



**KENNESAW STATE  
UNIVERSITY**  
GRADUATE COLLEGE



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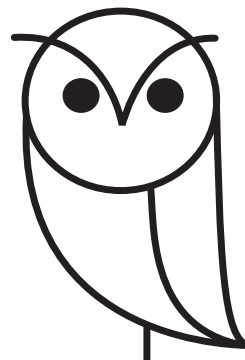
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As I reflect on the past year, my second at KSU, it is clear that remarkable strides have been made in graduate education at Kennesaw State University. As the Dean of the Graduate College, I am proud to highlight our unwavering commitment to student success and the strategic enhancements that have strengthened our academic community.

This year, we focused on comprehensive initiatives that support our students' academic and professional journeys. The opening of graduate student success centers on both campuses exemplifies our dedication to addressing the unique needs of our graduate students. These new spaces offer serene environments for studying, group projects, brainstorming sessions, and workshops, fostering both academic excellence and personal growth. With the spaces in place, we are poised to roll out more comprehensive graduate student support opportunities.

Workforce development remains integral to our strategic vision. By aligning our programs with the evolving needs of Georgia and beyond, we are preparing our graduates to excel in varied industries. The introduction of the new Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence is a testament to KSU's commitment to staying at the forefront of technological advancements and meeting the demands of the modern workforce. This cutting-edge program will equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary to lead in the rapidly growing field of AI.

This year also marks a significant milestone for our Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Engineering, with the graduation of its first three students, just three years since the launch of the program. Their achievements reflect the high caliber of our academic programs and the dedication of our faculty to research and innovation as well as doctoral student mentoring. These graduates are pioneers, paving the way for future scholars and professionals who will drive progress in engineering and beyond.

Funding for graduate students, coupled with professional and research growth opportunities remains a cornerstone of the mission for the Graduate College. With the generous support of donors, funds for graduate student scholarships increased in the last fiscal year by over \$700,000. Additionally, we increased funding levels through institutional and external grant funds, to provide more competitive funding packages to a growing number of doctoral students.

As you explore this year's annual report, you will find accounts of our initiatives, data on our progress, and inspiring stories of individual students whose lives have been transformed by their experiences at KSU.

Together, we achieved great things this year, and I look forward to the continued success of our students. Thank you for being part of our journey and for supporting the Graduate College.

With gratitude,

Juliet Langman, Ph.D.  
Dean & Professor, Graduate College



# Who we are

The Graduate College works alongside stakeholders to find ways to increase graduate enrollment and student retention rates by anticipating the needs of the University's graduate programs, raising the quality and accountability in graduate education, improving financial support, and fostering professional development. From processing graduate applications to guiding students toward the completion of their degrees, the Graduate College staff supports students' academic progress from admission to graduation and beyond.

## Mission

Kennesaw State University transforms lives through academic excellence, innovative research, strong community partnerships, and economic opportunity. We empower our students to become thought leaders, lifelong learners, and informed global citizens by cultivating an inclusive environment that encourages free expression and civil discourse.

## Vision

Kennesaw State University will achieve national prominence as a public university known for education, research, and community programs that foster inquiry and advance society.

## Values

Respect · Integrity · Collaboration · Inclusivity · Accountability

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## Goals

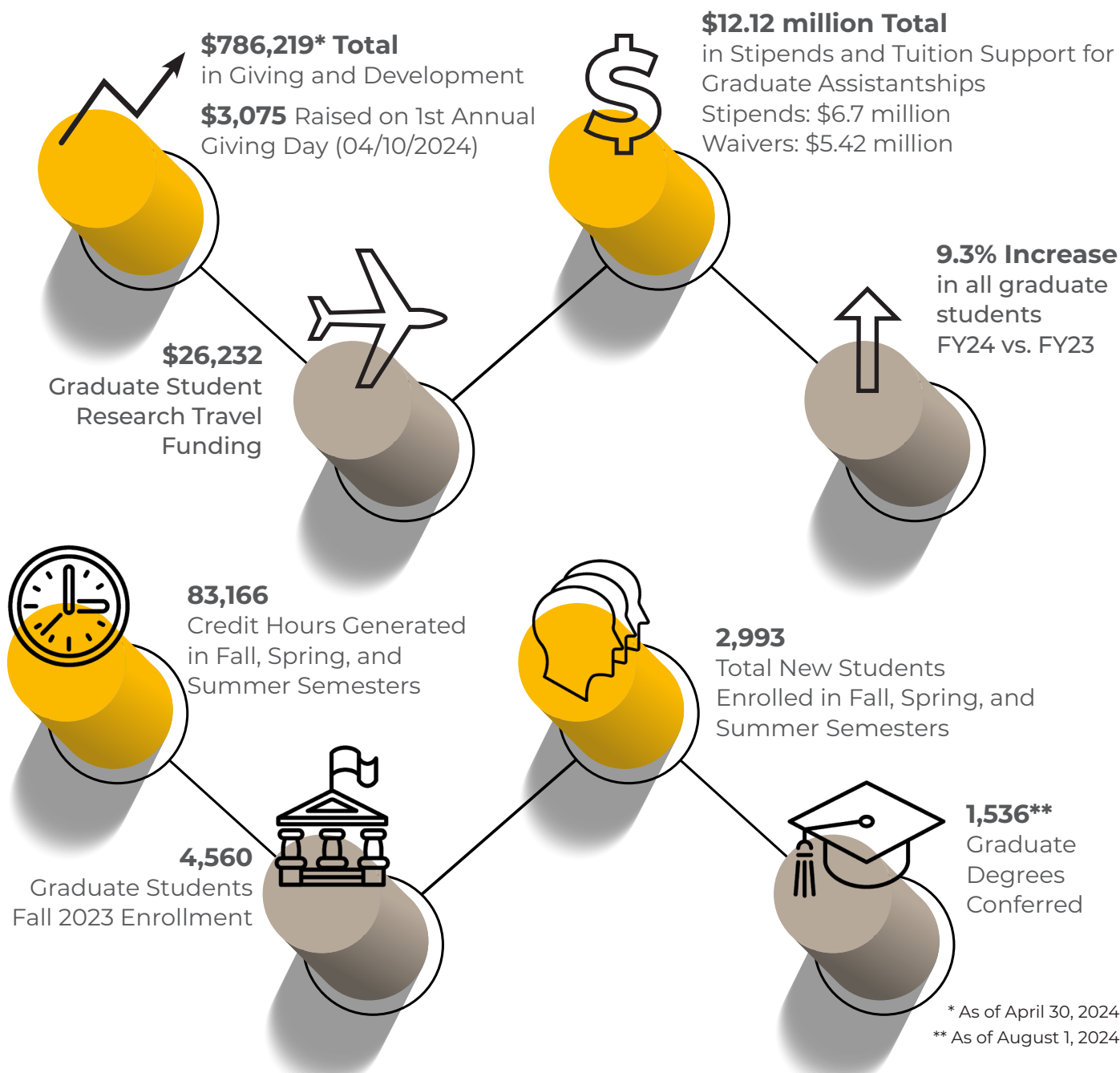
- Enhance graduate student services
- Strengthen campus-wide partnerships
- Manage quality assurance for all graduate programs
- Strategically grow graduate programs

# By the Numbers

Kennesaw State University offers a variety of graduate programs on campus, online, and hybrid that provide students with the opportunity to develop advanced skills and knowledge in their chosen fields.

