A Georgia State scientist and his protégé are part of a team that puts pre-programmed tablets into the hands of children in remote international villages and in the rural South. Amazingly, the outcomes are the same.

With little or no instruction, they're teaching themselves to read.

EDUCATORS TURN THE TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM MODEL ON ITS END

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28 HEAD OF THE CLASS
In this age of innovation, Georgia State educators are turning the traditional classroom model on its end.

“It’s highly collaborative here and with that collaboration comes an attitude of helpfulness, which is really great.”
—Mark DiCristina (MBA, ’13) MailChimp marketing director
The value and benefit of experiential learning, including co-ops, internships and study abroad opportunities, cannot be overstated.

In the university’s strategic plan, adopted in 2011, we promised increased learning opportunities for our students, inside and outside the classroom. We’ve made major progress toward this goal.

The value and benefit of experiential learning, including co-ops, internships and study abroad opportunities, cannot be overstated. I hear time and again from students and graduates that these kinds of experiences, coupled with the outstanding education they’re receiving in the classroom, have truly prepared them for the world outside of Georgia State.

Georgia State’s cooperative education program began in January 2014 with students from the College of Arts and Sciences and the J. Mack Robinson College of Business. It provides students with practical experience at companies like UPS, AutoTrader and the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations. More students started co-ops this summer and will finish in December. Over the next year, we will be expanding the co-op program into new majors. We are starting small to ensure success and over the next few years we envision many majors included in the program.

In addition, more Georgia State students than ever are studying abroad, and we have strengthened partnerships at universities around the world. We are funding more study abroad scholarships so students from all backgrounds can access the transformative experience of traveling and learning in another country.

At a university where nearly 60 percent of incoming freshmen are Pell-eligible, it’s even more critical we remove the financial barriers that could stop them from exploring an international experience.

We’re committed to finding new ways to teach and connect our students to the world beyond our campus. Whether through technology, international travel or job training, we’re offering students the kinds of signature experiences that will ready them for the global workforce.

Sincerely,

Mark P. Becker
President

I had the pleasure last month of cutting the ribbon for the opening of Georgia State’s newest interactive space on campus. We call it CURVE (Collaborative University Research and Visualization Environment) and it’s a place where technology and classroom teaching intersect in amazing new ways. A dozen 55-inch displays wrap around the room, allowing professors and students to view maps and images in minute detail. An 84-inch touch screen uses Ultra High Definition technology, with a resolution four times what you’re used to seeing on your high-definition television at home.

The technology is cool, no doubt, but it’s how it is applied that is truly transformative. With it, professors are taking students on big-screen adventures to Mexico’s Yucatan peninsula to scout Mayan ruins. They’re mapping systems in the human body, showing molecules and cells in new and different ways.

It’s yet another example of how Georgia State is taking teaching beyond the traditional classroom and how professors are moving away from being the “sage on the stage” to the “guide on the side.”
ACADEMIC APPRECIATION
I especially enjoyed the current issue of the magazine. Being an adjunct professor at the University of West Florida, the article on Dr. Brattain surely got my attention! Learning more about Coach Jags, the GSU-62 program and seeing that glimpse of the new Law School building on the Inside Insight page was so enjoyable. Thanks for a great issue. John D. Bloodworth (J.D. ‘86)

TIME WELL SPENT
When I started my education, Georgia State was the Atlanta Division, University of Georgia. When I graduated in 1959, it was Georgia State College. In 1953, after the Army, I went to work at the Clark Thread Co. in Clarksdale, Ga. After a few months, I decided I needed an education to get ahead. I determined that the Atlanta Division was the place to go. And so it was Monday, Wednesday and Friday for six years at night after work. During that time, I was on the first Georgia State tennis team. Although I loved my job at Clark, I left for Allstate Insurance. Because I had a degree and supervisory experience I was hired as a supervisor there. I did well at Allstate for 26 years. Thanks, Georgia State. Raymond Meadows (B.B.A. ’59)

WEB(OUTTA/SITE!
Not only does the magazine look great, the magazine webpage layout looks fantastic. Kudos to your design team or agency. Tiffany J. Cody (B.A. ’08), via LinkedIn

Editor’s note: Thanks Tiffany. Enablus, an Atlanta-based creative technology firm, built the framework for magazine.gsu.edu, and our internal team is responsible for making each issue’s content look great on the web.
MILITARY AID
Veterans on campus will be helped by new legal clinic

Georgia State’s Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC), representatives of the State Bar of Georgia’s Military and Veterans Law Section and the College of Law will start a new legal clinic this month for more than 800 veterans enrolled at the university.

Professor of Law Roy Sobelson, associate dean for academic affairs for the college, will provide faculty leadership and oversight for the Georgia State Law Volunteer Clinic for Veterans.

“The new clinic for university veterans will allow law students to translate what they have learned in classes to real application in a setting where they are carefully supervised by experienced lawyers,” Sobelson said. “In addition, this is a vehicle by which we can inculcate in our students a spirit of public service.”

Law students will assist in conducting initial interviews and counseling with the veterans in the new clinic. Students also will work with experienced volunteer lawyers who will serve as mentors while helping to address and resolve legal issues.

Students will assist with a wide range of legal matters from disability and pension claims to the more typical civil or criminal matters that can face anyone. Students will also get experience in such areas as drafting a will or handling a divorce or property dispute.

UP AND COMING U
University lauded for innovative approach to student success and graduation rates

Georgia State has again been recognized as one of the most innovative and rapidly improving institutions in

PHASE TWO
THE UNIVERSITY BROKE GROUND IN OCTOBER ON A NINE-STORY BUILDING IN ITS GROWING DOWNTOWN SCIENCE PARK.

ROOM FOR A SCIENCE BOOM: Space is at a premium at Georgia State, and the university is building more room to handle the increasing research expansion. Construction on the Science Park II is underway next door to the Parker H. Petit Science Center.

CUSTOM BUILT: The $25 million building will provide five floors to house Georgia State’s growing translational biomedical research and investigations into infectious diseases. Science Park II will be built to accommodate researchers’ specific needs. The first scientists and their staffs are expected to move in by late 2015 or early 2016.

ADVANCING RESEARCH: In 2010, Georgia State opened a science teaching lab named after Parker “Pete” Petit (MBA ’73), former chief executive office (CEO) of Matria Healthcare Inc. Petit is now CEO of MiMedx Group, an orthopedics implant company.
PLAYING FOR PEACE

Grad student Ben Spears breaks down barriers with Ultimate Frisbee

BY MARCIA JONES CROSS
PHOTOS BY BEN ROLLINS
Ben Spears spent the first half of the year in one of the most fought-over and unstable regions on Earth playing a relatively obscure sport with kids.

Spears is a leadership development coach with Ultimate Peace, a nonprofit organization that connects youth in areas divided by conflict through the sport of Ultimate Frisbee. In the West Bank of Israel, he coached more than 500 teenagers — Palestinians and Israelis who would otherwise never meet because of the decades-long strife there. They were required to play together on teams.

