

# FALL '23 ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

You are reading the alumni newsletter of the Georgia State University Department of Nutrition! We created this newsletter to keep you updated on what has been happening at GSU and to highlight and celebrate the Nutrition alumni and their numerous accomplishments.



## 30 Year Alumni Reunion

Retired GSU Nutrition professors, Barbara Bowman and Missy Cody, have lunch with Coordinated Program alumni from the class of 1993.



Pictured are Katie VanHiel, Jennifer Brent, Julie Rambo, M Berman, M Cody, B Bowman, S Killam-Hall, and Hans Hammer.

# Dr. Missy Cody Student Travel Endowment Recipients

Thanks to this endowment, undergraduate and graduate Nutrition students were able to attend professional conferences to network, present, and increase their nutrition knowledge.



**Dr. Maureen Meister** attended the **American Physiological Society's Summit** in Long Beach, CA, and presented her research on the differential sex-dependent effects of electronic cigarette exposure in primary endothelial cells. *"Dr. Cody's consistent support has been an essential source of encouragement through my PhD journey. This was an important conference for me as it was an opportunity to branch out into the field of toxicology and human health, an area of which I am currently working in at Chemical Insights Research Institute"* - shared Maureen



**Dande Ward** attended the **Integrative Healthcare Symposium**. This award support has been instrumental in helping him build a non-clinical inflammation management practice. *"Overall, the conference was a life-changing success. I learned so much about the body. I solidified my elevator pitch and gained networking skills. I learned how to talk to a variety of different practitioners, even when they intimidate me. I gained business connections and a connection to grad school for the future"* - noted Dande.



**Emerald Gibbs** attended at the **2023 Southern Gerontological Society Annual Meeting & Conference** in Norfolk, Virginia, where she presented a poster on "Household Food Security of Custodial Grandparents". *"Ultimately, it was incredibly fulfilling to have received the first-place student poster award after many hours dedicated to this study. Again, thank you so much to Dr. Cody for the financial contribution, allowing me to have an experience I will never forget"* - shared Emerald.



**PhD candidate Hannah L. Lail** presented her research on methionine restriction's sex-dependent effects on central and peripheral insulin signaling at the **American Diabetes Association 83rd Scientific Sessions** in San Diego, CA. *"This experience not only provided me firsthand experience in sharing my research professionally, but it also provided invaluable insight into what others are researching within our field. I am so thankful and lucky to have had the Dr. Missy Cody Scholarship to assist in funding this unforgettable experience"* - said Hannah.

[Click here to support student travel](#)





# Nutrition and Dietetics Scholarship Recipients

The Nutrition and Dietetics Scholarship supports undergraduate Nutrition students with a minimum GPA of 3.0. Scholarships are awarded based on criteria including academic performance, student organization involvement, work experience, and community service.



**Onyedikachukwu Obiegbu:** "Your kindness, generosity, and unwavering support have not gone unnoticed. Your donation will go a long way in helping me achieve my goals. Thank you for your donation and your dedication to improving my higher education journey to become a dietitian. Your contributions made a difference in my life, and I am honored to have your support."

**Kendahl Heckstall:** "I am honored to be a multi-time recipient of this scholarship. I pride myself on being a high-performing student and taking my studies seriously. So, I am appreciative that those efforts were seen and trusted. A career goal of mine is to establish a non-profit organization that will provide nutrition education to marginalized communities and provide affordable nutritious food options to these communities."



**Nadia Varigina:** "Receiving the Nutrition and Dietetics scholarship, along with other forms of financial assistance, not only enabled me to graduate Summa Cum Laude with a debt-free B.S. in Nutrition Science but also solidified my commitment to furthering my education in Nutrition and Dietetics at GSU. Presently, I am proudly enrolled as a student in the Coordinated Program."

**Wesley Grace:** "I have joined a nutrition science research lab, served as a peer tutor for chemistry courses, and presented my research at major conferences all while completing undergraduate coursework. Without the aid provided by scholarships such as the one you contributed to, these achievements and experiences would not have been possible."