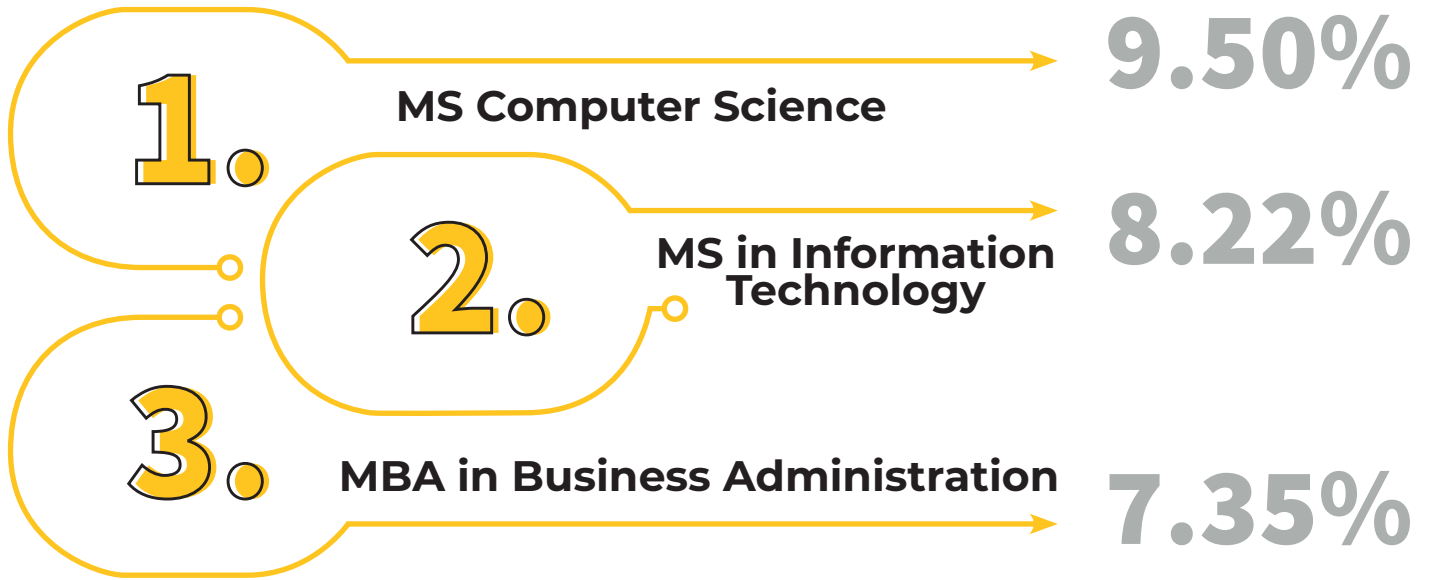
As an R2 institution, Kennesaw State University is committed to research excellence and offers a range of graduate research opportunities. These opportunities allow graduate students to work alongside faculty members on cutting-edge research projects and contribute to the creation of new knowledge in their respective fields.

