



# ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026



**KENNESAW STATE  
UNIVERSITY**  
OFFICE OF RESEARCH  
*Undergraduate Research*

**AUGUST 2026**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



**NOTE FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**3**

**DEPARTMENT  
OVERVIEW**

**4**

**ABOUT THE TEAM**

**5**

**PROGRAM  
OVERVIEWS**

**6**

**STUDENT  
SUCCESS STORIES**

**24**

**FACULTY  
SPOTLIGHT**

**25**

**OUR GOALS**

**26**



**KENNESAW STATE  
UNIVERSITY**  
OFFICE OF RESEARCH  
*Undergraduate Research*



# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Amy Buddie, PhD**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Undergraduate research is one of the most powerful ways students learn – not only how knowledge is created, but how they themselves can contribute to it. This past year, the Office of Undergraduate Research was proud to support that discovery process across disciplines, methods, and colleges.

Despite a year of continued change in higher education and research, our commitment to expanding access to meaningful experiences has remained strong. We supported students as they asked bold questions, engaged with faculty mentors, presented their work locally and nationally, and applied their research skills beyond the classroom.

This year, we expanded research opportunities through new funding initiatives and strengthened faculty mentorship programs. We also hosted our 30<sup>th</sup> Symposium of Student Scholars that celebrated academic scholarship and fostered a sense of research community across colleges and departments. These efforts reflect our belief that research is not an exclusive activity, but a high-impact practice that is accessible to all.

I am deeply grateful to the faculty mentors whose time, guidance, and enthusiasm make undergraduate research possible. I also thank our campus partners and senior leadership for their collaboration and support. Most importantly, I thank our students, whose curiosity, creativity, and resilience remind us why this work matters.



90%

Student satisfaction rate



\$1.8 M

Total budget



25%

One-year increase in the number of undergraduate researchers



# VISION

We aim to make research an integral part of the undergraduate experience at Kennesaw State University and to become a premier resource for undergraduate research both at KSU and nationally.

# MISSION

The mission of the Office of Undergraduate Research at Kennesaw State University is to promote high-quality undergraduate student-faculty collaborative research and scholarship in all disciplines across campus.

## SNAPSHOT OF OUR MISSION IN ACTION

### Staffing

- Five full-time staff
- Three student assistants
- Five peer ambassadors

### Big Events (1,000+ attendees)

- Fall Open House (2-hr event)
- Fall Symposium (3-day event)
- Spring Symposium (3-day event)

### Smaller Events/Presentations

- 50 class presentations in Fall 2025
- 17 student workshops/events in Fall 2025
- 19 student workshops/events in Spring 2026
- Dozens of tabling events each year

### Presenting/Publishing

- Kennesaw Journal of Undergraduate Research
- Georgia Undergraduate Research Conference
- Posters at the Georgia State Capitol

### Collaborations

- Global Education (Year of and Education Abroad)
- Student Success (Coca-Cola Scholars Program)
- Honors College (capstones, HLEs)

### Funding

- First-Year Scholars Program (FYSP)
- Sophomore Scholars Program (SSP)
- Junior & Senior Scholars Program (JSSP)
- Undergraduate Research & Creative Activities (URCA) Grant
- National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR)
- Course-based Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs)
- Secondary Education Research Internship Funding (SERIF)
- Vertically Integrated Projects (VIP) Program
- Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP)
- Outstanding Undergraduate Research Mentor Award

### Other Support

- Graduation cords
- Undergraduate Research Video Series
- Online resources
- Poster printing
- Undergraduate Research Club
- Student-faculty matching
- Undergraduate Research on Undergraduate Research
- OUR Scoop



# OUR TEAM

Since the office was opened in 2016, we have seen tremendous growth not just in programming but also operations.



**Amy Buddie, PhD**  
Executive Director



**Jennifer Harb**  
Administrative Coordinator



**Michelle Chatelain**  
Business Operations Specialist



**Christin Richardson**  
Program Manager



**Haleigh Edmonds**  
Program Assistant



**Amelia Baker**  
Student Assistant



**Kiara O'Neal**  
Student Assistant



**Mikkell Cullen**  
Student Assistant



# PEER AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

The Office of Undergraduate Research supports the Peer Ambassador Program. Research has shown that peer mentoring programs are effective for both the peer mentors and the mentees. For example, peer mentors report gains in communication skills, improved career preparation, and enjoyment of the experience. Mentees report that peer mentors enhance their experiences by helping them feel more connected to the university. Peer Ambassadors work to promote undergraduate research at KSU in general and work with students in the First-Year Scholars Program.