**Olivia Hardie:** "I am currently working part-time and I am a full-time student. I have relied on grants to pay most of my tuition costs and the rest out of my own personal finances. This scholarship will allow me to reduce the financial stress of finishing school and I will have completed my bachelor's degree with zero debt."

[Click here to donate to the Nutrition and Dietetics Scholarship](#)



# The Barb Hopkins and Cathy McCarroll Endowment for student volunteers: *first two recipients*

Volunteer experience gives any graduate school applicant a competitive advantage; however, it is often implausible to work for free, as students may need to spend their already limited time earning a living. **The Barb Hopkins and Cathy McCarroll Endowment** provides **financial support for Nutrition students engaged in a sustained, meaningful volunteer experience at a health-related non-profit**. The endowment was established by Dr. Mildred "Missy" Cody in 2023 and **reimburses students at a rate of \$15/hour for up to 200 volunteer hours**. The first recipients of the endowment are undergraduate Nutrition students, **Lovia Appiah and Lilly Park**. Lovia and Lilly work under the guidance of a registered dietitian with the **Food as Medicine (FAM) program at Grady Memorial Hospital**. This program aims to **combat food insecurity and manage diet-related chronic conditions**, including uncontrolled hypertension and diabetes. FAM's multifaceted approach includes regular produce pick-ups and cooking and nutrition classes in the Teaching Kitchen, where patients learn to manage their conditions through culinary medicine. **Lovia and Lilly** participate in various aspects of the FAM program, including **assisting in cooking classes, creating patient-friendly materials, and developing cultural and age-appropriate curriculum**.

**Lovia Appiah**



"Volunteering at Grady's FAM shows me the direct correlation between food and health as I hear about the patients' success stories. I have also learned how important it is to meet a patient where they are when it comes to food, and it is not about forcing them to change their eating habits but rather working with them to see where changes can be made so that they can still see improvement when it comes to their health conditions. Through this program, I have gained insights that I believe will help reinforce my commitment to make an impact in my future career in the medical field."

**Lilly Park**



"Volunteering at Grady Memorial Hospital's FAM program has been a transformative experience, shaping my education and career path. Engaging in cooking classes, creating patient materials, and developing culturally relevant curricula has given me hands-on experience in nutrition, community health, and patient education. This experience has not only deepened my understanding of social factors in healthcare but has also sharpened my communication skills with patients. As I contribute to the program, I am developing a passion for community-based healthcare and hope to pursue a career incorporating education, nutrition, and community wellness."



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# ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS



***Lesley A. Baradel, MBA, MS, RDN,  
LD, FAND***

**Since graduating from the GSU Coordinated Program in Nutrition, what have been your career path, key achievements, and milestones?**

I had a business career before the CP. I got my MBA from Emory University; I started the CP when I was 36. Upon graduation, I opened a private practice called Balanced Nutrition and worked at Westminster School as a dietitian, focusing on food service and type 1 diabetes education.

I had another business, My Menu Pal, with a fellow dietitian and MS/DI program graduate, Ann Teh. Our primary focus was working with different areas of the food industry regarding menus and helping to market nutrition information to consumers. At the time, I also was teaching as an adjunct professor at Georgia Tech. Now, I work at Georgia Tech as a full-time lecturer at the Institute of Biological Science, where I teach three applied Physiology courses. One course covers the scientific foundation of health; another is on the science of physical activity and health; and I also teach a course on flourishing: strategies for well-being and resilience.

**It sounds surprising to me (Nadia, our marketing GA) that there are nutrition-related classes at Georgia Tech. So could you explain more about how your expertise fits into the coursework of this university?**

Georgia Tech students have Health and Wellness course requirements, and so that's where I fit in. To be honest, dietitians are an excellent fit for these classes' particular goals because nutrition is one of the crucial pillars of health. I cover cardiovascular disease, cancer, and other chronic illnesses related to food and physical activity.