## 2023-2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



# Enrollment Trends

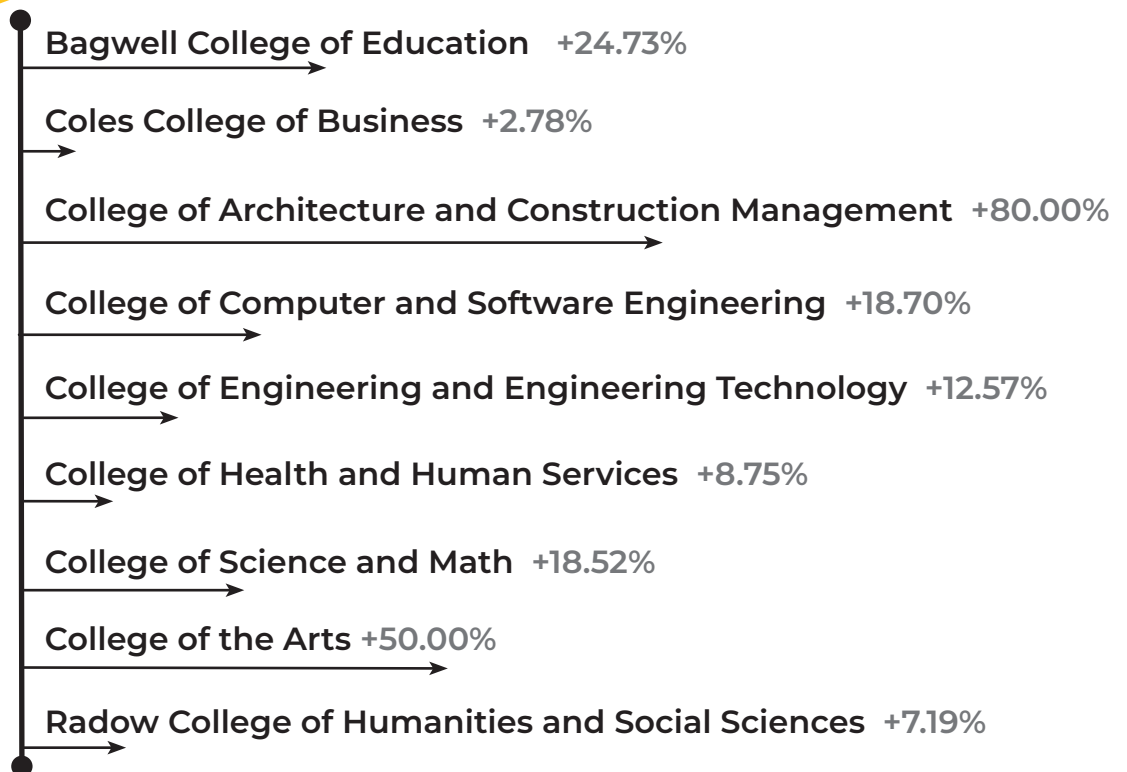
## Top 3 Enrollment Majors, Fall 2023

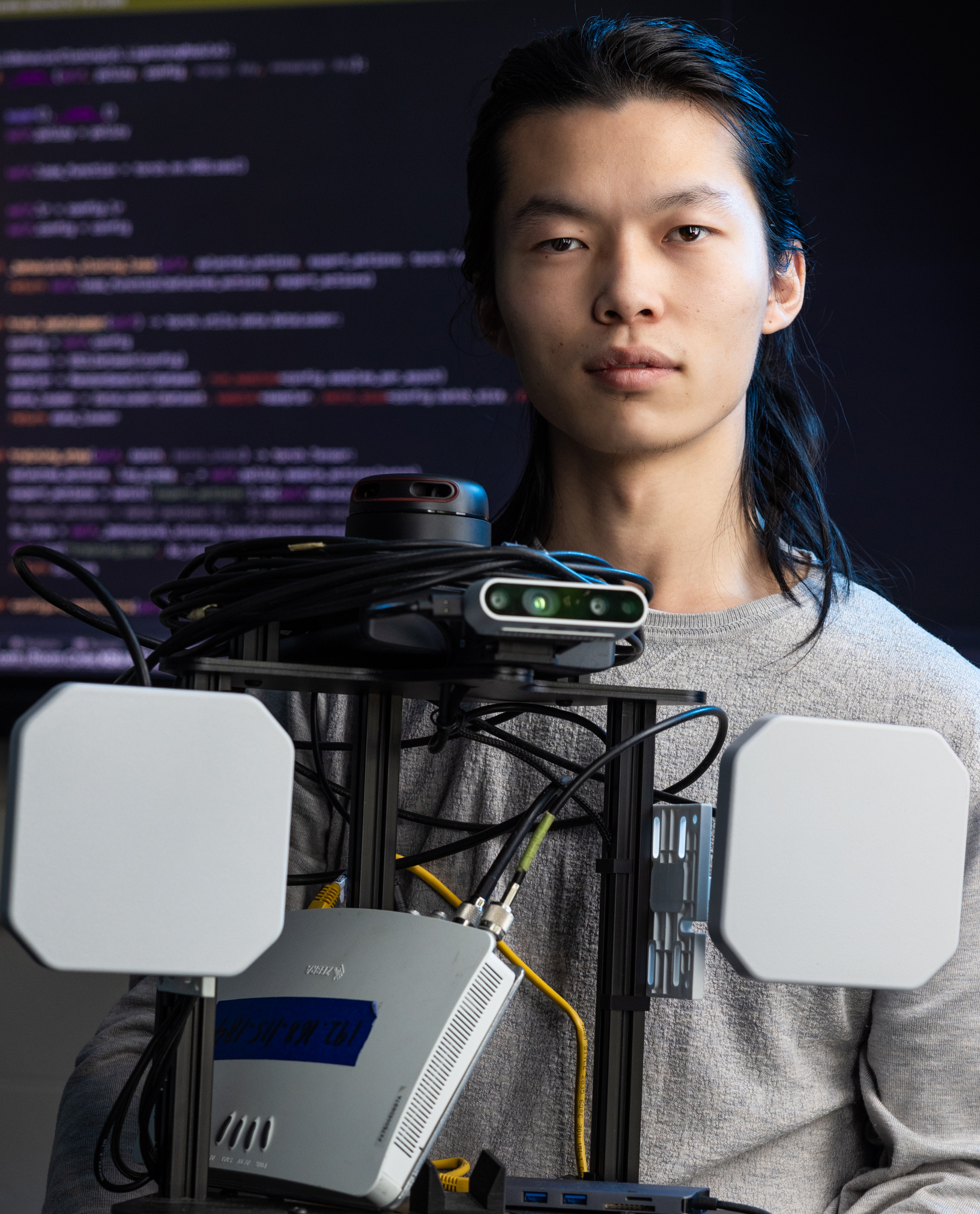


Year to year change in the number of new students:



Total **16.41%** increase over the previous year.







# KSU Grad Student Wins Globecom 2023 Best Paper Award for Groundbreaking IoT Research

By Tracy Gaudlip

**K**ennesaw State University's master's in information technology student, Yongshuai Wu, was honored with the prestigious Globecom 2023 Best Paper Award for the Internet of Things (IoT) and Sensor Networks Symposium on December 7, 2023, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Globecom conference, organized by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc. (IEEE) Communications Society, serves as a premier platform for global innovation in communications technology, and receives over 2,000 research paper submissions annually.

Yongshuai, an international student from China, was enthusiastic about his first major accolade at such a renowned conference. "This was my first peer-reviewed academic research paper, and it was a total surprise to me when I learned that my work had been chosen to win the Best Paper Award." The award-winning paper, titled, "Cross-Modal Reasoning Model for Improved Learning Efficiency in IoT Environments," proposes a revolutionary approach to managing multiple sensors in complex tasks.

His research focuses on embedded intelligent systems, particularly autonomous robots in logistics, bridging artificial general intelligence, robotics, IoT, and cyber-physical systems. The model, known as CMRM, extracts high-dimensional information from various sensors, efficiently reasons from multiple modalities, and aligns learned task policies to offer zero-shot generalization to unseen environments.

The methodology of the award-winning paper involves a unique encoder-decoder network structure with transformer layers for relationship extraction. Yongshuai's

team successfully deployed the CMRM to a robot for radio-frequency identification (RFID) based inventory tasks, showcasing a 20-times improvement in learning efficiency. When asked about the implications of his work, Yongshuai emphasized the framework's ability to handle multiple sensors outputting different data modalities, offering significant improvements in task generalization for unseen scenarios.

When asked about his paper, he expressed sincere gratitude to his advisors, Professors Jian Zhang and Shaoen Wu for their guidance and explained how their expertise helped him plan his research. He confided, "During the process, I struggled and encountered challenges with maintaining the project, changing methodology, and drafting the paper. But Prof. Wu, as a senior researcher, gave me a high-level view of research, so I learned how to plan my research journey. And meanwhile, Prof. Zhang, with his years of research and work experience, taught me a lot about the importance of the details." He stressed that the effort to face the challenges paid off and now he can be more efficient when working on future projects.

Reflecting on his success, he acknowledged the challenges faced during the project but emphasized the valuable lessons learned. He credited teamwork as a cornerstone, highlighting the contributions of undergraduate students, Chris Turner and Hanson Chaney to the virtual warehouse development using a game engine. He also expressed additional gratitude to Dr. Ying Wang from the Department of Robotics and Mechatronics Engineering and Prof. Shiwen Mao from Auburn University's

Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. He also thanked the National Science Foundation (NSF) for sponsoring his research projects.