“The spirit of the game is that every player has to negotiate with each other and be his or her own referee,” said Spears, who will receive his M.P.A. degree from the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies this December. “You can’t score by yourself. You have to rely on teamwork. It’s about integrity and mutual respect.”

Spears is a recipient of the Ultimate Peace Fellowship, which supports a full-time position that works to strengthen the organization’s year-round program by coaching in the Middle East.

That concept of “ultimate peace” was completely shattered in June.

Spears and his colleagues were preparing for a one-week camp on the campus of the Kfar Silver Boarding School in Ashkelon, Israel when rockets from Gaza landed in the area.

“Our main worry was getting permission for Palestinian players to cross the border and to stay at the camp,” Spears said. “Our second worry was what’s happening in the air.”

The rocket fire began the night before they started training for the camp, Spears remembered.

“Several coaches and I were sitting at a dining table out on a patio. The World Cup is on TV, there’s food on the table and all of sudden we see a rocket headed from left to right in the air,” Spears said. “And the sirens go off. Because we were close to Gaza, the sirens actually couldn’t go off far in advance. We rushed inside and took a few minutes. Everybody took their breath and took stock of what happened.”

The camp eventually occurred, he said, but the Palestinian players never received permission to cross the border.

Undaunted, Spears is heading back to the region with Ultimate Peace after graduation. He says he’s known for more than 10 years that international nonprofit work is his calling.

“My parents instilled in me a sense of doing my part,” says Spears. “I feel like we all have a responsibility to each other.”
the nation, according to the 2015 “America’s Best Colleges” edition of U.S. News and World Report magazine.

The publication ranked Georgia State 6th in the country among the top “up and coming” universities, a list of schools nominated by college and university leaders. The list includes institutions that have made the “most promising and innovative changes in the areas of academics, faculty, student life, campus or facilities,” according to the magazine. In 2014, Georgia State tied for 14th place in the same category.

“Georgia State’s ground-breaking initiatives for increasing graduation rates and its strategic focus on student success have made it a national model,” said Tim Renick, vice provost and vice president for enrollment management and student success. “We have had leaders from more than 80 universities from around the country visit Georgia State in the past year to see first-hand how we are helping students earn their degrees.”

FALL’S COUNT
Georgia State has largest, most diverse enrollment ever

For the ninth consecutive year, Georgia State has set a record for its largest enrollment, growing in size, diversity and quality. At 33,444, the freshman class has grown by 8 percent since last year, with a record high school grade-point average of 3.4. Georgia State’s total enrollment stands at a record 32,544. Record numbers of Latino and African-American students enrolled in the freshman class. African-American freshman enrollment increased by 10 percent over the previous year from 1,226 to 1,344. Hispanic first-year student enrollment increased by 7 percent from 362 to 389.

INNOVATION ALLIANCE
Georgia State is leading a group of major universities raising student success

Georgia State President Mark Becker took center stage in Washington, D.C. in September, publicly announcing the formation of an 11-university alliance committed to increasing the number of low-income students who start and graduate from college.

Becker is a vice-chairman of the University Innovation Alliance, which has already raised $5.7 million to study and share best practices. The 11 public research universities will match the funding, and the collaborative effort earned major national media attention.

Georgia State’s success using predictive analytics and its proactive advising interventions will be one of the first projects scaled. Students are now earning their degrees a full semester earlier at Georgia State, and if that approach worked similarly across all 11 universities in the group, it would prevent 19,000 students from dropping out and save graduates $200 million in tuition and fees.

192,785
Degrees conferred by Georgia State since its founding in 1913.

1.5
Billion dollars.
Georgia State’s economic impact on the South every year.

2013 for NIH’s 2014 awards are reflecting more growth for Georgia State as the university continues to expand its research efforts.

“Our efforts are paying off, and it’s exciting to be listed among the top universities in the nation that have increased their research funding,” said James Weyhenmeyer, vice president for research and economic development. “This accomplishment is particularly significant as available research dollars at many organizations nationwide have declined in recent years.”

LOOKING INTO THE SUN
Professor predicts solar storms more than a decade in advance

According to a 2008 National Academy of Sciences’ report, a major space weather event such as a “severe geomagnetic storm” could knock out the power grid of the United States, costing an estimated $1 to $2 trillion during the first year alone, with a recovery time of four to 10 years.

Petrus Martens, a professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy, has received a three-year, $1.2 million NASA Grand Challenge grant to develop a system to predict solar cycles and determine the long-term frequency of major solar storms.

“We think we can forecast the cycle about 11 years ahead,” Martens said. “We will use the latest data both from ground-based observatories and spacecraft because that data sets the conditions for the future. We will look at previous cycles for which we have data already, feed our programs with that and see what results come out. If we can do a couple of previous cycles correctly, we think we can confidently predict the future.”

The sun goes through an 11-year solar cycle, which has periods of increasing and decreasing magnetic activity. Sunspots occur most frequently during the peak of the cycle and result in increased magnetic activity, solar flares and coronal mass ejections, which can be hazardous to Earth.
Being able to predict solar cycles years ahead of time could allow governments and businesses to take preemptive measures to protect the power grid and give airlines adequate time to reroute flights near the poles.

UNDERGROUND SOUND
Researcher creates real-time seismic imaging system using ambient noise

Computer Science Professor WenZhan Song has developed a way to turn background noise into an image of what’s beneath our feet.

Song, a professor in the Department of Computer Science, is working with a four-year, $1.2 million grant from the National Science Foundation to use an imaging system to study and monitor the sustainability of the subsurface, or area below the surface, and potential hazards of geological structures.

Song and his collaborators will image the subsurface of geysers in Yellowstone National Park using the technology. “At Yellowstone, for instance, people visit there and cars drive by. [This activity can] generate signals that penetrate through the ground,” he said. “We essentially use that type of information to tap into a very weak signal to infer the image of underground. This is very frontier technology.”

Real-time ambient noise seismic imaging technology could also inform homeowners if the subsurface below their home, which can change over time, is stable or will sink beneath them. In addition, it could be used for real-time monitoring and developing early warning systems for natural hazards, such as volcanoes, by determining how close magma is to the surface.

THE FORCE IS STRONG WITH THIS ONE
GRAD STUDENT/LAWYER/TEACHER BRANDY ROATSEY IS THE JEDI OF STAR WARS PROGRAMMING AT DRAGON CON

Can this be true? You’re an attorney, a teacher and working on dual master’s degrees?
I was a public defender here in Fulton County for about three and a half years in the juvenile division and then the trial division, which really changed how I see the world. I wanted to try to “save the children,” so I taught Law and Justice at Centennial High School in Roswell, Ga. Currently, I’m pursuing my MBA and Master’s of Health Administration. When people ask me what I want to do, really, the only answer I have is “everything.”

What exactly does the producer of Dragon Con’s Star Wars programming do?
My team and I plan year-round to coordinate the programming and events relevant to Star Wars fans for Dragon Con, the world’s largest pop-culture convention held every Labor Day weekend here in Atlanta. That includes massive parties, meaningful and thought-provoking discussion panels, costume and trivia contests and even a foam Lightsaber School for kids.