**What does your day/week look like as a full-time lecturer?**

My schedule looks a little different each semester because we are required to complete a different number of credit hours depending on the semester. I have four classes now, which is a lot, and I only have two next semester. I have over 600 students in my four classes this semester and teach big lectures. Interestingly, I'm really physically only teaching 6 hours plus one asynchronous course, so you would think, "Oh well, that's a really easy job"! (laughing) Well, most of my time is spent on developing the classes, consulting students, and working with the teaching assistants to get the grading done. So it feels like, oh, 6- 8 hours that's easy, but there's a lot of work behind the scenes. Plenty of continuing education opportunities are offered; higher education and Tech, particularly, keep things very exciting. For instance, I've already read two books this semester to help me develop my classes and make them more effective from a research standpoint.



# ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS- Lesley Baradel

I am making sure that I teach students based on how research shows students learn. I work to create a classroom environment that feels inclusive for everybody, because Georgia Tech has a very diverse population. These are things that I think strategically about. How do I make sure that students from all over the world feel like they're part of the community? I'm always trying something new; thankfully, my work environment encourages creative freedom and provides much flexibility.

**It does, overall, sound like you are satisfied with your work environment and with your position. Did I catch that correctly?**

Oh, I love my job, and I'm very fortunate!

**Are there any emerging trends or challenges in the field of nutrition and dietetics that you believe are important for our readers to be aware of? And how do you navigate that in the work that you do?**

**Artificial intelligence (AI)**, for sure, in both nutrition and higher education. The technology is here, and it is up to us to learn to embrace and optimize it. As a professor and educator, I aim to learn how to use AI in the classroom. I use AI for nutrition analysis, and I'm trying to get somebody to help me make it more inclusive. For instance, I have the students use the USDA database to analyze their three-day dietary recall, but not looking at the calories and looking at it from the food group perspective. Since I have students from China, for example, the USDA database may not represent their diet. So, I am working on adjusting these assignments to different ethnicities and cultures. Also, I'm trying to use AI to convert my assignments into other languages to eliminate language barriers and help my students. Before, I would have to hire someone for this. So, there are ways that we can use AI in the classroom, even though people are terrified of it. Changing your framework around it and embracing it can significantly enhance learning and teaching and allow more space for creativity and originality.

**What would you say to a person who thinks that since AI is so powerful and all-knowing, it could eliminate the need for dietitians and nutrition educators?**

When counseling somebody, I think there's so much more to nutrition than just the physiological aspect of the food and how it impacts the body from a physiological perspective. The relational aspect of food and eating is only assessable by an empathetic human expert. For instance, there might be a disordered relationship with food, and even the most accurate advice "on paper" won't help. Thus, only a trained professional can catch such patterns, so I think that from a dietitian standpoint, that's something that AI can't accomplish because it's too "matter of fact"; it's too factual. Dietitians will continue to be an integral piece of the healthcare puzzle.

Stay connected:



# ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS - Lesley Baradel

**How did your education and experiences at Georgia State prepare you for your current role in the field of nutrition and dietetics?**

I was in cohort I of the CP. During the CP, I thought we accomplished a lot within a short time. The part of the CP that differentiates it from other programs is that you're taking classes, and you're also working at the same time. That allows you to apply what you're learning immediately, and that's how you learn best. Hands-on learning is essential, that's a struggle with colleges - you learn, learn, learn, and never apply it until you're done with school.

**What is your advice to the current CP students? Was there something that you feel like maybe you were pleased that you did the way you did, or perhaps that's something that you now look back on and wish you did differently?**

For the CP students, one of the most valuable things you can do is develop strong relationships with your professors and internship directors. And your fellow students, of course! I got my job at Georgia Tech because another dietitian got a full-time job somewhere else, so she asked me to step in for her to teach. It just fell on my lap, and I fell in love with it. I think really focusing on your network from a student, professor perspective, and internship perspective and being involved in nutrition-related organizations. I've really been involved in nutrition-related organizations. I have held almost every position in the Greater Atlanta Dietetic Association (GADA): Chairperson of Professional Issues, Treasurer, Awards Co-chair, and President.

