



AUBURN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION | 2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

## A Message from the Dean

*The 2024-2025 academic year was one of historic accomplishments for Auburn University's College of Education.*

*From groundbreaking external funding to opening doors of opportunity with a new College of Education Building and Doctor of Physical Therapy program, we furthered the mission of our college and grew its reach, all while celebrating the college's 110th anniversary.*

*With this annual report, we highlight the year's accomplishments — including compelling initiatives and partnerships, student successes, significant philanthropic impact, and much more.*

*In our strong dedication to opening doors and improving lives, working to meet society's education and health challenges, we remain grateful to our donors, partners, alumni and friends who help make possible our mission of building a better future for all.*

*Thank you and War Eagle!*



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey T. Fairbrother".

**Jeffrey T. Fairbrother**  
Dean, College of Education  
Wayne T. Smith Distinguished Professor

# OPENING DOORS TO NEW SPACES //

## A Grand and Historic Opening

A century and a decade after its founding, Auburn University's College of Education began a new era on Aug. 12, formally opening its new home with a grand opening ceremony and ribbon-cutting.

Welcoming a crowd of supporters seated inside the new three-story building, located at the corner of Samford Avenue and Duncan Drive, College of Education Dean Jeffrey T. Fairbrother shared his gratitude to the hundreds in attendance and his excitement for the future.

*"I am thrilled to be with you today to celebrate this significant milestone in the history of our college and our university," he said. "Today, we officially mark the grand opening of the College of Education's new building — a vibrant hub of collaboration and innovation where we will be opening doors to opportunity for generations to come."*

Fairbrother thanked the many dignitaries in attendance and shared his gratitude to Auburn Board of Trustees member Wayne Smith, an esteemed alumnus of the College of Education, and his wife, Cheryl, for their lead gift that championed the project. Fairbrother said the long-awaited new home opened at a significant time as the college recognized its 110th anniversary.

## New Building, By the Numbers:

**Three** stories, **167,000**-square-feet of space

**33** learning spaces (classrooms, labs, seminar rooms)

**29** meeting and study spaces

**New Spaces** for student advising, Learning Resources Center and The EAGLES program

**Two** media production rooms for podcasting

**6,000**-square-foot Commons area



Read the full story  
Scan the QR Code





## NEW DPT LAB, SETTING THE GOLD STANDARD

### History in the Making: First Cohort of Auburn Physical Therapy Students Begin Classes

For nearly five years, the School of Kinesiology in Auburn University's College of Education has been working to develop a physical therapy program. The Doctor of Physical Therapy program was built from the ground up, including curriculum design, modifying spaces to function as classrooms and labs, hiring faculty, recruiting students, purchasing equipment and a lengthy accreditation process.

In June, 21 students began classes as the first cohort of physical therapy students. Representing 10 undergraduate institutions in four states, the inaugural group will carry the torch for the cohorts to come as the program aims to set the gold standard for physical therapy education.

*“Today is more than just the first day of classes — today is history in the making,”* said Harsimran Baweja, director of Physical Therapy. *“These students are pioneers. They are not just beginning their journey into one of the most impactful and rewarding professions in health care — they are helping build something lasting, something transformative and something uniquely Auburn.”*

The physical therapy program was developed out of a growing need for physical therapists across the country, and especially in Alabama, where rural health care needs are often unmet. The state of Alabama only has approximately 30 licensed, practicing physical therapists per 100,000 residents.

Auburn’s program will change that by graduating up to 38 physical therapists each year, starting in 2028.



## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION //

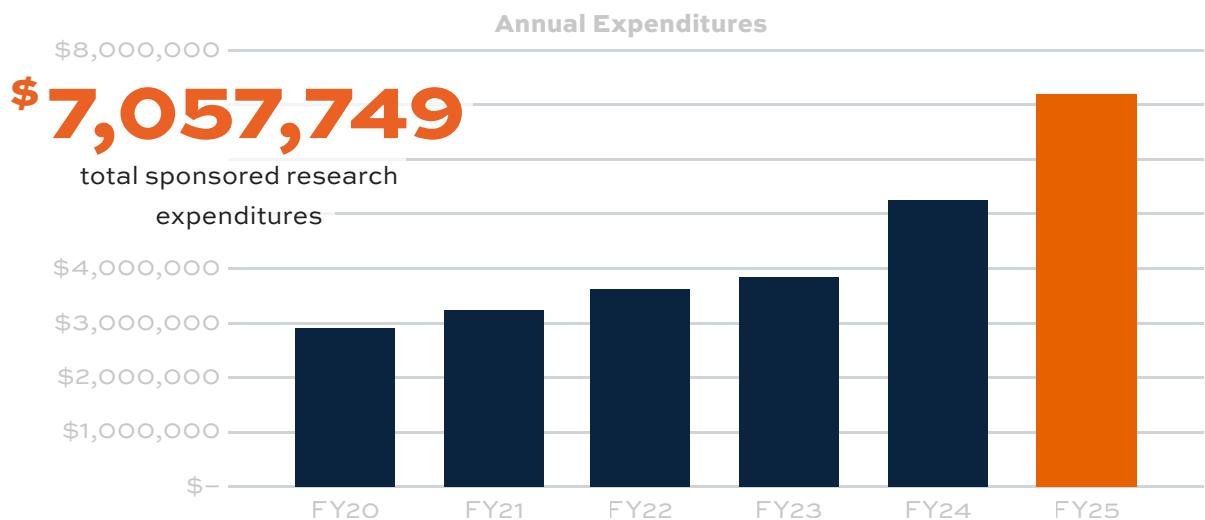
The College of Education's research — on topics ranging from cardiovascular health to teacher shortages — advances its mission to build a better future for all.

The college leads such work through several funded initiatives in partnership with multiple federal and state agencies as well as industries and international collaborations.



**\$26,504,085**  
active award dollars

**15%**   
year-over-year  
growth of sponsored  
research expenditures



In the 2024-2025 academic year, the college supported **27 doctoral fellows** and **7 undergraduate research fellows**, investing **nearly \$2M in funding** to support faculty research activities and to develop the next generation of researchers.

**14**  
Presidential  
Doctoral Fellows

**6**  
Dean's  
Doctoral Fellows

**7**  
doctoral fellows on  
extramurally sponsored  
fellowships

**\$1.9 million**  


AU investment  
in academic year  
2024-2025 for  
doctoral fellows

**\$6.5 million**  


AU investment  
over the life of  
the doctoral  
fellowships



## KEY PARTNERSHIPS

### BOLT Initiative

In 2024, Professor Joellen Sefton and the Warrior Research Center were tapped by the Air Force to develop BOLT, a comprehensive performance initiative for military service members attending Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. Armed with a \$500,000 grant, Sefton and her team of faculty members, postdoctoral researchers and graduate and undergraduate students are creating a method to improve service members' quality of life and professional performance.

### Bristol Meyers Squibb Foundation Grant

Last year, College of Education Professor Evelyn Hunter's Disrupt MS study was emboldened by an \$850,000 philanthropic grant by the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation to support research into health disparities in rural communities. Hunter's work is focused on helping those with multiple sclerosis, and her study aims to develop interventions that can disrupt pathways to psychological distress, improving patient care.

### NIH Grant & Collaboration with Duke

In 2024, Associate Professor Brian McCabe was awarded a \$2.9 million, five-year grant by the National Institutes of Health for a collaboration between Duke University School of Nursing's Rosa Gonzalez-Guarda and Behavioral Assessment's Richard Cervantes. The grant specifically focuses on establishing a group intervention program for Latin American immigrants in the Durham, Raleigh, and Chapel Hill area, known as the Research Triangle. Gonzalez-Guarda and Cervantes serve as the project's principal investigators, with McCabe as co-investigator, along with others, including Allison Stafford and Irene Felsman at Duke and Gabriela Nagy at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

### GEAR UP Achieve

GEAR UP Achieve, funded through an \$18.4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, is dedicated to increasing college and career pathway awareness and preparing students for the workforce. The current GEAR UP Achieve cohort of students are members of the high school graduating class of 2029 and began receiving services in the 2024-25 school year. GEAR UP Achieve mentors a cohort on a whole grade approach. Students in the cohort will receive mentoring services from 7th grade through their first year of post-secondary education at a four-year university or college, a two-year community college or trade school, or an accredited certificate program.



# IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH RESEARCH //

The dedicated research work of our faculty addresses everything from nationwide teacher retention issues to enhancing mobility and resilience in aging adults to disrupting multiple sclerosis and equipping future educators with CLEAR Thinking skills.

## Dr. Jada Kohlmeier

Dr. Jada Kohlmeier has a clear approach to complex issues, and it's a process she's hoping to convey to future generations of educators and students alike.

Through the "Developing CLEAR Thinking" project, Dr. Kohlmeier—the Humana Foundation-Germany-Sherman Endowed Distinguished Professor in Auburn University's College of Education—aims to equip teachers and students with CLEAR (Civic, Legal, Ethical and Analogous Reasoning) skills.



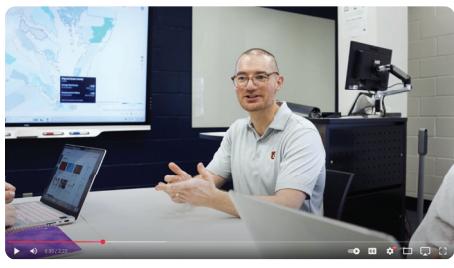
**WATCH  
VIDEO**



## Drs. Andrew Pendola & David Marshall

Drs. Andrew Pendola and David Marshall offer practical solutions for the nation's teacher retention challenge, highlighting teacher autonomy and administrative support.

Dr. Pendola's words resonate: "Teaching is more than getting test scores. Teaching is about helping children flourish."

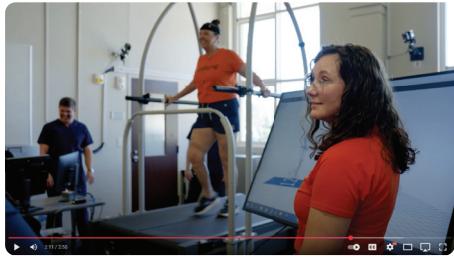


**WATCH  
VIDEO**



## Dr. Jaimie Roper

Dr. Jaimie Roper explores biomechanics and neurocontrol of human movement, with the goal of enhancing mobility in those who are aging. Her work promotes thriving and resilience in aging and aims to advance movement quality by training the next generation of clinicians and scientists in the School of Kinesiology's Locomotor and Movement Control Lab.



**WATCH  
VIDEO**



## Dr. Evelyn Hunter

Dr. Evelyn Hunter explores how social and psychological health can impact those with multiple sclerosis, particularly those in rural communities lacking needed resources. Dr. Hunter's Disrupt MS Study examines inflammatory markers to determine how social experiences and psychological health affect those navigating their MS diagnosis.



**WATCH  
VIDEO**



# STUDENT SUCCESS //



**1,601**  
Undergraduates



**808**  
Graduate Students



## Top 10 States:

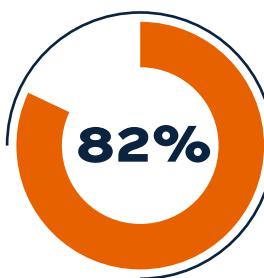
Alabama – 1,583  
Georgia – 288  
Florida - 73  
Tennessee – 65  
Texas – 54  
North Carolina – 39  
Mississippi – 25  
California – 21  
Illinois – 20  
South Carolina - 20

**\$3.3 million**

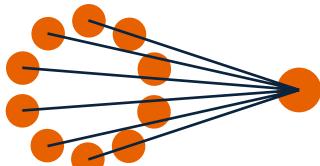
merit-based scholarships funded university-wide  
for College of Education students