**Nevaeh Branham**  
Peer Ambassador for CCSE



**Aichel Candanedo**  
Peer Ambassador for CSM



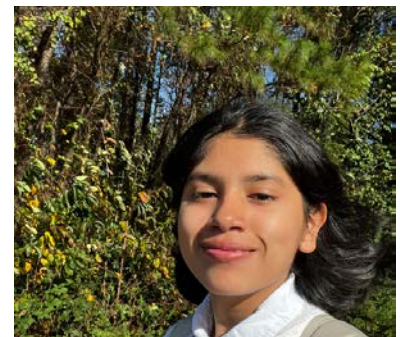
**Abeer Kayser**  
Peer Ambassador for CCOB



**Amelia Baker**  
Peer Ambassador for SPCEET



**Eric Miller**  
Peer Ambassador for SPCEET



**Coraima Perez**  
Peer Ambassador for CACM

# FIRST-YEAR SCHOLARS

## The First Year

This program matches first-year students with a faculty mentor to conduct research over the fall and spring semester, culminating in a presentation at the Symposium of Student Scholars in April. Students are paid up to \$1,000 per semester, and the mentors are provided with up to \$1,000 per student on their team to support the project (e.g., supplies, equipment, conference travel). Students also participate in professional development workshops, on-campus research events, and department hosted social activities as part of the program requirements.



### Applicants

In Fall 2025, there were 750 unique student applicants who submitted over 1,800 applications, a new record.



### Acceptance + Retention

We accepted 378 students. The acceptance rate in Fall 2025 was a little over 50%.



### Achievement

96% of students presented at the 2026 Spring Symposium of Student Scholars.

21% of students presented at other conferences, as reported by their PI in the Year-End Survey.



# FIRST-YEAR SCHOLARS

“This program has been one of the most impactful activities I have done this year. I would say joining First Year Scholars was one of the best decisions I have made so far. I learned new things beyond the classroom and studio which are directly related to my studies and future career. I felt this gave me extra information that put me ahead in my classes. I learned how to work with my PI, other academics and peers in a formal academic research environment, covering the entire process from the beginning to end. I worked with an excellent team; I'm very satisfied with what we have achieved this year, and I hope to continue work with my PI and OUR in Sophomore Scholars and beyond!”  
(First-Year Scholar, 2025-2026)