**Last question: what would be your overall message or insight that you would like to share with the readers of our newsletter?**

Your network is your key to success. Your professional solid network that should be developed through the classroom and outside of the school will be essential in the future. So, besides building relationships at school, get involved in the department, attend conferences, and volunteer. I have a lot of solid relationships because of the volunteer positions I've held, and they're fun, too! You learn stuff in the classroom, but your connections get you places - you get that first job, and after that, it's about who you know and who knows you.

**Connect with Lesley  
Baradel here**



# ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS

## ***Brittany Lightsey, MS, RD, CSP***

**Since graduating from the GSU Coordinated Program in Nutrition, what have been your career path, key achievements, and milestones?**

Right after graduating from the coordinated program, I was offered an opportunity to shape and develop a multi-specialty pediatric weight management clinic and community program. In that role 8 years, I saw the clinic get off the ground, trained over 200 community pediatric providers in motivational interviewing, coordinated institution-wide culinary medicine projects utilizing a mobile cooking kitchen, implemented food insecurity screenings across general pediatric and subspecialty clinics, and championed efforts with the local farmers market to secure a \$455,000 grant from the USDA to establish a food pharmacy program. After 8 years flew by, my husband took an opportunity in Nashville, TN, where I worked as a clinical dietitian in pediatric gastroenterology at Vanderbilt. We welcomed our daughter into the world two years later and moved back home to Savannah.

Vanderbilt's connections allowed me to start as a remote

clinical dietitian supporting a pediatric gastroenterology practice in Macon, GA. Through previous culinary medicine projects, I was also offered a culinary medicine RD position with the MaxLove Project. I happily still wear the hats of pediatric clinical dietitian, culinary medicine dietitian, and pediatric outreach dietitian with our local hospital. As an outreach dietitian, I facilitate and coordinate nutrition-forward outreach of the local children's hospital with community partners such as the children's museum.

**How did your education and experiences at GSU prepare you for your current role in the field of nutrition and dietetics?**

I often think of three of my GSU experiences - taking Dr. Nucci's pediatric nutrition class, completing a rotation at CHOA, and my graduate assistantship as an After-School All-Stars' cooking instructor. Each of these experiences in tandem provided a strong and invaluable foundation for my career launch.

**In what ways have you been involved with the nutrition community since graduating from GSU? Have you participated in any research, outreach, or community programs?**

Since starting my career, I have been involved with Healthy Savannah, an initiative leading the culture of health in Savannah, GA, by making the healthy choice, the easy choice. Specifically, I have been a part of the Partner Steering Committee (committee chair, 2016), which brings over 200 like-minded private and public organizations around the same table to identify and share resources related to the mission of community health.





# ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS - Brittany Lightsey

## **What advice do you have for current students in the Coordinated Program in Nutrition at GSU who want to succeed in nutrition and dietetics?**

If an area of nutrition sparks your interest, ask all the questions, and foster good relationships with your professors and preceptors. You never know what doors networking will open for you. Also, explore nutrition-focused organizations related to your area of interest. For example, ASPEN, NASPGHAN, and the Obesity Medicine Association have been vital in helping me maintain clinical competency over the past several years.

## **Are there any emerging trends or challenges in the field of nutrition and dietetics that you believe are important for our readers to be aware of?**

Food insecurity is one of the most significant barriers I see in my practice. In fact, 1 in 8 children in Georgia are food insecure. In pediatric clinical practice, one of the key places to start is with the Hunger Vital Sign, a 2-question food insecurity screen. This way, you can quickly identify patients who need to be connected with federal and community resources. Also, advocating and educating about food insecurity is vital.

## **Could you tell us about any research, projects, initiatives you're currently working on, or any new developments in your career that you'd like to share with our readers?**

In the next year, I'll be working to develop and pilot a hospital culinary medicine program targeted to child life specialists. These medical professionals focus on play and developmentally appropriate communication to inform hospitalized children and families about their condition, establish coping mechanisms, and more. Food "play" is a natural fit in the hospital setting, and child life specialists have been key partners in getting our culinary medicine programs off the ground on the inpatient side. The goal would be to share this program with hospitals nationwide that don't have access to a teaching kitchen or mobile cooking kitchen.

