or higher. Which county will attract new industry, create companies and lure families?

There are also intangible benefits that come with a college experience, such as sharpening critical thinking, improving communications skills, and understanding the need to show up on time and meet deadlines.

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There are also intangible benefits that come with a college experience, such as sharpening critical thinking, improving communications skills, and understanding the need to show up on time and meet deadlines.

The bottom line is that if we want companies to move here or our citizens to start companies and rear their families here then we must have a trained and educated workforce.

Complete College Georgia is the plan for how we will increase college attainment in our state, and the University and Technical College Systems are bringing it to life.

Dr. Steve Wrigley is the chancellor of the University System of Georgia.
The chairman of the state Board of Education says the evolution of education is underway— one driven by creating new opportunities for students to customize their educational experience.

Mike Royal is Gov. Nathan Deal’s 7th Congressional District appointee and was elected board chairman last year. During his six-year tenure Royal has seen “huge strides” in Georgia’s educational system— changes involving seat time requirements for students, mandated testing, single diplomas, career pathways and the opportunity for students to earn college credit while still enrolled in high schools. But the greatest changes will come in 2018 as Georgia embarks on turning around schools that have been designated as chronically failing.

“Six years ago, Georgia offered a single, standard diploma for all students; we had seat time requirements with very little flexibility; college and career pathways did not exist; and there was no dual enrollment or Move On When Ready programs,” said Royal. “We were embarking on Race To The Top, teacher and leader accountability systems, and Milestones testing did not even exist.”

As early as six years ago, Georgia students were required to take 42 state and federal tests between kindergarten and their senior year. That has now been cut to 24 “and still going down,” according to Royal.

The state’s graduation rate has jumped from 67 percent six years ago to 79 percent last year. “It’s not where it needs to be right now but we are trending in the right direction,” said Royal. And that, the chairman says, is the result of the state’s focus on personalized, individualized attention for all students.

New, Different Career Pathways

Georgia now offers over 177 different career pathways. The number of AP courses have increased across the state— thanks in part to increased bandwidth and virtual education— and courses offered to high school students have risen as a result of dual enrollment and Move On When Ready. According to Royal, Georgia high school students were enrolled in more than 90,000 college level courses this past school year, and the graduation rate among students taking Career Tech courses is 95 percent.

“This concept has resonated with students across the state,” said Royal. “I truly believe that’s why the state’s graduation rate is climbing. We have created relevance for so many of these students. But the key to this is that we can’t stop now. We are off to a great start, but we have to continue improving and continue to come up with new opportunities for our students.”

In this context, the state board recently contracted with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) to continued on page 38
**Mike Royal**

review the career pathways and update the state’s energy pathway. “We want to ensure that the courses in the pathways are still meaningful,” said Royal. “We want to look at each pathway and determine what a child needs to study to be successful, and how we can make the class more relevant.”

Royal said the Board also continues to look at ‘Move On When Ready’ and ensure that all students have the same opportunities in every seat across the state. “By increasing our bandwidth across the state,” he says, “we can now offer students courses through distance learning that may not have previously been offered in their school.”

### A Chief Turnaround Officer Search

The biggest challenge, however, is created by House Bill 338 in the 2017 legislative session—the First Priority Act—or, as many have referred to it, the school improvement bill. In this legislation, the Board of Education is tasked with hiring and overseeing the work of a Chief Turnaround Officer (CTO) to address chronically failing schools.

There was some concern about the CTO being hired and working under the direction of the State Board of Education, especially by State School Superintendent Richard Woods who pushed to have the position under him. However, as approved by legislation, the officer would work in cooperation with Woods in the improvement department, as well as this position. Woods says that Johnson ‘will also collaborate with the Chief Turnaround Officer appointed by the State Board of Education in response to House Bill 338. Moving forward, Johnson and her team will focus on implementing a tiered, proactive system of supports, ensuring that all schools have the supports they need and are improving student achievement.’

In response to the Woods announcement, Royal emphasized that the board is now “looking for the right person for this position. This person will obviously play a critical role in the future of Georgia’s children.”

Cindy Morley is a staff writer for James.

### Also— A New ‘Turnaround’ Principal

In the meantime, Superintendent Woods has moved ahead with hiring Stephanie Johnson, a successful turnaround principal with 22 years of education experience, to oversee the Department’s school improvement efforts. After leading reforms at Sequoyah Middle School and Jonesboro High School in Clayton County, Johnson served as the turnaround principal of Maynard Jackson High School in Atlanta—and was a finalist for National Principal of the Year in 2017. She will serve as the state Department of Education’s Deputy Superintendent for School Improvement.