Student Satisfaction

**98%**

Primary Investigator  
Satisfaction

**85%**

FY 2026 Budget Allocation

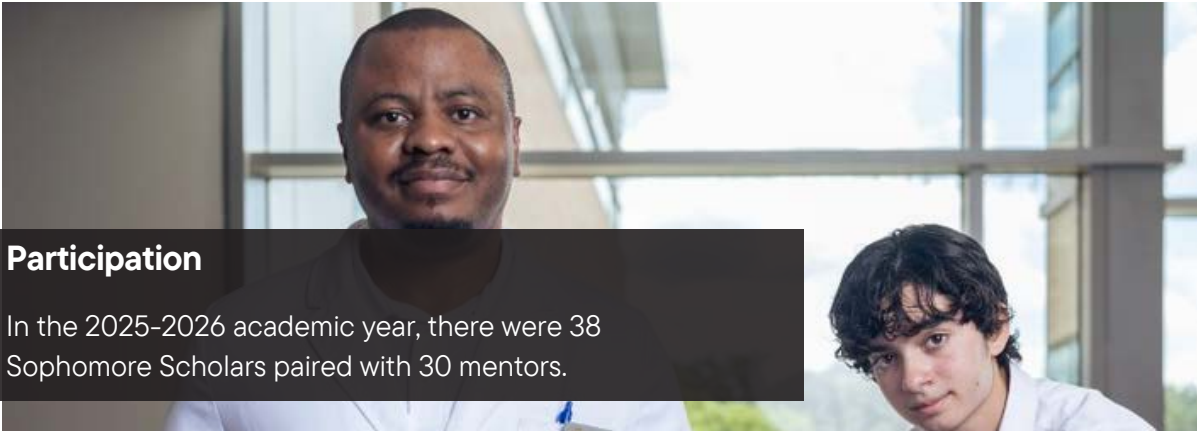
**\$ 1.08M**



# SOPHOMORE SCHOLARS

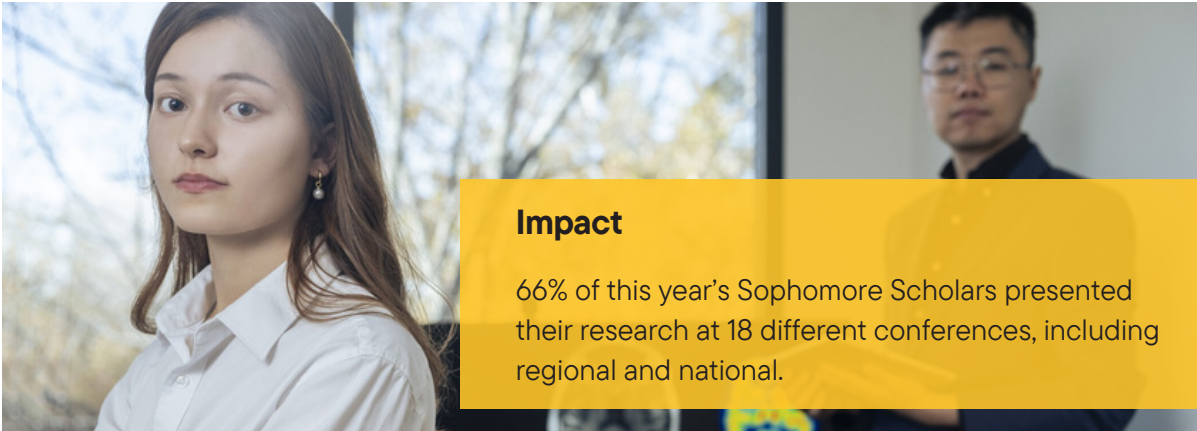
## The Second Year

Students continue their work from the First-Year Scholars Program into their sophomore year, with the same funding structure as in the First-Year Scholars Program. In addition to participating in professional development activities and presenting at the Symposium, students are required to publicly disseminate their work in one other way. To date, students have chosen to present their work at an external conference.



### Participation

In the 2025-2026 academic year, there were 38 Sophomore Scholars paired with 30 mentors.



### Impact

66% of this year's Sophomore Scholars presented their research at 18 different conferences, including regional and national.



### Continuity

In Fall 2025, 17 eligible Sophomore Scholars applied for and were accepted to the inaugural Junior and Senior Scholars Program, for a 100% acceptance rate.

# SOPHOMORE SCHOLARS

“...the Sophomore Scholars program gave me hands-on research experience where I could apply what I have learned in class, build professional connections, participate in presentation opportunities, and better prepare for my future career. Continuing to work with my faculty mentor has helped me deepen my understanding of the field and take on more advanced tasks this year. Through many new challenges, I have been able to learn new skills and develop adaptable designs. Sophomore Scholars has been an enabling factor in helping me gain these experiences, and I am very thankful for the program’s impact on my academic and career development. I fully believe Kennesaw’s Sophomore Scholars and First-Year Scholars programs will have played a major role in my future career success.” (Sophomore Scholar, 2025-2026)



Student Satisfaction

**90%**

Primary Investigator  
Satisfaction

**91%**

FY26 Budget  
Allocation

**\$114,000**

# JUNIOR & SENIOR SCHOLARS

## The Third & Fourth Years

Students continue their work from the Sophomore Scholars Program into their junior or senior years, with the same funding structure as the First-Year Scholars and Sophomore Scholars programs. These students are required to (a) participate in professional development activities, (b) present at the Symposium, (c) present at an additional conference, and (d) submit a manuscript for publication to a peer-reviewed journal.



### Students

In Fall 2025, we accepted 19 students into the inaugural Junior & Senior Scholars Program. 2 of the students were Seniors and 17 were Juniors.



### Projects

There were 17 projects to which students contributed, led by faculty representing different disciplines from Mechanical Engineering to Nursing to Psychological Science.