How did you get into this, and how long have you been doing it?
I just completed my sixth Dragon Con. It’s a labor of love, but I wouldn’t trade it. I feel even luckier now that we have new shows and movies coming out!

What are some of your favorite memories from Dragon Con?
How many people can say they got Carrie Fisher a Coke Zero or got to hang out with Billy Dee Williams? A favorite will always belong to TV’s original Batman, Adam West. He was the most charismatic gentleman I’ve ever had the pleasure of meeting. Even if he hadn’t have sung, “Brandy, You’re a Fine Girl” to me, I’d probably still have been swooning over him.

Read more at magazine.gsu.edu
Five nights a week on New York Public Radio's WQXR 105.9 FM, Terrance McKnight (M.Mu. '95) takes over the airwaves to guide listeners through the world of classical music.

McKnight came to Georgia State in 1992 to study piano pedagogy but a hand injury forced him to step away from the bench. It was then that his career began to take shape. “I experimented with what I’m doing now at Georgia State,” McKnight says. “When I couldn’t play, I was listening to a lot of classical music on the radio. ... I would always think, man, I would have told this story about the music.”

He began to make his mark at Georgia Public Broadcasting where he initiated the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra broadcasts to the entire state and introduced “Studio GPB,” a program created to highlight the diversity of music happening in Georgia through recordings, interviews and live studio sessions with local and visiting artists.

New York Public Radio came knocking in 2008 and recruited him away to be an evening host, first with WNYC then with WQXR. Until this summer, he also hosted “All Ears with Terrance McKnight,” a weekly show about musical discovery.

McKnight says he calls on his background when he is in the booth. “Georgia State gave me a very open-arms approach to what great music is and how to present it to people,” McKnight says of his radio-hosting philosophy. “It’s teaching; it absolutely is.”
Health (NIH). The grant will fund opportunities to teach genetics literacy in informal venues across the state.

Since 1999, the program has taught more than 250,000 students in Georgia’s schools. Its primary goal: to make science exciting.

“You don’t have to be a nerd to be a scientist,” said Professor of Biology Barbara Baumstark, the program founder and director. “Science can be cool, and we present that by using graduate and undergraduate students.”

Baumstark believes the program’s best advertisement is the Bio-Bus Fellows. With the help of these university students, the program has been able to deliver fun, interactive labs and lectures to K-12 students for 15 years.

Baumstark said they plan to use the award to expand the program and add new sessions, such as “DNA is for Families,” a teaching module that focuses on genetic traits and features family-inspired learning activities.

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**THANKSGIVING TRADITION**

Marching Band selected for Macy’s Day Parade

The Georgia State Marching Band will join the Rockettes, Snoopy, Tom Turkey and Santa Claus Nov. 27 during the world famous Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. The band will perform before more than 3.5 million live spectators and 50 million at-home viewers.

The Marching Band was selected to be one of 10 marching ensembles in the annual parade, beating out more than 175 applicants nationwide. Pretty impressive considering the band is a mere four years old.

“The selection committee is amazed at the incredible performance quality the Georgia State University Marching Band has achieved in only a short few years of existence,” said Wesley Whatley, creative director for the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. “We are thrilled to introduce this exciting new band to the Macy’s Parade audience.”

For Chester Phillips, director of athletic bands, the turkey day trip to New York is a childhood dream come true.

“My family has maintained a tradition of watching the parade each Thanksgiving morning, and now our band will be a part of the magic. Simply amazing!” he said.

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**COUNTRY RISK ANALYSIS** has been a topic of investigation for decades, often focused on forecasting the risks to business profits. While there have been improvements in the analysis, many practitioners continue to incorporate limited conceptualizations of risk and a relatively small number of variables.

The Robinson Country Risk Index is a project directed by Chris Brown, a lecturer of political science and vice president for research and analysis at the World Affairs Council of Atlanta, and developed through a unique partnership between the Robinson College of Business and the council. It incorporates four broad dimensions — governance, economics, operations and society. The tool includes some 275 variables, 126 countries and 10 years of data. Visit magazine.gsu.edu to see the rankings.

**BIG DATA**

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**ATHLETICS**

**PANTHERS WORLDWIDE**

Nearly 15 percent of Georgia State student-athletes are international

There are no boundaries when it comes to recruiting, especially when you call the international city of Atlanta your home. Georgia State coaches scour the world for the top players and this semester have enrolled 41 international student-athletes.

They come from 22 countries and are playing across 10 Panther sports. The farthest reach? Madagascar in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Africa, more than 9,300 miles from Atlanta. That’s home for women’s tennis newcomer Niriantsa Rasolomalala. The most from one country? Seven from Germany.

**SEASON’S LEADERS**

Georgia State’s fall teams post impressive stats

Panther squads got off to a strong start to the 2014 fall sports season with several ranking among the national leaders. Men’s golf opened the campaign with a second-place finish in a tough field and earned the No. 10 spot in the first national
A Mission’s Statement
Georgia State’s Head Basketball Coach Ron Hunter took his team to Costa Rica to distribute shoes with the charity Samaritan’s Feet. They returned changed men. Visit magazine.gsu.edu to read about the trip.

THE BUZZ UP ABOVE
WELCH SCHOOL STUDENTS CREATE MURAL CELEBRATING DOWNTOWN ROOFTOP BEE GARDEN

What’s the buzz downtown these days? The Hyatt Regency Atlanta recently unveiled a new landmark for downtown Atlanta, one pioneered by talented Georgia State students. This landmark, an 18-foot rooftop mural, celebrates the hotel’s innovative Polaris Bee Garden.

The bee garden is a large rooftop space 25 stories above Peachtree Street. Visible from Polaris, the newly opened rotating restaurant and lounge, the mural represents the 60,000 honeybees in the rooftop garden. It is the result of a yearlong collaboration between the hotel and students in Assistant Professor of Graphic Design Jeff Boortz’s class.

“We strive to offer our students signature experiences,” Boortz said. “One of our first projects was to create this mural. Now, Atlanta has a great mural, and our students are more prepared to thrive in their chosen careers. The heartwarming story behind the rescued bees in their hives made this project a great fit.”

The bees depicted in the mural came to the hotel in 2013 through the Metro Atlanta Beekeepers Association after being rescued from a truck accident. The bees produced their first fresh honey in August and soon, “Blue Dome Honey” will be integrated into Polaris dishes and beverages as well as made available to guests in the gift shop.

Pam Barba (B.F.A. ’14) was grateful to be a part of what she considered the best project of her young, creative career.

“Creating this mural was a great experience,” she said. “As the producer in this group, I got the experience leading a creative team. It was a unique opportunity.”

—Ashton Brasher (B.A. ’14)

Hunter took his team to Costa Rica to distribute shoes with the charity Samaritan’s Feet. They returned changed men. Visit magazine.gsu.edu to read about the trip.

HOSPITALITY GONE GLOBAL
Kaye Chon (B.S. ’84) is an international leader in academia and the hotel industry

Just a couple blocks from Victoria Harbour, Hotel ICON is one of the top places to stay in Hong Kong. It’s won numerous awards for its luxury accommodations and its restaurants, and its lobby features one of the largest vertical gardens in the world.