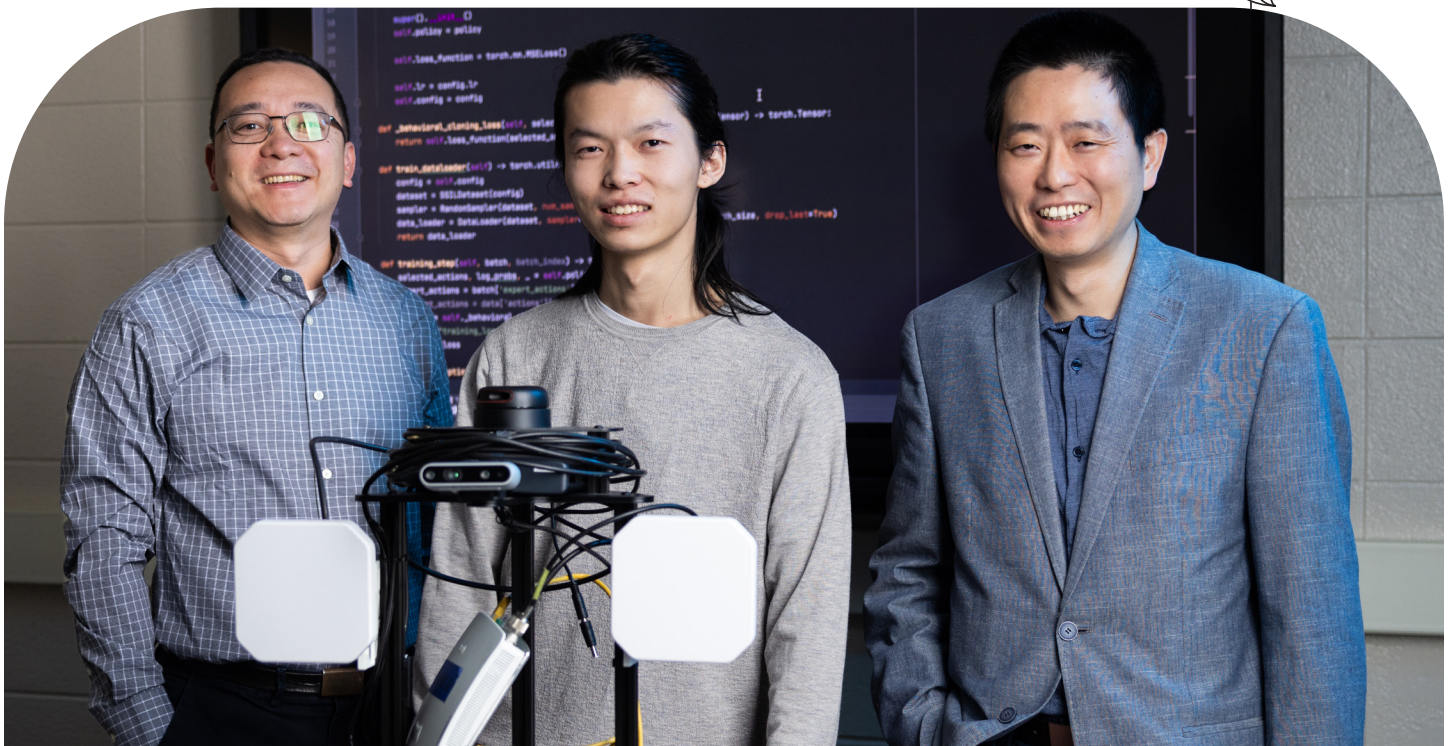
When asked about his decision to attend KSU, Yongshuai gave credit to Dr. Wu. “Before coming to KSU, I focused on engineering projects, especially electric circuits design. I joined a research group to help the professor with project implementation, hardware, and software design. During my study, I realized that a good project is one that combines research and implementation.” However, he felt he needed to be more knowledgeable in the latest research and therefore wished to connect with those who are at the forefront of innovation. That’s when one of his friends recommended Dr. Shaoen Wu, Professor and the Department Chair of Information Technology at KSU. After Yongshuai contacted Dr. Wu, he knew he found the mentor he was searching for.

In April 2024, Yongshuai capped off his master’s program by presenting his

research at the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition at KSU during Graduate Student Appreciation Week. His presentation, titled “Autonomous Robots for Inventory Tasks in Unstructured Environments via Zero-Shot Imitation Learning,” earned him both the Runner-Up and People’s Choice awards.

After earning his Master’s in Information Technology at the end of the Spring semester, Yongshuai began pursuing a Ph.D. in Computer Science at KSU. Looking ahead, he plans to focus his research on overcoming challenges in complex environments and tackling general tasks. He is also committed to staying current with industry trends, publishing more papers, and further honing his engineering and research skills.

As Yongshuai continues to advance in the field of information technology, his Globecom 2023 Best Paper and 3MT awards underscore his dedication, innovation, and the promising future of IoT and sensor networks research.



# New Program

## Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence



The approval of the new Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence (MSAI) degree by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia signals a significant milestone for Kennesaw State University as it prepares to launch the program in Fall 2024. As the second degree of its kind in the state of Georgia, this pioneering initiative underscores KSU's dedication to innovation and meeting the evolving demands of both industry and society.

Our master's program will emphasize hands-on learning and practical experience, ensuring that our graduates are well-prepared to tackle real-world challenges in AI," said Sumanth Yenduri, dean of the College of Computing and Software Engineering. "By embracing the limitless potential of artificial intelligence, we are preparing our students to meet the industry needs of tomorrow while catalyzing positive change across various sectors."

Housed within the College of Computing and Software Engineering, the MSAI program expands upon KSU's existing artificial intelligence concentration, positioning itself as a pivotal player in shaping the future of AI education. Dean Yenduri's words underscore the program's focus on experiential learning, promising a curriculum rich in practical applications and real-world problem-solving opportunities. With the global AI market projected by PricewaterhouseCoopers to soar to unprecedented heights—up to \$15.7 trillion by 2030—the demand for skilled professionals in this domain has never been more urgent.

Central to the MSAI curriculum is its emphasis on experiential learning, offering students a rich tapestry of opportunities to explore AI core principles and technologies in real-world contexts. From machine learning and neural networks to cognitive computing and natural language processing, the program encompasses a diverse array of topics designed to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of AI's multifaceted applications. Additionally, with flexible enrollment options, be it on campus or online, KSU ensures accessibility and convenience without compromising on quality.