# JUNIOR & SENIOR SCHOLARS

“This is an opportunity that gives me access to knowledge no regular student in my major would know. This makes me feel prepared about the job market.” (Junior Scholar, 2025-2026)

**Student Satisfaction**

**92%**

**Primary Investigator  
Satisfaction**

**94%**

**FY26 Budget  
Allocation**

**\$57,000**



# VERTICALLY INTEGRATED PROJECTS

Kennesaw State University's Vertically Integrated Projects (VIP) teams are large, multidisciplinary student groups that work on long-term faculty-led research projects, allowing students from different majors to collaborate and gain valuable skills. Though VIP is structured as a semester-long course, the team operates like a lab group which gives undergraduates the unique opportunity to engage in research and innovation without the traditional class model.

## 01

### Infrastructure

The VIP program at Kennesaw State University began in 2021 and has grown steadily each year. We began with 7 teams and now have 28 in total and we are represented in 8 out of 9 colleges.

## 02

### Operational Methods

Students register for RES 4000 or RES 7000 each semester for variable credit options of 1-4 credits.

## 03

### Resources

Each year we accept up to 7 teams that all receive initial funding of \$5,000 in their first year of operation. This is state funding – after the first year, teams are to seek out external funding.

## 04

### Fall 2025 Growth

Fall 2025 saw 79 undergraduates and 4 graduate students registered for the RES courses, representing a 152% increase since Fall 2024

## 05

### Spring 2025 Growth

Spring 2026 saw 69 undergraduates and 3 graduate students registered for the RES courses, representing a 57% increase since Spring 2025.

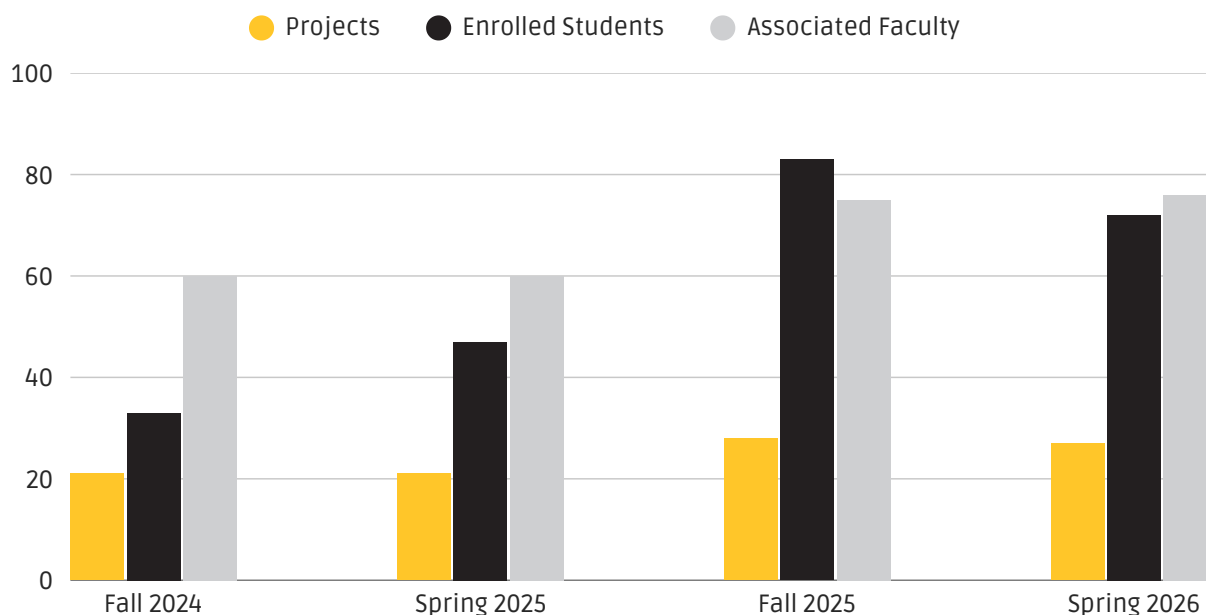
## 06

### Dissemination

All teams are encouraged to present at the Symposium of Student Scholars held at KSU bi-annually and at other opportunities such as NCUR, Posters at the Capitol, and various disciplinary conferences.