## **How has networking and staying connected with fellow alums, colleagues, and mentors benefited your career in nutrition and dietetics? Do you have any tips for maintaining these connections?**

I was incredibly lucky to have made lifelong friendships in the coordinated program. Members of Cohort IX are even planning a weekend "reunion" of sorts in spring 2024.

## **What role did mentorship play in your journey? Are there mentors or professors at GSU who influenced your career choices or provided valuable guidance?**

Although she may not know it, I credit Dr. Anita Nucci as a key influence in igniting my passion for pediatrics, and I often referenced her lectures in my first years working.

## **What are your thoughts on the value of continuing education and professional development in nutrition and dietetics? How do you stay current in your practice?**

Conferences, through previously mentioned organizations like NASPGHAN, have been key to keeping my practice up to date and allowing me to connect with other dietitians practicing in similar fields of nutrition science.

## **Could you share your personal or professional goals for the professional/academic future in nutrition and dietetics?**

Professionally, I'd like to advocate for reimbursement of MNT through Telehealth. There are so many clinical and culinary education opportunities if only we could reach patients inside their homes.

**Click [here](#) to connect with Brittany and follow her numerous endeavors**



## More highlights

### **Several alumni have careers with the Coca-Cola Company:**

Julia Lott, MS, RD, LD – Manager, SRA Governance (Corporate SRA)

Tatum Nolan, MS, RD, LD – SRA Governance and Innovation Coordinator (Corporate SRA)

Rachel Quiles, MS, RD, LD – Senior Manager, Scientific Communication (Corporate SRA)

Joanna Skinner, MS, RD, LD – Senior Regulatory Manager, Nutrition & Labelling (Corporate SRA)

Ansley Fowler Vineyard, MS, RD, LD – Global Innovation & Compliance Manager

Marisa Little, MS, RD, LD – Scientific & Regulatory Affairs Specialist

### **Two Coordinated Program Alums work on the Food as Medicine program at Grady Memorial Hospital**

Jasmyne Blacks, MS, RD, LD – the food pharmacy manager

Alisha Virani, MS, RD, LD – FAM diabetes educator

**Stay connected:**



# Nutrition Alumni at FNCE'23





## DENVER, COLORADO



### Sherry Coleman Collins, MS, RDN, LD

Presentation topic: Making Infant Feeding of Common Allergens Practical

Sherry Coleman Collins is a Marietta, GA-based RDN with over 15 years of experience in food allergies, pediatric clinical nutrition, school food service, and nutrition communications. She has spoken at dozens of professional conferences, is a frequent guest and freelance writer, and serves as an expert in the media. Sherry spearheaded the development of the AND Certificate of Training in Food Allergies and authored the Academy's 2016 Practice Paper on the Role of the RDN in Food Allergy Diagnosis and Management. She has completed the FARE Pediatric Food Allergy Certificate of Training. Sherry is a consultant who helps provide professionals and consumers with reliable and science-based information about food allergies through her practice, **Southern Fried Nutrition Services**.

Contact info:    

### Tamara Melton MS, RDN, LD

Presentation topic: Improving Health Equity Through Diet and Nutrition: Amplifying the Role of Nutrition Professionals

Tamara is the **co-founder and Executive Director of Diversify Dietetics**. At Diversify Dietetics, Tamara leads a team of diverse and dedicated nutrition professionals and students who provide resources such as mentorship programs, application preparation, academic course remediation, scholarships, and more to BIPOC dietetics students, interns, and young professionals. Tamara also leads the development and delivery of training for dietetics educators and preceptors. In addition to this work, Tamara owns TSM Nutrition Consulting, where she provides consulting in various practice areas. Tamara's most recent honors include an Excellence in Practice in Diversity and Inclusion by the AND, Outstanding Dietitian of the Year by the GAND, and 40 Under 40 class by her alma mater GSU.