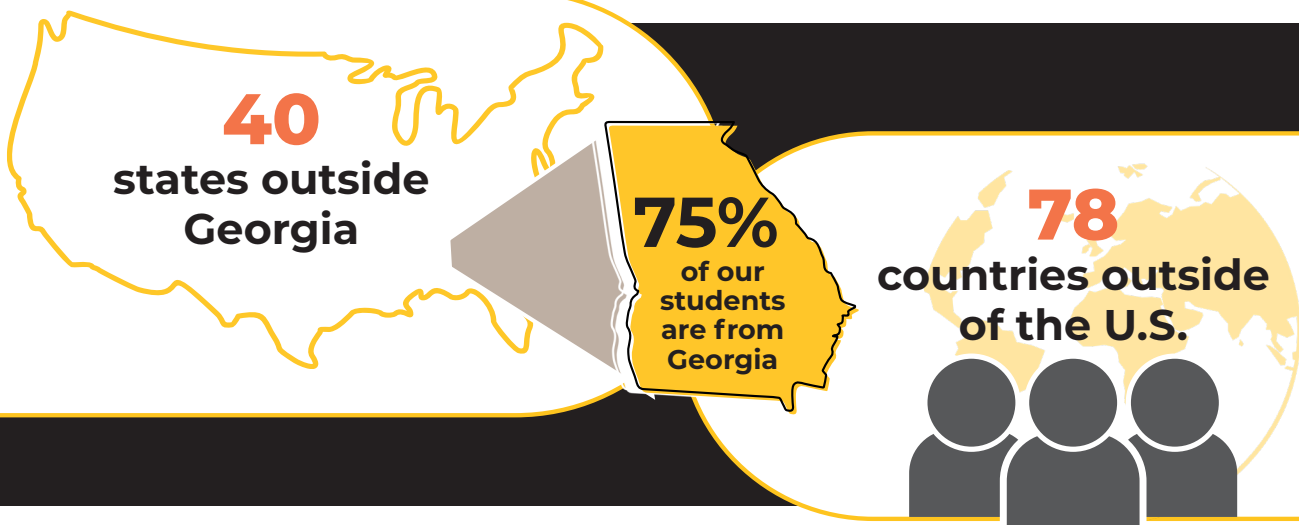
Prospective students eyeing career advancement or contemplating a shift into the burgeoning field of AI will find KSU's MSAI program to be a compelling choice. The program's interdisciplinary approach, drawing from disciplines such as computer science, cybersecurity, and data science, underscores its commitment to fostering holistic learning experiences.

The MSAI program at KSU stands as a beacon of innovation, poised to meet the rising demand for AI expertise regionally and beyond. With a robust network of industry partnerships, internship opportunities, and collaborative projects, students can expect to emerge not just as graduates but as trailblazers poised to shape the future of artificial intelligence.

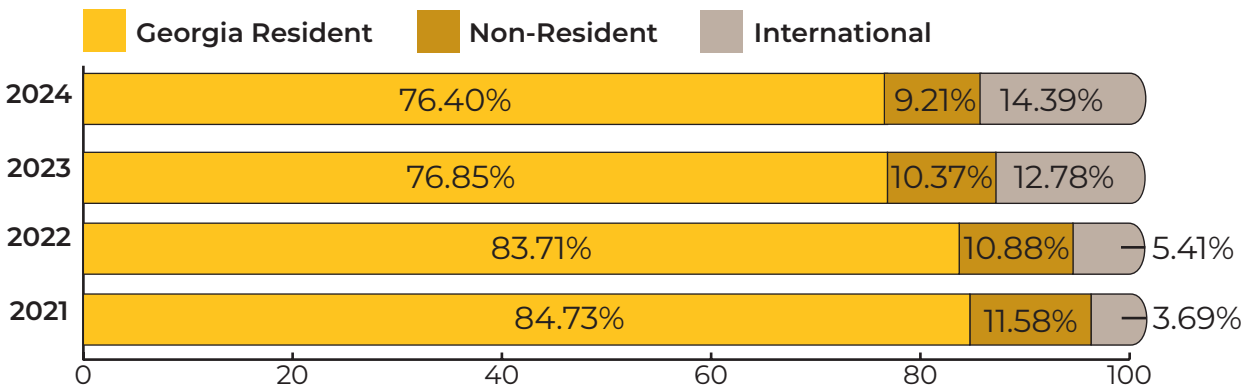
# Prospective Student Audience

Competitive tuition and scholarships, personalized support from staff and faculty, research opportunities, modern facilities, and the flexibility of on-campus, online, or hybrid learning, all within a supportive community, draw in a varied group of applicants.

## Our graduate students come from:



## Graduate Student Residency Rates 2021-2024



## Enrollment Top 5 International Countries Comparison Over Two Years

International applicants to graduate school are important as they bring cultural richness and innovation to campus and prepare students for a globalized workforce.

### 2023-2024

India:	740
Nigeria:	78
Bangladesh:	49
Ghana:	26
China:	14

### 2022-2023

India:	470
Nigeria:	61
Bangladesh:	23
Ghana:	20
Nepal:	10

# Graduate Student Demographics

KSU continues to thrive with a varied student body, which injects unique perspectives into the classroom by offering differing viewpoints that challenge conventional thinking and fostering a deeper understanding. This foundation supports students in becoming effective leaders who excel in managing teams, navigating cultural boundaries in communication, and driving innovation in a global workforce.

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Average age of  
KSU graduate  
student 2023-24

## Gender

43%  
Male

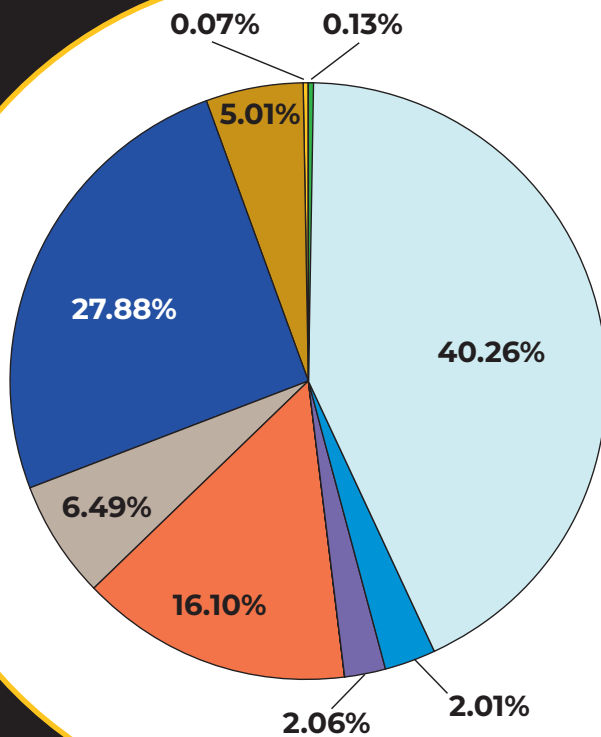
57%  
Female

## On Campus or Online

54% Online

46% Campus

## Graduate Students 2023-24



- White
- Unknown/Undeclared
- Two or More Races
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- International
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African-American
- Asian
- American Indian/Alaskan Native

# Graduate Student Highlights

## Students Showcase Research at 3MT Competition

On Thursday, April 4, 2024, the Graduate College held its 9th annual 3-Minute Thesis competition (3MT), tasking master's and doctoral students with presenting their research to a non-specialist audience within a strict three-minute time frame.