# VIP PROGRAM



Student reported satisfaction

**93% of students rated moderate to high**

Faculty reported satisfaction

**100% of faculty rated moderate to high**

Final grade of an A or B

**92% of students earned**

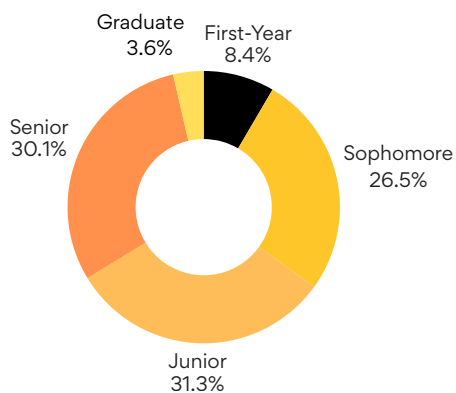
## Gender of the Students in 2025-2026

Female Male

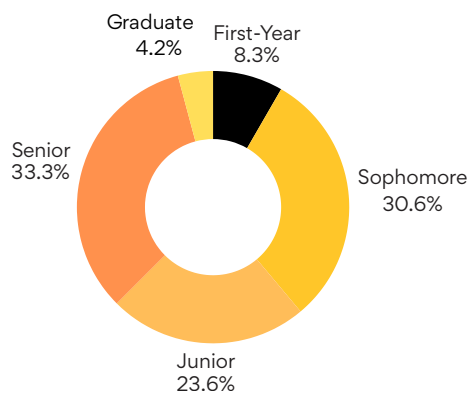
56%

44%

### Statuses in Fall 2025



### Statuses in Spring 2026





# SUMMER SCHOLARS

S

## Summer

- Conducted over the 8-week summer session
- Required to work 40 hours per week
- Required to attend professional development activities

U

## Undergraduate

- Degree seeking student at KSU
- Minimum GPA of 3.0
- Students earn a stipend of \$4,000
- Students complete bi-weekly progress reports and an End of Program Experience Survey

R

## Research

- Already identified a faculty research mentor
- Required to submit an abstract and actively present at the Fall Symposium of Student Scholars

P

## Program

- In 2026, 25 SURP projects were accepted (out of 52 applications, a 48% acceptance rate).
- 100% of mentors in 2026 reported being moderately or extremely satisfied with the program.
- 74% of students reported being moderately or extremely satisfied with the program.

# SUMMER SCHOLARS

“Research sounded a little intimidating to me when I would hear about it, but doing this research has changed my mind exponentially as I got to learn about something so interesting while also navigating new tips and tricks.” (SURP Student, 2026)

“I have grown to love research because of the incredible opportunities KSU has provided me.” (SURP Student, 2026)

“I really enjoyed being part of the program and learning through this research experience. It helped me grow, and I am very grateful for the support and encouragement I received.” (SURP Student, 2026)

FY 26 Budget Allocation

**\$ 291,390**

“This is one of the best run programs I've encountered at KSU. I have no room for improvement.” (SURP Mentor, 2026)

“The program allowed the participating student to go far beyond the type of research that could be done during the semester. Being able to dedicate full-time hours in the summer allowed for the results of the research to rise to the level of international journal publication and national meeting presentation.” (SURP Mentor, 2026)

“Thank you for organizing and supporting this program. It provided a valuable research experience for undergraduate students and helped foster meaningful collaboration between students and faculty. I appreciate the opportunity to participate and look forward to supporting the program in the future.” (SURP Mentor, 2026)



# UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

“Research sounded a little intimidating to me when I would hear about it, but doing this research has changed my mind exponentially as I got to learn about something so interesting while also navigating new tips and tricks.” (SURP Student, 2026)

“I have grown to love research because of the incredible opportunities KSU has provided me.” (SURP Student, 2026)

“I really enjoyed being part of the program and learning through this research experience. It helped me grow, and I am very grateful for the support and encouragement I received.” (SURP Student, 2026)

## Research Stipend

→ \$16,955

## Conference Registration & Travel

→ \$57,969

## Supplies, Incentives, & Publication Costs

→ \$9,790





# NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

## Student Quote

I liked how much I was able to learn about so many different topics in a short time. I attended a variety of presentations ranging from music to physics, so I could learn more about research outside my field. I also liked the community of undergraduate researchers that was brought together. It was nice being able to share an experience with so many students who were all eager to discover different aspects of their prospective fields. (NCUR Presenter, 2026)

## Student Quote

Attending the National Conference on Undergraduate Research was a really valuable experience for me. In addition to presenting my own research, I was able to attend different sessions and learn about topics outside of my major. Being around students from all over the country who are passionate about their work was very inspiring, and it made me more excited about continuing research in the future... (NCUR Presenter, 2026)

→ **68%**  
Acceptance rate

→ **30**  
Total number of students who received OUR funding

→ **54**  
Total number of KSU students presenting at NCUR

# OTHER FUNDING

## CURES

Course-based Undergraduate Research  
Experiences Funding Program

Two faculty have been awarded (psychological  
science and physics) with each course enrolling 29  
and 32 students respectively.