Kaye Chon is a regular guest at the hotel, but not as a tourist. He’s checking up on his students. Hotel ICON is an extension of Hong Kong Polytechnic University’s School of Hotel and Tourism Management, of which Chon is the dean. And on any given day, 15 percent of ICON’s workforce is his students running a luxury hotel in one of the world’s busiest cities.

Chon has won numerous awards for teaching and innovation in the field of tourism and hospitality. They include a 2003 award from Georgia State’s Cecil B. Day School of Hospitality Administration recognizing him as the most outstanding alumnus in the school’s first 30 years.

Being more than 8,000 miles away, though, hasn’t caused...
During World War II when Hideko Kato was 13 years old, U.S. forces firebombed her home during an air raid of Tokyo. Just a few years later, during the U.S. occupation of Japan, she found herself working for U.S. Gen. Douglas McArthur in his headquarters as a translator and English stenographer.

“We were all so fascinated by him. He really was always smoking that pipe,” she remembers.

Her understanding of the English language and work ethic impressed Atlantan Floyd Cossitt, who led the Natural Resources Division at the occupation headquarters. In 1957, his family welcomed Kato to Atlanta where she lived with the Cossitts and studied at Georgia State, then the Georgia State College of Business Administration.

In August, she visited Georgia State for the first time in 55 years.

“My memories of being here were of ‘Gone With the Wind,’” she says, laughing. “The university is very different now!”

These days, the university is an international campus with students from more than 150 countries.

Her experience at Georgia State served her well. She went on enjoy a successful career as an English instructor and corporate trainer.

Today, now 87, she continues to teach the beauty of Japanese culture worldwide and “the Way of Tea,” the Japanese tea ceremony.

“If everyone could understand the Way of Tea there would be no more war,” she says.
Chris Appleton (B.A. ’09) leads the arts organization WonderRoot and is a grassroots champion of creativity in Atlanta.

Today, WonderRoot’s physical space is a modest, yellow clapboard house about two miles east down Memorial Drive from campus. Inside, however, is an epicenter of creativity, a place for Atlanta artists of all walks to use technology, studio equipment and space to make art.

By coordinating arts programs and providing production facilities, such as a recording studio, darkroom, ceramics studio and a digital media lab, WonderRoot empowers artists to engage the community through arts-based service work, said Chris Appleton, executive director and co-founder.

Founded in 2004 with his high-school friends Alex West and Witt Wisebram, WonderRoot’s fundamental mission, Appleton says, is to use the arts to build a better Atlanta.

“WonderRoot’s mission of uniting artists and community to inspire positive social change rings as true today as it did when the organization was founded 10 years ago,” Appleton said. “Atlanta is becoming known as a city that supports artists who are engaged with the communities around them.”

The irony of today’s globally connected culture is that keeping up with a rapidly changing tourism industry has left Chon less time for his own personal adventures.

“I am positive that I will exceed my lifetime goal of traveling to 100 countries very soon. The problem is that I don’t have time to travel,” Chon said. “To be more exact, I travel frequently, but usually to the same places, for business. And I don’t have the time to travel for leisure so I can add more countries to my list.”

ADVANCING THE ARTS

“This new partnership between our two universities provides experiential opportunities I hope will inspire Georgia State students to follow Kaye’s path of becoming a global leader in hospitality and tourism,” Becker said.

The 2014 Distinguished Alumni Award winners are Eva Galambos, (Ph.D. ’69), Sue Henderson (B.S. ’75, M. Ed. ’78), Eric Joiner (B.B.A. ’66, MBA ’69) and Iqbal Paroo (B.B.A. ’72, M.H.A. ’75). Visit magazine.gsu.edu to meet the award winners.
A Georgia State scientist and his protégé are part of a team that puts pre-programmed tablets into the hands of children in remote international villages and in the rural South.Amazingly, the outcomes are the same.

With little or no instruction, they’re teaching themselves to read.
is a remote patch of southwestern Georgia bottomland pinned against the Chattahoochee River at the Alabama border. More than half of the county’s 11,000 residents are scattered across the countryside, many on farms — peanut and cotton, mostly. Cell phone reception is spotty, and those who can afford Internet access get barely enough bandwidth to check their email account, if they have one.

Blakely, population 5,000, is the county seat, centered on a domed and columned courthouse built in 1904 in the middle of the town square. It is the home of the county’s lone school district — 2,200 students, nearly 70 percent of whom qualify for free or reduced-cost lunch. The city also hosts the county’s sole library, though it is not really a part of most citizens’ daily lives. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 22 percent of residents over the age of 16 lack basic literacy skills. One survey found 30 percent of households with young kids reported owning fewer than four children’s books. Some had none at all.

Based on some of these factors alone — higher levels of poverty, illiteracy and limitations in technological access — one might think this rural corner of Georgia had too many educational challenges. Georgia State Regents’ Professor of Psychology Robin Morris thought it was perfect.

Morris is a founding member of the Global Literacy Project, a partnership among Georgia State, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Tufts University built around the idea of helping at-risk children learn basic language and literacy skills by connecting them with technology. The plan, simply put, was to load a tablet with interactive reading and language-rich software and hand it to a child in undeveloped Africa and India where there are no schools or teachers. The pure curiosity of youth, the researchers theorized, would lead the kids to figure out the reading-related games and puzzles on their own and, thus, they would essentially teach themselves to read.

That was the theory, at least. Before they could secure the money and resources to start the initiative on a global scale, reaching 170 million illiterate children in some of the poorest parts of the world, the Global Literacy Project had to see if the tablet would actually work. And what better, more accessible testing grounds than with at-risk children in the American South?

In late fall 2012, Morris and his team drove three-and-a-half hours down from Atlanta, set six Motorola Xoom tablets on a table in front of a pre-kindergarten class of 4- and 5-year-olds, and stepped back without saying a word. Many of kids had never seen such devices before. They approached with caution and handled the tablets with awe-inspired care. Without receiving a breath of instruction, they soon figured out how to turn on the display and quickly started scrolling through the applications and playing the reading and language games. A promising start.

But were the children actually learning?

Each university in the collaborative assumed a different role in the project. Tufts curated the teaching software on the tablets. MIT handled the technology implementation and core tablet platform development. Georgia State was in charge of methodology and some of the analytics.

To get the initiative rolling, the team knew they didn’t have a year or two to wait and survey participants’ improvements on some standardized test, and besides, the children in Africa and India didn’t have any such formalized exam. Their answer was to program each tablet to upload its usage data — which applications were used, for how long and how much progress was made — to a central website. With each tablet assigned to a group of children, or at times to an individual student (numbered, so as not to identify the child), researchers could follow an entire group’s, or an individual child’s development, in Africa or Asia remotely from a laptop in Atlanta or Boston.

Morris is an expert in reading research and has worked with many complex datasets. But he was less equipped to administer that sort of technology or the amount of data being generated daily.