William Reed, a master's in exercise science student, clinched the top spot with his presentation titled "Kinetic and Kinematic Effects of Unilateral Flag Carrying on Referee Sprinting and Agility Performance." Yongshuai Wu, currently pursuing a master's in information technology, secured both the Runner-Up position and the People's Choice award for his presentation titled "Autonomous Robots for Inventory Tasks in Unstructured Environments via Zero-Shot Imitation Learning."

Reed's presentation centered on the differences between normal sprinting motions and that of "flag-carrying" soccer referees. From his own experience he explained, "We referees have a distinct lack of research around us in comparison to the players we officiate, so finding a way to add to that limited research base was the goal. Referees receive very little assistance when it comes to specialized training, so working to analyze the intricacies of our own performance expectations led us to this premise of running with only one moving arm, as the flag must be carried in the other." He added that while there is some research on the effects of restricting both arms in track athletes, none have looked at the effects of running with only one arm moving.



*The 2024 3MT winners pose with Dean Juliet Langman: Runner-up and People's Choice, Yongshuai Wu (Left), Dean Langman (Center), and First Place winner, William Reed (Right).*

In addition to the 1080Sprint machine, he used tests standardized by soccer governing bodies to determine what kind of change flag-carrying has on running. He tracked kinetic data for each test, and compared the tests within individuals.

Now that the competition is over, Reed said he "feels a sense of calm" and is looking forward to the next challenge.

Wu's research delves into robotic reasoning, which involves training robots to mimic human behavior. To evaluate their methods, he explained that they chose robot radio-frequency identification (RFID) because it's a challenging task for robots. This technology uses radio waves to identify and track tags attached to objects and is used in applications such as inventory management.

“The concept of RFID inventory is that each product will have an RFID tag, which can be scanned by a reader within a short distance. This is why we need to train the robot to approach those places where the products are located.”

Wu explained that grasping robotic reasoning can be daunting for those unfamiliar with robotics. “Summarizing this into a 3-minute presentation is tough,” he said. He opted to focus on key milestones rather than narrate the entire journey, and it turned out to be effective.

Reed was awarded \$1,000 for his first-place presentation, while Wu earned \$750 for second place and an additional \$350 for winning the people’s choice award.

Dr. Amy Buddie, the Director of Undergraduate Research, along with Dr. Karin Scarpinato, the Vice President of Research, and Dr. Jessica Rudd, an alumna

of KSU’s Ph.D. program in Data Science and Analytics, and a past champion who currently serves as Senior Data Engineer and Technical Lead at Intuit Mailchimp, were the judges for the competition.

*Pictured, from left: Kimberly Wu, Anthoanette Kommeh, Kimberly Green, Srivastva Mallapragada, Yongshuai Wu, Dean Juliet Langman, William Reed, and Lacey Harper.*



## 2024 3-Minute Thesis (3MT) Participants

- **Kimberly Green, Ed.D. in Teacher Leadership;** Faculty advisor: Dr. Nicholas Clegorne  
*Perceptions of the Differing Preparatory Needs of Teacher Leaders and Educational Leaders*
- **Lacey Harper, Master of Science in Exercise Science;** Faculty advisor: Dr. Garrett Hester  
*The Power of the Mind to Enhance Strength Training Adaptations in Older Women*
- **Anthoanette Kommeh, Ph.D. in International Conflict Management;**  
Faculty advisor: Dr. Christopher Pallas, *The Impact of NGO Sensitivity to Local Gender Dynamics on Project Outcomes and Social Relations in Northern Ghana*
- **Srivastva Mallapragada, Ph.D. Analytics and Data Science;** Faculty advisor: Dr. Ying Xie  
*Multi-Modality Transformer for E-Commerce: Inferring User Purchase Intention to Bridge the Query-Product Gap*
- **William Reed, Master of Science in Exercise Science;** Faculty advisor: Dr. Jacob Grazer  
*Kinetic and Kinematic Effects of Unilateral Flag Carrying on Referee Sprinting and Agility Performance*
- **Kimberly Wang, Master of Science in Information Technology;** Faculty advisor: Dr. Chloe Yixin Xie  
*How Tiny Interactions in GPR56 Control Your Health?*
- **Yongshuai Wu, Master of Science in Information Technology;** Faculty advisor: Dr. Shaoen Wu  
*Autonomous Robots for Inventory Tasks in Unstructured Environments via Zero-Shot Imitation Learning*





# Graduate Student Finds Her Calling in Women's Health at Kennesaw State

By David Shelles

One message reset the life trajectory for Kennesaw State University graduate student Lacey Harper.

Two years after earning a bachelor's degree in exercise science summa cum laude from KSU, Harper worked as manager at a sporting goods store when she received a message via LinkedIn from one of her former professors, Garrett Hester.

"It almost seems like a movie," Harper said. "I was just pursuing the business side of life and I got a message from, of all places, KSU. He asked me if I would be interested in an open graduate research assistant position. That one message really turned everything around."

Currently pursuing a master's in exercise science, Harper has thrived in the Hester research group. Along with the important mission of improving the health of older women, she discovered her inner nerd, immersing herself in the data analysis of her various projects as well as the hands-on aspects of studying the effects of exercise. She presented one of her projects at the Wellstar College Research and Engagement Day in spring 2023 and won honors among student presenters.

While her award-winning project focused on fall risk among middle-aged women due to muscle fatigue, her master's thesis examines strength training with elastic bands to improve the health of older women. Strength training is effective for increasing muscle strength, but few perform such exercises, particularly older women. It's a matter of accessibility and comfort with elastic bands, and more evidence is needed on their

efficacy for improving muscle health. Harper seeks to quantify those physical function improvements and discover more about the physiological mechanisms behind them.