Contact info:  



### Dalia Kinsey, MS, RDN, LD

Presentation topic: Overcoming Weight Stigma: A Conversation to Face Personal and Professional Bias

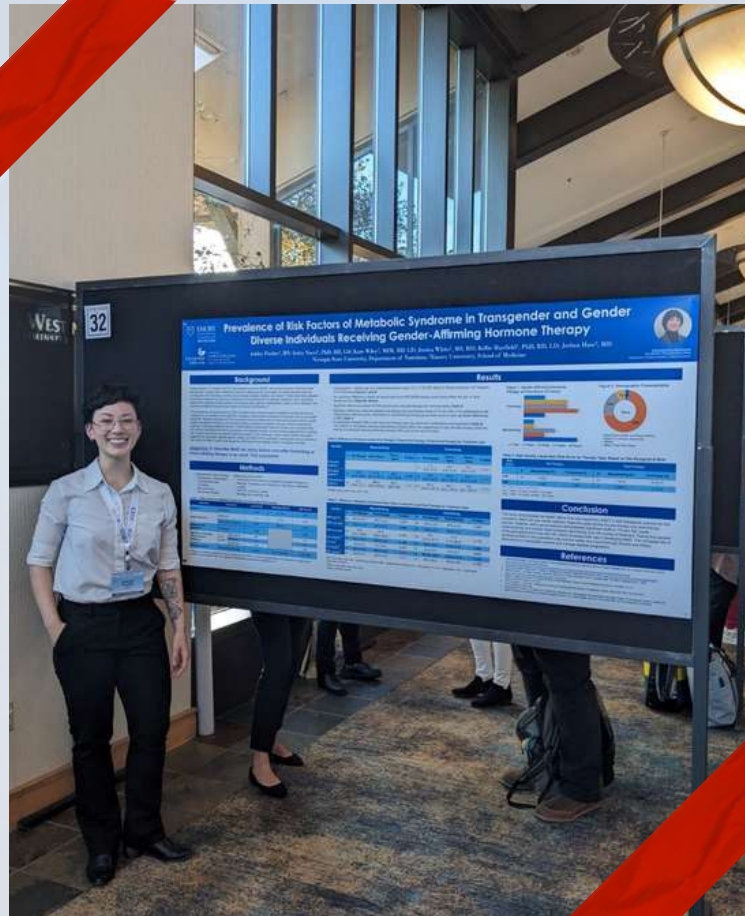
Dalia Kinsey is a queer Black Registered Dietitian, the creator of the **Body Liberation for All** podcast, and author of **Decolonizing Wellness: A QTBIPOC-Centered Guide to Escape the Diet Trap, Heal Your Self-Image, and Achieve Body Liberation**. Dedicated to health equity, Dalia has extensive experience in public health and school nutrition working at the intersection of holistic wellness and social justice, continually creating wellness tools and resources that center the most vulnerable, individuals that hold multiple marginalized identities. Dalia rejects diet culture and teaches people to use nutrition as a self-care and personal empowerment tool to counter the damage of systemic oppression.

Contact info:  





# Coordinated Program thesis received national recognition.



Please join us in congratulating **Ashley Fischer, MS, RD**, her thesis advisor, **Anita Nucci, PhD, RD, LD** and her committee members and collaborators, **Kate Wiley, MIM, RDN, LD**; **Jessica White, MS, RD, LD, NBC-HWC**; **Kellie Mayfield, PhD, RD** and **Jeehea Sonya Haw, MD** on their abstract, *“Prevalence of Risk Factors of Metabolic Syndrome in Transgender and Gender Diverse Individuals Receiving Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy”*.

The abstract was presented at the **United States Professional Association for Transgender Health (USPATH) 2023 Scientific Symposium** in Westminster, Colorado in November.

# THE SECOND ANNUAL GRADUATE CONFERENCE FOR RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY: INNOVATION THROUGH SCHOLARSHIP.

The GSU Graduate School organized the Graduate Conference for Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity. This year's theme was "Innovation Through Scholarship." Graduate students from all disciplines within Georgia State University are invited to showcase their scholarly and creative endeavors to a broad audience.