To be clear, though, this is not the same position as the CTO. The Georgia Department of Education has long had a school improvement department, as well as this position. Woods says that Johnson “will also collaborate with the Chief Turnaround Officer appointed by the State Board of Education in response to House Bill 338. Moving forward, Johnson and her team will focus on implementing a tiered, proactive system of supports, ensuring that all schools have the supports they need and are improving student achievement.”

Cindy Morley is a staff writer for James.

**Stephanie Johnson**
Ga. Dept. of Education Turnaround Officer

**Joe Frank Harris (1983-1991)**

*No Tax Increase.* These maroon-colored signs were placed all over Georgia. Billy Bledsoe and I would go out in my station wagon and I would stand on top of it and nail them as high as possible on power poles and telephone poles. Consequently, they couldn’t be torn down easily by his rivals. I even put some on tree tops above the water in Lake Seminole. A good man, Joe Frank Harris. A great governor. He gave us the Quality Basic Education Act which is still the bedrock of Georgia’s public education law. He was instrumental in bringing the Democratic National Convention to Atlanta in 1996 and the Olympics in 1996. The controversial mandatory seat belt law passed while he was governor. And, just like his slogan, there were no new taxes.
"Zig Zag Zell" served 16 years as Georgia’s lieutenant governor. In the Democratic gubernatorial primary in 1990, the tally was: Zell Miller– 41 percent; Andrew Young– 28 percent; Roy Barnes– 21 percent; Bubba McDonald– 6 percent; and Lester Maddox– 3 percent. And in the general election, it was Zell Miller– 52 percent and Johnn Isakson– 45 percent. Author, cowboy boots, country music, turtle on a post, mountain man, great governor. The HOPE Scholarship. Probably the most important impactful legislation passed during my legislative tenure. It may be one of the top two or three enactments in our state’s history.

Sonny Perdue (2003-2011)
Georgia’s first Republican governor since Reconstruction. His defeat of incumbent Roy Barnes was one of the biggest upsets in Georgia’s political history. Sonny was the right person to be Georgia’s first GOP governor. He was a businessman, knew how to handle money and was tough. He gave Georgia a new flag that proved popular with most Georgia voters. State government shifted to complete Republican control under his leadership, and his conservative leadership style, like the flag change, was popular with Georgia’s voters.

So there you have it. Six good men. Six good governors—no, six excellent governors. I enjoyed serving with all of them. And I am proud that this good leadership continues with our present capable and popular governor, Nathan Deal. Another “A” governor!

Larry Walker is a practicing attorney in Perry. He served 32 years in the General Assembly and serves on the University System Board of Regents.
In 2002, the first Republican since Reconstruction won Georgia’s top prize—governor. Sonny Perdue defeated incumbent Democrat Gov. Roy Barnes in an election that virtually no one thought he could win. Democrats thought it was a fluke and Republicans thought it was a miracle. It was neither. It was a sign of times to come.

It was in 2006 when the country turned blue with Democrats winning control of the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate, a majority of state legislatures and a majority of governorships. Yet, one gubernatorial election that Democrats did not win was in Georgia. Governor Perdue easily defeated then-Lt. Gov. Mark Taylor.

In 2010 when term-limited Perdue left office, Democrats believed that they had their best chance of regaining political control. Instead, not only did Republican Nathan Deal win the governorship but Georgia Republicans won every single constitutional office and increased their margins in the Legislature to numbers sufficient to pass constitutional amendments. There was no doubt that Georgia had gone red.

Since then Georgia Democrats have been singing a different song. Citing changing demographics, they now concede Georgia indeed went red but insist that now it is swinging back purple. While it sounds right to many (like the pundits predicting a Hillary Clinton win last November), so far there is no evidence that now it is swinging back purple. Democrats hoped that the combination of Trump’s challenges in the district along with supposed demographic changes would be enough to push them over the top. It was not. Republican Karen Handel easily won the special election runoff—dashing the hopes and dreams of a political party desperate for a win.

Now all focus turns to the 2018 elections. Every constitutional office (including governor) as well as all of the state Legislature will be up for re-election. Once again, Georgia Democrats and pundits are pointing to any number of political variables to insist that purple is finally here. It’s not.

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When we started in Atlanta in 1886, we never imagined that someday our beverages would be enjoyed around the world 1.9 billion times a day. Coca-Cola is proud to call Georgia home and a great place to do business.