**"She's truly committed to older women's health and has really dived into the research and analytics. She's also really embraced mentoring undergraduates, which is important for any graduate student, especially at an undergraduate-focused university like KSU."**

—Dr. Garrett Hester  
Associate Professor  
Exercise Science

"We've created a home-based, super-practical elastic band training program that we will have women ages 65-79 perform at home, so it will be very easily accessible for them," she said. "We're going to see how a shorter program affects their muscle health, their muscle quality and their physical function. We're doing all sorts of tests related to strength, all-cause mortality, how it affects their daily function and their quality of life."



professional development pursuits. She has published two research articles, including one in the *Journal of Physiology*, a high-impact journal in the field. Harper also obtained her exercise physiologist certification this past summer. Recently, she was selected to present her findings on aging and muscle function in an “Emerging Findings on Aging” session at the Annual College of Sports Medicine meeting.

After graduating in May, Harper plans to pursue a doctorate in the exercise science field, studying older women’s health in even greater detail. She said she will carry the lessons she learned in the labs and classrooms at Prillaman Hall with her wherever her studies take her.

“Thanks to Dr. Hester, the faculty at Kennesaw State and support from Wellstar College, I’ve been granted the opportunity to return to school in this way,” she said. “I know it’s cliché, but to say it has changed my life is the truest thing I can say about it. This time two years ago, I would never have thought I’d have the opportunity to dedicate myself to the important research we’re doing right now, and that I’m so grateful to contribute to the field of muscle health and aging.”

Hester researches aging and neuromuscular function with a recent emphasis on women’s health. He said Harper expressed interest in graduate school during her senior year in 2020, but her name didn’t come up until he had an opening for a graduate research assistant. His hunch paid off, and Harper has done exceptional work in the lab.

“She’s been an impressive graduate student, and her accolades reflect that,” Hester said. “She’s truly committed to older women’s health and has really dived into the research and analytics. She’s also really embraced mentoring undergraduates, which is important for any graduate student, especially at an undergraduate-focused university like KSU.”

Aside from her master’s thesis, Harper has been consistently active in research and



**Supporting graduate students through donations to the KSU Foundation empowers promising scholars to pursue higher education by providing crucial financial resources. This support fosters research and enhances the reputation of the University. It plays a vital role in nurturing the next generation of professionals across diverse fields. To give a gift to the Graduate College, visit [giving.kennesaw.edu/online-giving/graduate-college.php](https://giving.kennesaw.edu/online-giving/graduate-college.php).**

# Graduate Student Appreciation Week

The Graduate College celebrated Graduate Student Appreciation Week during the first week of April, to show support and gratitude for graduate students' contributions, impact, and value. Events for the week began on Saturday, March 30 with a baseball game at Stillwell Stadium, but the official kick-off to the week began on Monday, April 1 with tables set up on both the Kennesaw and Marietta campuses, where students received complimentary t-shirts, swag items, and answers to general inquiries.

This year's festivities included a blend of virtual events alongside traditional in-person gatherings. An informative online session focused on financial literacy provided valuable insights into financial aid options, scholarships and additional resources. Students also engaged in a virtual version of Dr. Christopher Pallas' "Getting Work Done" workshop and enjoyed the Virtual Happy Hour, where they engaged in conversation about topics ranging from dream vacations to women's basketball to a game of Would You Rather, all while enjoying their favorite non-alcoholic "mocktail".

The second annual wine and cheese reception was well attended and provided an opportunity for students to unwind with peers, faculty members, and Graduate College staff. Additional events included a live cooking demo and complimentary tickets for the campus performance of *Pride and Prejudice*.

The highlight of the week, once again, was the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition, showcasing a wide variety of research endeavors. Following the competition, a reception allowed participants to mingle with the audience, and winners were honored with awards.

Events such as these are made possible through contributions by individuals and organizations to the KSU Foundation and demonstrate a commitment to developing a thriving academic environment that prioritizes the needs and aspirations of graduate students. These funds enable the Graduate College to organize a wide range of events and initiatives that go beyond academic support, focusing on the holistic well-being and personal development of graduate students.



# Graduate Programs by College

## Clarice C. and Leland H. Bagwell College of Education

### Master's

- Educational Leadership, M.Ed.
- Elementary and Early Childhood Education, M.Ed.
- Instructional Technology, M.Ed.
- Secondary and Middle Grades Education, M.Ed.
- Special Education, M.Ed.
- Teacher Leadership and Educational Leadership, M.Ed.
- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), M.Ed.
- Teaching, MAT

### Specialist

- Curriculum and Instruction, Ed.S.
- Educational Leadership, Ed.S.
- Instructional Technology, Ed.S.
- Secondary and Middle Grades Education, Ed.S.
- Special Education, Ed.S.

### Doctorate

- Educational Leadership, Ed.D.
- Instructional Technology, Ed.D.
- Secondary and Middle Grades Education, Ed.D.
- Teacher Leadership, Ed.D.

### Certificate

- Autism Spectrum Disorder Certificate
- Coaching Certificate
- Dyslexia Certificate
- Educational Leadership - Tier I Post-Master's Certificate
- English to Speakers of Other Languages Endorsement Certificate
- Gifted Education Certificate
- Higher Education Administration Post-Master's Certificate
- Personalized Learning Certificate
- Reading Education Certificate
- Special Education Certificate
- Teacher Leadership Post-Master's Certificate
- Teaching English in Global/Local Contexts Certificate

### Non-Degree

- Curriculum and Instruction Certification
- Educational Leadership Tier II Certification Only
- Instructional Technology Teacher Certificate
- Preschool/Special Education Certification-Only Program

## College of Architecture and Construction Management

### Master's

- Construction Management, M.S.

## College of Computing and Software Engineering

### Master's

- Artificial Intelligence, M.S.
- Computer Science, M.S.
- Cybersecurity, M.S.
- Data Science and Analytics, M.S.
- Information Technology, M.S.I.T.
- Software Engineering, M.S.S.W.E.

### Doctorate

- Computer Science, Ph.D.
- Data Science and Analytics, Ph.D.

### Certificate

- Computer Science Foundations Certificate
- Data Analytics and Intelligent Technology Certificate
- Enterprise IT Management Certificate
- Health Information Technology (HIT) Certificate
- Information Technology Foundations Certificate
- Information Technology Security Certificate
- Software Engineering Certificate
- Software Engineering Foundations Certificate

## College of Science and Mathematics

### Master's

- Chemical Sciences, M.S.
- Integrative Biology, M.S.

## College of The Arts

### Master's

- Art and Design, M.A.

## Michael J. Coles College of Business

### Master's

- Accounting, M.Acc.
- Business Administration, M.B.A.
- Digital Financial Technologies, M.S.
- Healthcare Management and Informatics, M.S.
- Information Systems, M.S.I.S.

### Dual Master's Degree

- Business Administration/Conflict Management (M.B.A./M.S.C.M.)
- Business Administration/Information Systems (M.B.A./M.S.I.S.)
- Business Administration/Public Administration (M.B.A./M.P.A.)
- Business Administration/Social Work (M.B.A./M.S.W.)