## YOUR

Year Of....Undergraduate Research

Funding is provided by Global Education to faculty  
working with undergraduate researchers on a project  
related to the “Year Of” program. Three faculty were  
awarded in 2025-2026.



## SERIF

Secondary Education Research Internship Funding

This fund is dedicated to supporting faculty  
who are mentoring high school students. In  
2025 - 2026, two faculty were awarded.



## URSA

Undergraduate Research in Study Abroad

Funding is provided by Global Education to faculty  
who embed undergraduate research into their  
study abroad experiences. Nine faculty were  
awarded in 2025-2026. One student noted, “I really  
enjoyed participating in this class and in  
observational research. By doing this research, I  
actually feel more prepared to travel to other  
countries in the future.”

# SYMPOSIUM OF STUDENT SCHOLARS

The Symposium of Student Scholars is designed to showcase student research and therefore welcomes projects submitted by current undergraduate or graduate students at Kennesaw State University.



## Fall Symposium



The Fall 2025 Symposium took place from November 19-21 on the Marietta Campus. We saw a total of 1085 attendees across three days of hosting. There was a 15% increase in projects with 257 projects in total since last Fall: 23 oral presentations and performances, 187 posters and visual displays, and 42 virtual presentations.

## Spring Symposium



The Spring 2026 Symposium took place from April 22-24 on the Kennesaw Campus. We saw a total of 1200 attendees across three days of hosting. There was a 32% increase in research projects with 499 projects in total since last Spring: 33 oral presentations and performances, 401 posters and visual displays, and 65 virtual presentations.



# SYMPOSIUM OF STUDENT SCHOLARS

## 30 Years of Discovery

“Standing at the symposium and finally seeing my hard work come to life was an incredibly rewarding experience. After weeks of grinding through data collection and perfecting the abstract, it felt great to step away from the screen and see the final physical product looking professional. Walking around and seeing the sheer variety of other presentations was nice as well.” (First-Year Scholar, 2025-2026)



# UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CLUB

Whether students are curious about starting their own project, connecting with brilliant mentors, or just want to explore what research is all about, Undergraduate Research Club is the place at Kennesaw State University for them. The Undergraduate Research Club (URC) is a dedicated student-led community for emerging and established undergraduate researchers. URC is all about building a supportive, exciting research community where students can grow professionally and make a real impact through their research projects. Open to all KSU students, URC offers regular meetings covering diverse research topics and provides the perfect platform to connect with fellow students and mentors.



Established

**2012**



Registered Members

**1,300+**



2025-2026 Events

**9**



# KENNESAW JOURNAL OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

## Opening Closed Doors:

Supporting Undergraduate  
Scholars Through  
Open-Access Publishing



The Kennesaw Journal of Undergraduate Research (KJUR) is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal dedicated to promoting academic study and achievement among undergraduate students at Kennesaw State University.

**TOTAL PAPERS**

**80**

**TOTAL DOWNLOADS**

**231,354**

**2025-2026 DOWNLOADS**

**68,028**

# STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES



## BROOKLYN GALVAN

“Kennesaw State University has provided me with endless opportunities to gain hands-on experience and build a strong foundation for both my academic and career goals. I was able to begin conducting research as a freshman through Kennesaw State University’s First-Year Scholars Program and continued to grow through the Sophomore Scholars Program, Birla Carbon Scholars Program, and Junior Scholars Program. These experiences helped prepare me to become a competitive applicant, leading to my acceptance into the National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates (NSF REU) program at the University of Southern Mississippi. I truly believe Kennesaw State offers students every opportunity to succeed; you just have to be willing to pursue them, and I am incredibly thankful for the undergraduate research opportunities that have helped shape my future.”