The Department of Nutrition was represented by Hannah L. Lail, Jessica P. Danh, Zainab Alonge, Emmaline Peterson, and Kehinde Akintola. Here are their presented topics:

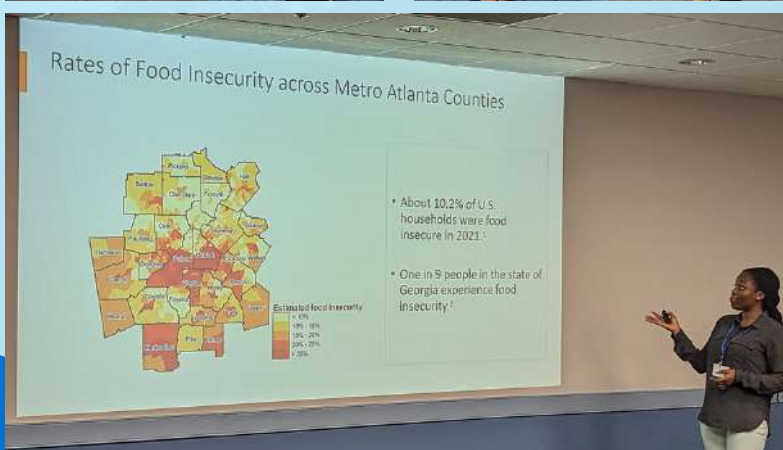
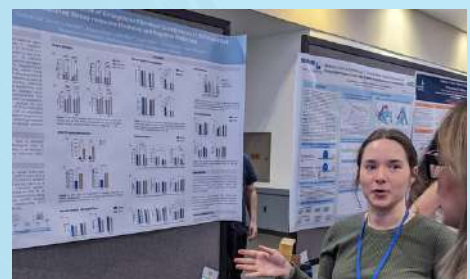
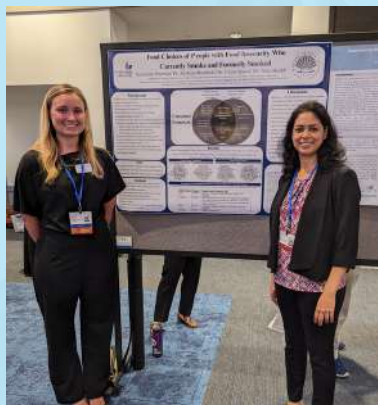
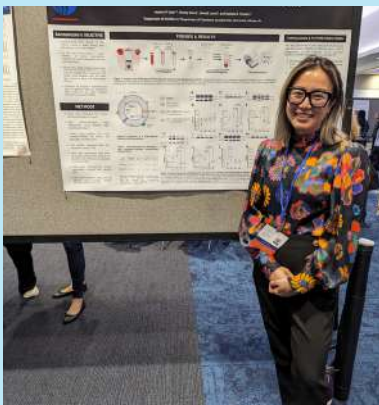
✨ Alonge Z, Shaikh NI, Brooks F. *Comparing Pantry Satisfaction, Food Availability, and Food Use/Waste among Adults visiting Choice versus Non-Choice Food Pantries in Atlanta, GA.*

✨ Lail HL, Lawrence R, Allen Z, George A, Mabb A, Wanders D. *Examining the Neurobiological Role of Endogenous Fibroblast Growth Factor 21 (FGF21) as a Diet-stimulated Stress-response Hormone and Cognitive Protectant.*

✨ Danh J, Laroui H, Feresin RG. *Anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects of berry-derived exosome-like nanoparticles in LPS-stimulated vascular smooth muscle cells.*

✨ Peterson E, Kim-Mozeleski J, Spears C, Shaikh N. *Food Choices of People with Food Insecurity Who Currently Smoke and Formerly Smoked.*

✨ Akintola K, Foley S, Willis A, Cook M, Ramisetty-Mikler S, Mayfield K. *Examining the Association Between ADLs, Demographics and Food Security of Older Adults at senior centers in Fulton County GA.*





**We're craving good news!**

Have an update on your  
post-graduation life?

We want to share what  
you have been up to.

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here:

**[nutrition@gsu.edu](mailto:nutrition@gsu.edu)**



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**Thanks, Alumni!**