“I needed someone who knows a lot more about the hardware platform, the mainframe and large databases,” says Morris. “But I also needed someone who could get interested in the project itself.”
Gibbs was asked to put his fingerprint on a project that might not only teach at-risk children without options how to read, but change the way the world looks at learning.

“Nobody had ever done this before,” Gibbs says.
Enter David Gibbs, a then 24-year-old undergrad in the Computer Science Department. He had his own start-up information technology (IT) business that was paying a chunk of his tuition. He clearly had the technical chops. But behind the impressive resume was a young man who had been just the kind of kid the collaborative was hoping to reach.

Gibbs’ father had worked in IT with Coca-Cola, but the elder Gibbs didn’t force his day job on his son. He didn’t have to. Gibbs was always curious, always taking apart toys and electronics to figure out how they worked (a habit that especially irked his younger brothers when they came home to find their Sega Genesis in pieces). As he got older, Gibbs was always tearing into cars and computers and putting them back together, making small improvements and modifications along the way. Now in college, Morris asked Gibbs to put his fingerprint on a project that might not only teach at-risk children without options how to read, but change the way the world looks at learning. He was in.

“Nobody had ever done this before,” Gibbs says.

There were plenty of unique challenges awaiting Gibbs at the collaborative.

Nine months before the kids in Early County were powering on their new educational toys, 40 tablets had been dropped off for a pilot project in two remote villages in Ethiopia. Again, there were no schools, no teachers. And yet, just like their Early County counterparts more than 10,000 miles away, it took the children mere minutes to turn on the machines. There was also no power grid, so computer engineers from a (relatively) local university had to come in and show the villagers how to daily recharge the tablets on special solar-power stations. And with no Internet access in the village, the engineers returned regularly to collect memory cards so the data could be uploaded to the network.

There were other technical issues that were not bound by geography or socio-economics. First and foremost was security. After all, tablets are essentially technological toys, and the collaborative needed to be sure the students, their older siblings and parents were not just playing around. The team password-protected the machines, locking up access to browsers and the hardware settings, stripping the desktop of all icons not attached to the approved software. Still, a boy in Ethiopia hacked into one tablet and turned on the disabled camera. A five-year-old in Early County figured out how to bypass the login, a trick he quickly showed his classmates, negating all the specially designed data collection software.

“He came up to us and said ‘Watch what I can do!’” says Morris. “We lost a whole classroom of data, because the data wasn’t being collected.”

Another technological hurdle in the project has been standardizing the data across such diverse testing sites and types of tablets. Researchers and the local educational officials decided early that even the tablets going to Africa would teach English as opposed to any regional language or dialect in the early deployments, but more recently relevant apps in the local languages are starting to be developed and may be deployed.

Gibbs has worked tirelessly to hone a lineup of around 160 apps that will run on multiple tablet platforms, while he and colleagues constantly update those programs to better serve the students.

The number of plates Gibbs and the project’s associates are spinning at once is growing rapidly. Months after the introduction in Early County, Gibbs and Morris delivered 35 tablets to kindergarten classes in rural Roanoke, Ala. And in the two years since, the project has set up sites in Uganda, South Africa and the Pune district of India. Bangladesh is in the works. Right now, the collaborative has about 750 tablets in the hands of students across the globe. By the end of next
His protégé. "But he saw that there was a real impact here."

The city schools in Roanoke, Ala., population 6,563, have about 1,500 students and 68 percent receive free or reduced-cost lunch.

David Crouse, the school system's technology director, an educator for 40 years, says he believes technology is a "game changer" and can be used as an equalizer for disadvantaged students. He's sought out grants and partnerships to get technology into his classrooms.

Year Gibbs expects that number to be 10,000 to 12,000. He says the goal is to have reached 100 million illiterate children throughout the world by the end of this decade.

Gibbs's role in the project is expanding almost as rapidly. He's no longer just the computer wizard cooped up in a windowless climate-controlled server closet at Georgia State. Over the summer, he was in Cambridge, Mass., working alongside the head of the collaborative at MIT. The residency was a transfer of knowledge, a passing of the keys, for when Gibbs graduates this December and moves permanently to Boston where he'll become the technical director of a separate Global Literacy Project nonprofit spin-off in the private sector.

"He could go anywhere and be well compensated," says Morris of his protégé. "But he saw that there was a real impact here."

Closing the Digital Divide

The difficulty is discerning how large a role the tablet has in helping a child learn to read compared to other available instruction and a child's natural progress. One thing they do know is that the tablets are not, and will most likely never be, a replacement for good teaching when teachers are available. Unfortunately, in many places around the world, there aren't any. And in many places, even with good teachers, children don't have access at home to literature.

Hard data aside, the collaborative has made some unmistakable observations of progress. Mere weeks after receiving the first tablets, a number of Ethiopian children were able to say and write part, if not all, of the English alphabet. Some could read simple written words.

Michael Williams, technology director for the Early County schools, is convinced from what he's seen. His oldest daughter, Hayley, was one of the pre-kindergarten students who were exposed to those first tablets. He says she was immediately touching the screen of his laptop and the TV trying to work them with her finger. When it was Hayley's turn to bring the tablet home, she would crawl up in her father's lap and walk him through each word, to feed Baby D a certain number of bugs, and when the child drags enough bugs from the lily pad into the animal's mouth, the duck gobbles them up, even burping at one point, to the delight of the young reader. While she giggles, she is learning spelling, pronunciation, colors and counting.

At least that's the idea behind this particular app, called TinkRbook, developed by the MIT group on the project, along with the dozens of similar apps installed on the Global Literacy tablets. Whether this approach significantly aids child language development and literacy is still open to debate. The project is still compiling data as researchers put together their business proposal and grant applications for the new nonprofit.

One evening, Williams walked into his living room and found Hayley on the couch sitting beside her two-year-old sister, Bowien, with the tablet in their laps. Big sister was leading little sister through the apps, showing her how to make the baby duck burp, passing on what she had learned.

Tony Rehagen is a senior editor at Atlanta magazine.
His work has also appeared in Men's Health and has been anthologized in the book "Next Wave: America's New Generation of Great Literary Journalists."
It’s not monkey business at MailChimp. The digital marketing firm with the hip corporate culture is home to these successful Georgia State alumni.

By Doug Gillett  photography by Andrew Thomas Lee
about a mile and a half up Marietta Street from Georgia State’s campus, hang a left on Means Street into an industrial corridor of 19th century warehouses and you’ll find yourself at the offices of MailChimp. Inside, skateboard decks and graffiti decorate exposed brick walls, and dozens of plush primates dressed like a mail carrier — Freddie, the company mascot — are perched pell mell. You might not realize you’ve ended up at one of the fastest-growing tech companies in the country, but that’s exactly what MailChimp is.

It started in 2001 as an offshoot of Rocket Science Group, a Web design firm founded by entrepreneurs Ben Chestnut and Dan Kurzius. It soon became so popular they devoted themselves fully to MailChimp and the wide range of Web and mobile applications it’s built. Today, more than seven million people, representing everything from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies, use MailChimp to create electronic newsletters and marketing campaigns.