### Doctorate

- Business Administration, Ph.D

### Certificate

- Business Intelligence Certificate
- Business Research Methods Post-Master's Certificate
- Financial Technology (FinTech) Certificate
- Information Security and Assurance Certificate

## Norman J. Radow College of Humanities and Social Sciences

### Master's

- American Studies, M.A.
- Conflict Management, M.S.C.M.
- Criminal Justice, M.S.
- Integrated Global Communication, M.A.
- International Policy Management, M.S.
- Professional Writing, M.A.P.W.
- Public Administration, M.P.A.

### Dual Master's Degree

- Public Administration/ Criminal Justice (M.P.A./M.S.C.J.)
- Public Administration/Integrated Global Communication (M.P.A./M.A.I.G.C.)

### Doctorate

- International Conflict Management, Ph.D.

### Certificate

- American Studies Certificate
- Creative Writing Certificate
- Digital and Social Media Certificate
- Professional Editing and Publishing Certificate
- Professional Writing for International Audiences Certificate
- Screen & Television Writing Certificate

## Southern Polytechnic College of Engineering and Engineering Technology

### Master's

- Civil Engineering, M.S.C.E.
- Electrical and Computer Engineering, M.S.
- Engineering Management, M.S.E.M.
- Intelligent Robotic Systems, M.S.
- Mechanical Engineering, M.S.M.E.
- Systems Engineering, M.S.S.E.N.G.

### Doctorate

- Interdisciplinary Engineering, Ph.D.

### Certificate

- Six Sigma Green Belt Certificate
- Systems Engineering Certificate

## Wellstar College of Health and Human Services

### Master's

- Exercise Science, M.S.
- Family Nurse Practitioner, M.S.N.
- Leadership in Nursing, M.S.N.
- Prosthetics and Orthotics, M.S.P.O.
- Social Work, M.S.W.

### Certificate

- Leadership in Sport and Exercise Certificate
- mHealth Certificate
- Nurse Educator Post-Master's Certificate
- Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

### Post-Master's Certificate

- Social Entrepreneurship Certificate



# Mfon Okpok: Pioneering Interdisciplinary Engineering at Kennesaw State University

By Tracy Gaudlip

**M**fon Okpok's journey through academia has been nothing short of extraordinary, culminating in his achievement as one of three inaugural graduates of Kennesaw State University's pioneering Ph.D. program in interdisciplinary engineering. From the outset, Mfon's passion for pushing the boundaries of traditional disciplines and seeking innovative solutions to complex problems set him apart as a visionary scholar. As he steps onto the stage to receive his doctoral hood this May, Mfon embodies the spirit of interdisciplinary collaboration and academic excellence that defines this groundbreaking program, poised to make significant contributions to the ever-evolving fields of engineering and technology.

Before embarking on his Ph.D. journey, Mfon already traversed a diverse academic and professional landscape. He explains, "I completed my B.Sc. from Rivers State Polytechnic in Nigeria and pursued postgraduate studies at Drexel University and Southern Polytechnic State University." Armed with master's degrees in mathematics, electrical technology, information technology, and software engineering, his multidimensional background laid a solid foundation for his groundbreaking venture into the realm of interdisciplinary engineering.

His decision to pursue his doctoral studies at Kennesaw State University was a strategic one influenced by innovative research opportunities, robust interdisciplinary programs, and the university's renowned faculty. Mfon admits he faced challenges

balancing coursework, research, and personal commitments, but with effective time management, unwavering perseverance, and a mentorship-seeking approach, he navigated these obstacles successfully.

**"When Mfon brought his thesis idea to my office, I immediately knew he had something that was new and relevant to the practice."**

—Dr. Billy Kihei  
Assistant Professor  
Computer Engineering

Mfon's motivation to succeed stems from a deep-seated desire to integrate his varied academic expertise and tackle complex engineering challenges from multiple angles. "I was driven by a passion for innovation and a commitment to advancing technology for societal benefit, particularly to combat child abduction around the world—especially that of girls." The focal point of his dissertation research concentrated on state-of-the-art improvements to public emergency notifications. "I focused on developing novel approaches for compressing static images of criminals or missing children based on the number of vehicles in proximity to the roadside unit without affecting other key vehicular safety messages and aimed to disseminate these images in public emergency notifications using emerging



the interdisciplinary nature of his work and showcases the relevance of interdisciplinary engineering as a burgeoning field of study.”

Mfon agrees and explained how choosing advisors from diverse areas of expertise exposed him to different perspectives and methodologies. “It instilled in me a holistic approach to problem-solving and a commitment to innovation and collaboration. Their mentorship helped refine my academic skills and navigate various challenges effectively. Furthermore, it has enabled me to transcend disciplinary bias and effectively engage with other disciplines to incorporate their perspectives into problem-solving processes.”

vehicular ad-hoc networks, with image resolution adjusted according to the number of vehicles.” This research not only demonstrates Mfon’s technical prowess but creates significant implications for enhancing emergency communication and public safety on roadways, particularly in combating crimes like child abduction.

Dr. Billy Kihei, Mfon’s dissertation chair, identified several qualities and strengths in Mfon that contributed to his success in the Ph.D. program. “Mfon is a lifelong learner. He entered the program having already completed several MS degrees, taught college-level courses, and had prior work experience in broadcast technologies; all of which he adapted well to a topic relevant to my research lab thrusts.” He added, “When Mfon brought his thesis idea to my office, I immediately knew he had something that was new and relevant to the practice.”

Mfon’s research outcomes have made an impact and garnered significant interest both locally and internationally. “He is already gaining a lot of interest in his birth country of Nigeria to start pushing interdisciplinary engineering as a legitimate field of study,” Dr. Kihei enthusiastically shared. “The diversity of his committee members—from Kennesaw State, the University of Georgia, and Argonne National Laboratory—helps other programs reflect on

Looking ahead, Mfon’s future career goals encompass innovative research and leadership roles in academia or industry. By leveraging his Ph.D. experience, he aims to apply interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to address pressing engineering challenges and contribute meaningfully to societal advancement. Mfon’s journey as the first graduate of KSU’s Interdisciplinary Engineering program serves as a beacon of inspiration for future students, faculty, and staff. His message of seizing opportunities, embracing challenges, and striving for excellence resonates deeply within the academic community, reinforcing the program’s commitment to fostering visionary scholars who pioneer transformative solutions in engineering and technology.



**We salute and congratulate Mfon as well as Mahdiyeh Soltaninejad and Alan Kazemian for being the first doctoral students to graduate with their Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Engineering from KSU. Their dedication and hard work have set a high standard, and we look forward to seeing the incredible contributions they will make in their fields!**



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