## YADIRA MINAYA

“Through KSU’s First-Year Scholars Program, [Minaya] turned [her] curiosity into award-winning research on restaurant franchising. Minaya received the Best Undergraduate Presentation Award at the 55th Annual Conference of the Southeast Decision Sciences Institute in Jacksonville, Florida earlier this year, for presenting her research examining how franchisors support restaurant franchisees and whether those support systems influence business success.” ([Article](#) by Christin Senior)

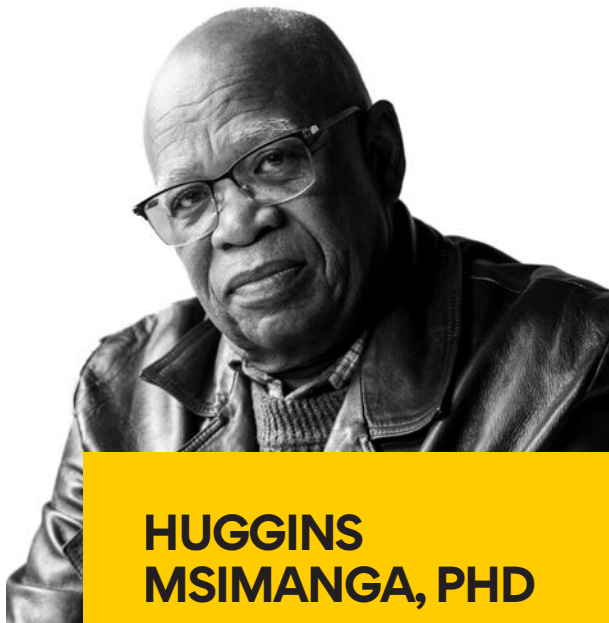
## KAYLEE STONE

Kaylee participated in the First-Year Scholars Program and the Summer Undergraduate Research Program. She co-authored a manuscript in the European Peptide Society Journal, and she presented at the Symposium of Student Scholars multiple times. She has been accepted to veterinary school starting in Fall 2026 at the University of Georgia. “I always want to do research as long as I’m learning because there’s so much to learn and do.” ([Article](#) by Dave Shelles)

## MIRIAM RAGGS

Miriam participated in the First-Year, Sophomore, and Junior Scholars Programs, she presented at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research and multiple Symposiums, and she conducted research at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee over the past summer through the lab’s Research Student Internship (RSI) program. “I definitely want to go to grad school in the future. What exactly my focus would be, I’m not sure yet, but I think that this experience at Oak Ridge helped me solidify that I definitely want to go into quantum materials.” ([Article](#) by Dave Shelles)

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



**HUGGINS  
MSIMANGA, PHD**

Professor Emeritus, Chemistry

Students mentored:

**85**

\* Originally from Zimbabwe, Msimanga arrived at KSU in 1988 after completing his doctorate at Georgia Tech. He taught classes at every level, from freshman chemistry to senior-level forensic analytical chemistry, as well as directed applied research for advising students on writing manuscripts.



**CARL  
SAINT-LOUIS, PHD**

Outstanding Mentor Awardee

Students mentored:

**75**

\* Saint-Louis began teaching at KSU in 2020 but has been an Owl for much longer. Having graduated from KSU, Saint-Louis explained he felt drawn to being an undergraduate research mentor because of his own experience in undergraduate research at KSU. Since becoming a mentor, Saint-Louis has mentored 75 undergraduate students. Of these students, 100% of them have earned co-authorship on peer-reviewed publications and presented their research at conferences on the local, state, and national levels.

# OUR GOALS



## **Research Publicity**

A group of undergraduate researchers is currently working to catalog the ways that faculty do and do not talk about undergraduate research on their webpages. We hope to see an increase in the mention of undergraduate researchers on webpages in Fall 2026 once results are finalized.

## **Junior & Senior Scholars**

We aim to separate this combined program with professional development activities targeted for each level.

## **Symposium of Student Scholars**

We are aiming for a 25% increase in the number of student presenters from Spring 2026 to Spring 2027.

## **VIP Program**

Growing the VIP program should help increase the number of students on teams. We will be better able to track the students in VIP by offering a zero-credit option, which also allows for financial burden relief. After review by UPCC and GPCC, this will begin Fall 2026.

## **CUREs Program**

We plan to promote Course-based Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs) and fund at least 6 faculty.

## **Operations**

We are looking into software that would promote more cross-disciplinary collaborations.

## **Undergraduate Resource Videos**

We have updated our research video website. From introductory modules on developing research questions, selecting methods, to navigating ethics, these videos are designed to support undergraduates' journey as researchers.



# RESEARCH that matters

2025-2026