The company, whose tagline is “Love What You Do,” prides itself on its creative culture, employee empowerment and irreverent approach to making email marketing, well, not boring. It’s working: Last year, MailChimp sent more than 70 billion emails. That staggering number will increase this year. The company announced in June it has more than 10,000 new users signing up each day and is now sending more than 11 billion emails per month. In December, the company announced it’s moving to larger space in the redeveloped Ponce City Market, the former Sears distribution center just east of downtown.

Given the innovative environment and short distance between MailChimp and Georgia State, it’s no surprise more than a few Panthers have landed there. These alumni came from different starting points on Georgia State’s campus, however, and some aren’t the kind you’d expect to work for a tech company.

Says Mark Surber (B.A. ’05), a legal assistant who graduated from Georgia State with a degree in art history: “There is a trust that allows us to really be creative and pursue things that wouldn’t be allowed if we were told, ‘Here’s a list of things you have to get done, here’s the way it has to be done, your deadline is this.’ We can find our own way to an answer.”

Looking back, though, DiCristina says he “hit the jackpot” with MailChimp.

“The general atmosphere is very fast-paced, which is great,” he says. “It’s highly collaborative, there’s not a lot of friction around getting things done, and with the collaboration comes this attitude of helpfulness. I think everyone really has a mindset of doing what’s best for our customers and what’s best for everyone at MailChimp, not just for themselves.”

Bloom agrees. “I’ve never worked with such smart, talented people, and it’s great to be able to do that,” she says. Her one caveat? MailChimp has grown so fast since she joined in 2010 there are almost too many smart, talented people to keep track of.

“Up until about 150 employees, I knew everybody here,” she says. “Now I see somebody and I have to double-check that they’re an employee.”

THE EXECs

Jenny Bloom
Chief Financial Officer (MBA, ’94)
Mark DiCristina
Marketing Director (MBA, ’13)

OF ALL THE Georgia State alums working at MailChimp, Jenny Bloom and Mark DiCristina probably followed the most conventional route — MBA at the Robinson College of Business, management position at MailChimp. But that hardly means their route was a direct one. Nor was it an easy one for either of them.

“I think I took the maximum amount of time to finish [my MBA],” laughs Bloom, who took one class a quarter for four years and change. During that time she moved from an accounting position at Days Inn to one at Saab. She went on to work for a series of tech companies, including MP3radio.com, where she met the MailChimp founders before the “tech bubble” burst in 2000. Bloom started her own accounting practice after MP3radio shut down and Chestnut and Kurzius’ Rocket Science Group was one of her first clients.

DiCristina, likewise, describes his four-year pursuit of an MBA as “slow going,” though he, too, was working the entire time in addition to raising two small children. He came to MailChimp in 2009 after leaving Decatur-based Paste Magazine, which was struggling in the wake of falling ad revenues.

“I really needed a job,” he remembers. “We were pregnant with our second child at the time, so I was looking for anything I could find where I could tolerate coming to work every day. Initially I just thought, ‘This looks like it’s going to be OK for a while, and we’ll see how it goes.”

THE SOLDIER

Kiel Hughes
Delivery Engineer (B.S. ’13)

KIEL HUGHES DIDN’T have to worry about finding a job when the tech bubble burst. He had to worry about going to war. Just five months after enlisting in the Air Force, then 18-year-old Hughes watched on TV as United 175 hit the World Trade Center. A few months after that, his boots were on the ground in Afghanistan.

After a tour of duty in Afghanistan and two more in Iraq, readjusting to civilian life was a struggle.

“It was near impossible at first,” Hughes remembers. “I separated off of active duty in 2005, and I didn’t actually make the decision to go back to school until 2007 because I was having such a hard time dealing with it. In those two years I probably had about 10 different jobs, and I realized that really wasn’t the way to live my life.”

With some help from the GI Bill, Hughes enrolled in engineering classes at Georgia Perimeter College. He had problems with the lab sciences, but he excelled in his math classes, and upon transferring to Georgia State in 2011, he found math professors who were “nothing short of amazing.” In May 2013 he earned a degree in mathematics and became the first member of his family to graduate from college. Just three weeks later MailChimp offered him a job.

As a delivery engineer, Hughes helps
Hughes is confident he's found his niche at MailChimp, so much so that if he could go back and tell his 18-year-old self where life was going to take him “it would probably be a complete surprise,” he says. “Honestly, when I was that age, I had no idea I would even go to school.”

THE Ph.D.
Laurissa Wolfram-Hvass
User Experience Design Researcher
(M.A.’10, Ph.D. ’14)

Laurissa Wolfram-Hvass’ original plan seemed tailor-made for MailChimp: Clayton State for her core undergrad classes, Georgia Tech for a degree in computer science. That plan didn’t last long.

“I didn’t like programming,” she says, “so I ended up switching from computer science to a discipline with a language that I thought I was a little bit better at—English.”

After earning her bachelor’s degree at Clayton, Wolfram-Hvass came to Georgia State for her master’s and continued straight into her pursuit of a Ph.D. At the same time, she was doing a fair bit of technical writing, which spawned an interest in user experience and consumers’ interaction with technology.

“It was a good fit for me,” she says. “I left computer science and went to English, and then found my place at the intersection of the two.”

For her doctoral dissertation on rhetoric in the user-experience (or “UX”) design process, Wolfram-Hvass drew upon her Georgia State network to get connected with designers and researchers. One of them pointed her to MailChimp.

“The more I learned about the company, the more I thought, wow, they’re doing new things and this would be a really cool place to do my research,” she recalls. “So I told them, ‘I want to work with the UX team for six months, 32 hours a week. Can I come in, observe, listen, watch as you work and conduct interviews? In return, I’ll work for you. I’m a writer, I have a degree in English, I’ll do whatever you need me to do in exchange for being able to watch your team do what it does.’ And they said yes.”

So Wolfram-Hvass spent six months as “a researcher doing research about researchers conducting research,” and by the end of it, she had more than a dissertation. She had a job offer.

“I wasn’t in it for a job,” she says. “I didn’t really know where I would be or what I would end up doing after it was done, but they asked me at one point, ‘So with your dissertation finished, what do you plan to do? Would you consider staying?’”

Now, as a UX design researcher, she helps MailChimp’s designers and developers figure out how to make the system easier to use. She admits some people find it strange she landed at a tech company after switching from computer science to English, “but in reality, it couldn’t be a more perfect fit.”

THE ART STUDENTS
Alianor Chapman
Quality Assurance Lead (B.F.A. ’06)
Mark Surber
Legal Assistant (B.A. ’05)

If an English degree sounds like an odd way to get one’s foot in the door of a tech firm, an art degree might be even stranger. But Chapman and Surber say it’s not as weird as it sounds.

“One thing about people at MailChimp is that they have the ability to see the skill set, not just the résumé,” Chapman says. “They see the actual work that people are putting in, not just the degree they managed to achieve. With a lot of us who come from a nontraditional role, they’re looking for the kind of thinking skills that come from an art degree, the ability to reason through a lot of different stuff and the ability to take criticism.”

After earning her photography degree, Chapman’s first stop was at KEH, a used-camera dealer in Smyrna, Ga. She soon found she enjoyed working on the company’s website almost as much as she liked working with cameras. She began teaching herself some basic programming skills and by December 2009 she was moving up through the ranks of MailChimp’s tech-support department.

Surber originally had plans to pursue a photography degree before finding he liked the historical side of art better. His first job out of college was working in the slide library at Spelman College, doing research and helping to build a digital platform the professors there could access. As he kept tabs on jobs around Atlanta that involved similar responsibilities, he came across an opening in the compliance department at MailChimp.

“That position required a lot of reading, research, stuff like that,” Surber says. “So I applied for it, and because of how much work I’d done with research and writing in that regard, they said, ‘We think you’d be a really great fit,’ and gave me a position.”

Today Chapman is in quality assurance, while Surber researches and advises on potential legal issues with the content MailChimp’s users might be sending. And they don’t sound like they have many regrets.

“I didn’t know where my path was at first,” Surber says, “but I knew that the skills I had developed at Georgia State were going to give me tools that I could transfer anywhere. Because anywhere you go, you’re going to need to acquire really good writing and research skills, and being able to decipher what’s art, what’s fiction and what’s somewhere in between.”

Getting to solve people’s problems and “find order in chaos,” Chapman says, makes her job immensely satisfying. The people she works with do, too.

“It’s a great company to work for,” she says. “You feel valued as an individual contributor and as a contributor to a larger product. I’m lucky to be here.”
Head of the Class

In this age of innovation,
Georgia State educators are turning the traditional classroom model on its end

by H.M. Cauley  illustrations by Harry Campbell
After last year’s announcement of an ambitious plan to overhaul Georgia State’s campus with courtyards, gathering spaces and increased walkability, university planners and educators are now turning their attention to the classrooms. They’re looking beyond desks and overhead projectors to create spaces that will change not just where but how students learn.
It’s a change that’s long overdue, says Phil Ventimiglia, the university’s chief innovation officer, who took on the newly created role four months ago. “There are very few professions where I could take someone from 100 years ago and pop them in the same job today, and they’d feel completely comfortable,” he says. “But I could put Aristotle in a classroom in Kell Hall, and he could teach.”

The concept of the crowded lecture hall with a single instructor talking to hundreds of students before sending them off to read a textbook is fading. Today’s students look for ways to collaborate, get online and interact with the professor, and that’s a problem in a room that may not have any elbow room or enough — if any — charging stations.

“This is a classic new-product development problem,” Ventimiglia says. “What is the next-generation product of education going to look like? What format will they use? What tools will create that content? And we now have to enable a professor to use that device, figure out formats and help students focus their learning.”

Understanding new products is Ventimiglia’s forte. Before coming to Georgia State, he worked for Dell computers and NCR, where he took on ideas, developed them into concepts and introduced them into the marketplace.

“If I’m a builder. I’ve built products, businesses and organizations,” he says. “So many organizations have great ideas, but without disruptive innovation they just sit on the shelf. A lot of education is in the same place. It’s dominant design of a lecture hall with a professor standing in front of students has been around for hundreds of years and is now getting disrupted by things like MOOCs (massive open online courses).”

Across campus, a range of innovations, such as professors using Skype to enhance language skills, students writing and producing videos, and students and instructors blogging and tweeting, is disrupting the traditional classroom configuration. The challenge is figuring out which formats foster learning, then giving faculty members the tools and training to use them.

**PART OF THE CHALLENGE** is already being met at the Center for Instructional Innovation (CII) that offers an array of technological tools and experts to explain how to use them. A recent $2 million investment in CII is creating a collaborative space on the concourse of Library South where faculty can meet with instructional designers, create content and swap ideas in a supportive environment. When completed next fall, the center is expected to be one of the largest and most innovative of its kind in the state. But will it still be a safe space where faculty can admit they have no clue how to design a Prezi?

“We’re not about using technology just to use technology,” assures Julian Allen, CII co-director. “We’re about helping educators achieve their pedagogical goals. In some cases, that may be as easy as stripping out what you don’t use.”

**Camera Shutter**

A disruptive innovation is when a product or service takes root initially in simple applications at the bottom of a market and then relentlessly moves up market, eventually displacing established competitors. The term was coined by Clayton Christensen, the Kim B. Clark Professor of Business Administration at the Harvard Business School.

An example of a disruptive innovation is what happened to Kodak. “Kodak created the photography industry,” Ventimiglia says. “Kodak was disrupted, not once, but twice. First, it was disrupted by Polaroid and instant photography in the 1960s and ’70s. Polaroid disrupted the traditional film industry through instant photos and a better business model — no need to pay and wait for a studio to develop film into pictures. The knockout blow for all film-based photography, though, ultimately came from digital photography and the smart phone.”

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Digital Champions

Each year, the Center for Instructional Innovation awards $3,000 grants to full-time faculty members who are hybridizing or moving a class online. Those selected join a community focused on learning the techniques, practices, pedagogies and technologies needed to create a more digitized classroom. The champions also share their work with others across the university.

What does that work look like? Three recent Digital Champions share their stories.

GLADYS FRANCIS
Assistant Professor of French

It’s been a goal for me to connect my students with native French speakers around the globe. The advent of Skype made connectivity easier — and we have visuals!

Sometimes, when working with schools in Africa, there is no technology, and I’ve had to look for grants to get the technology to them. I often team my students with native-French speakers to work on projects. They brainstorm, write proposals and share information. Other times, we might use the technology for a special grammar lesson or to hear a guest speaker.

I worked with the CII to borrow iPads for my students to talk with their foreign partners, post tweets about class readings or to contact me — I hold my office hours via Skype. So, even if I’m at a conference, they can reach me.

It’s a new generation, and students are very tactile. But this goes beyond technology. That’s just one pathway for them to learn more than language.

ANNE LORIO
Assistant Professor of Physical Therapy

In one of my graduate neuro-rehabilitation classes, I moved some coursework online to keep the class momentum moving when I was at a conference. I recorded a lecture, put up a PowerPoint and gave students worksheets to go along with it. I use YouTube all the time to show physical therapy scenarios, but I wanted to learn more techniques that weren’t self-taught to make what I was doing better.

Soon after I received a Digital Champions grant, I began learning from other Champions about better ways to create online materials. They could tell me what worked and what didn’t. I also found I’d done it all wrong! I had recorded lectures that were an hour and a half in length, and I talk very fast and a lot. So students were doing a lot of stopping and rewinding. An hour’s lesson turned in four hours of work, and that wasn’t my intention at all. This group had some neat ideas I could use to improve. For me, that’s the most valuable component of the program.

I’m working toward hybridizing more courses with screen-captures from videos, 15-minute lectures and private Facebook pages. The Facebook idea was that we could share stories we came across related to treating patients with neurology diseases. I have several colleagues who have posted stories, and that connects students to people working in the real world. The students also post stories; even during the summer when they were off at clinic, they were still posting and sharing. None of it was tied to a grade, and they were okay with that.

I’d never be able to put all my lessons online, but hybridization allows me to cover lecture content outside the classroom so class time is reserved for discussion, critical thinking and hands-on activities.
Justin Lonsbury, CII’s manager of instructional design and training, aims to get instructors into the space not only to see it but to realize that “here, we do cool stuff” such as filming lectures, recording podcasts, putting courses online and playing around with the 3-D scanner. “We’re not just here for tech troubleshooting,” he says. “People can use our expertise.”

For all its cutting-edge gadgetry, the key component of CII’s approach is its focus on learning outcomes, says George Pullman, the center’s co-director and an associate professor of rhetoric in the English Department.

“We emphasize student learning assessment as well as the scholarship of teaching and learning,” he says. “It’s not how to teach better, but to see how our students learn. So rather than saying, ‘This person failed the test,’ we see how that can be interpreted as a sign of imperfect instructional practice. If you change the way you present information, you may get more people to understand it. So it’s very important to figure out the impact you’re having.”

Pullman says that with more students entering higher education and coming from varied socioeconomic backgrounds, we need more effective methods of teaching.

“We assumed that if you sat in front of someone and listened, you’d learn something. Most of us were educated that way,” he says.

By using targeted technology, he says, it can help progression, retention and student learning outcomes.

H.M. Cauley is an Atlanta-based author and writer whose work appears regularly in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and the Atlanta Business Chronicle. She is also a third-year Ph.D student and instructor in Georgia State’s English Department. She was once skeptical of transformative technology in the classroom, but is now on her way to becoming a Digital Champion at Georgia State.

The technology that improves learning objectives can take many forms, from a hybrid class in which students split course hours between online work and in-person meetings to something as simple as mixing assigned readings with TED talks (short, powerful recorded videos featuring experts discussing subjects in fields ranging from science to business to global issues).

It can be tossing out those tiny desks and adding tables on wheels that can be shifted for group work, or adding video equipment that students can use to record their presentations and immediately critique them. Many faculty members already employ some of these tools and teach in classrooms designed for maximum mobility and connectivity, but others, Ventimiglia admits, may be a bit more skeptical.

“I can usually get someone to accept these ideas intellectually, but the hard part is getting people to accept them in their hearts,” he says. For the unconvinced, he suggests they give augmentation a try.

“Technology offers a lot of opportunity to enhance learning outside the classroom, so instead of telling a professor to change the class, I’d suggest doing some virtual discussion — an online chat or office hours online. Things that don’t disrupt the classroom are easier to bite off.”

Experimenting with different modalities and bringing more technology into adapted classrooms will not signal the end of education, just the end of a delivery model that may have reached its sell-by date. It’s just like banking, Ventimiglia says.

“Ten years ago, pundits would have said there will never be another brick-and-mortar bank built again, but that didn’t happen,” he says. “Mobile banking extended the experience, and now we can transfer money online. Consumers are used to using that technology, and the bank branch is still here, but it’s changed. They brought the technology into the branch. It’s similar to what we face with the classroom.

“It’s very important we design spaces for the faculty that will be our future. Without the best environment to teach in, we won’t retain them. At the same time, we can work with our academic professionals to give them more skill sets to earn a living. The goal is to take what today is a Bermuda Triangle and turn it into a Golden Triangle.”

LINDA WILLIS
Instructor of Business Communication and Professional Development

When I started teaching this course back in 1998, it was an elite elective. Then it became a required course that students now take at the beginning of junior year. The material is largely based on feedback from employers, and addresses good writing and speaking skills. So it’s changed quite a bit.

I wanted a bigger room with enough space for all the stuff students bring. It was about making the classroom match what students need, and the old facilities didn’t work. Now I’m in a computer room set up in a U-shape, so everyone is on the front row.

This gives students more opportunities to practice professional speaking, and it turns an academic exercise into a practical skill they can use in their daily lives. At the same time, it allows me to teach to the highest standard.

Being a Digital Champion has also introduced me to faculty members across the university who share similar issues. They also have solutions. The workshops we’ve had bring a fresh perspective and can change the way we teach, and that’s important to me.
HIGH ABOVE HOMECOMING  Gilmer Street turns blue Oct. 16 as the Georgia State Marching Band assembles to lead the annual Homecoming Golf Cart parade through downtown Atlanta. Visit magazine.gsu.edu for more from Homecoming. See the band in action Nov. 27 when it performs in the world famous Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.
Georgia State is a wonderful place to be a mentor — not only for the students, but for a vital arts community here in Atlanta. This gift allowed me and my family to be part of that community.

Carroll Freeman knows the answer to the question “How do you get to Carnegie Hall?” firsthand — he’s sung on its stage, in addition to performing and stage-directing for operas around the world. Now, thanks to the gift that created the Valerie Adams Distinguished Professor in Opera Studies, he’s using his knowledge, experience and contagious enthusiasm to inspire Georgia State students. Not only that, he’s brought new energy to Atlanta’s opera community, further cementing the city — and Georgia State — as centers of artistic development.

THE GIFT THAT IGNITED my passion

“Georgia State is a wonderful place to be a mentor — not only for the students, but for a vital arts community here in Atlanta. This gift allowed me and my family to be part of that community.”
**WOMEN'S HOME SCHEDULE**

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<td>LIBERTY VS. PENN STATE</td>
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<td>JAN. 10</td>
<td>TROY* (DH)</td>
<td>12 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAN. 15</td>
<td>UT ARLINGTON* (DH)</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARCH 7</td>
<td>GEORGIA SOUTHERN* (DH)</td>
<td>12 P.M.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**MEN'S HOME SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TEAM</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOV. 24</td>
<td>THOMAS</td>
<td>7 P.M.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOV. 28</td>
<td>LIBERTY VS. PENN STATE</td>
<td>7 P.M.</td>
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<td>NOV. 28</td>
<td>SAMFORD</td>
<td>4 P.M.</td>
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<td>NOV. 30</td>
<td>CONSOLATION GAME</td>
<td>12:30 P.M.</td>
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<td>NOV. 30</td>
<td>CHAMPIONSHIP GAME</td>
<td>2:30 P.M.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEC. 3</td>
<td>KENNEBASKET STATE</td>
<td>7 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEC. 13</td>
<td>TENNESSEE TECH</td>
<td>2 P.M.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEC. 19</td>
<td>MASSACHUSETTS</td>
<td>5 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEC. 19</td>
<td>LA SALLE VS. OHIO</td>
<td>7 P.M.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEC. 20</td>
<td>MASSACHUSETTS VS. OHIO</td>
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<td>DEC. 20</td>
<td>LA SALLE</td>
<td>6 P.M.</td>
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<td>UL MONROE* (DH)</td>
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<td>JAN. 3</td>
<td>UALR* (DH)</td>
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<td>JAN. 5</td>
<td>TEXAS STATE* (DH)</td>
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*SUN BELT CONFERENCE GAME
(DH) INDICATES DOUBLEHEADER
ALL HOME GAMES PLAYED IN GSU SPORTS ARENA
DATES, TIMES AND OPPONENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

CALL 866-GA-STATE TO GET YOUR TICKETS TODAY!