**\$700,000**  
Total in undergraduate  
College of Education funded  
scholarship awards



Undergraduate  
and graduate  
employment  
success rate



**10:1**  
Student-to-Faculty Ratio



Undergraduate  
and graduate  
continuing education  
success rate

## Rural Teacher Fellowship initial cohort praises program's life-changing experience

Auburn College of Education students Jessie Barclay and Mary Wheelock say they learned a lot while teaching in a rural area this past year. The two were the first in an initial cohort of the Rural Teacher Fellowship Program that the College of Education and University Outreach began this spring at Eclectic Elementary School in Eclectic, Alabama. The program's goal? Addressing a shortage of teachers in rural areas of the state.

*“Teaching in a rural community is unique. It’s more than just delivering lessons—it’s about becoming part of a close-knit environment*

where schools are truly the heart of the community,” said Barclay, a Pelham, Alabama, native majoring in early childhood/elementary special education. “The relationships I have built—with students, families, mentors, and colleagues—have shown me that education here is deeply personal. The investment in students isn’t just academic; it’s about their well-being, their growth, and their future in a way that extends far beyond the classroom.”

[Read the full story](#)  
[Scan the QR Code](#)



## College of Education students land prestigious pre-doctoral internships

Five students in the Counseling Psychology doctoral program of Auburn’s College of Education landed prestigious pre-doctoral internships at leading peer institutions in spring 2025.

The process of matching with an internship site is similar to that of medical students matching for their residency.

The College of Education Special Education, Rehabilitation and Counseling unit has a 100% streak of matching students with top placements. Auburn College of Education Professor and Director of Training, Counseling Psychology Marilyn Cornish said the latest internship placements speak to each student’s hard work.

The pre-doctoral interns and their training site placements were as follows:

**Fatmah AlQadfan:** Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburg, Pa.)

**Gabrielle Brown:** University of South Carolina - Counseling and Psychiatry (Columbia, S.C.)

**Stephanie Gonzalez-Galvan:** University of Florida - Counseling and Wellness Center (Gainesville, Fla.)

**LaKaylyn Washington:** UNC-Charlotte CAPS (Charlotte, N.C.)

**Courtney Williams:** Florida State University - Counseling and Psychological Services (Tallahassee, Fla.)



## **Six College of Education mentored students selected for Auburn University Undergraduate Research Fellowships**

This past spring, six students mentored in Auburn University's College of Education, including four who are students in the college, were selected to receive 2025-26 Auburn University Undergraduate Research Fellowships.

Ife Ayileka, AK Black, Marigrace Crossett, Grace Greer, Michaela Stanik, and Mary Walker are continuing their research projects this academic year with the funding they received.

[Read the full story](#)

[Scan the QR Code](#)



## **Two grad students from School of Kinesiology selected as Three Minute Thesis finalists**

Each year, Auburn University offers graduate students an opportunity to share their research with the campus community in a unique way through the Three Minute Thesis Competition, or 3MT.

The competition challenges students to present a compelling oration on their thesis or dissertation topic and its significance in just three minutes. In Auburn's fall 2024 event, two students from the College of Education's School of Kinesiology were named finalists – Matt Beth and Marina Meyer Vega, both of whom work under Harsimran Baweja, director of the Sensorimotor and Rehabilitation Technology Lab and Doctor of Physical Therapy program. "Students like Matt and Marina make it easier to 'do my job' and fall in love with it every day," Baweja said. "Matt is the epitome of excellence in adversity. Nothing can stop him – he is sharp, intuitive and extremely hilarious. He shows me every day in everything he does how to be

excellent. To me, he is the embodiment of the Auburn Creed. Marina won me over when I was interviewing her for the Presidential Graduate Research Fellowship, which she is now funded on. She said 'You expect excellence from your students, and I think I have that to offer.' She is one of the hardest working students I've ever mentored and is an absolute force of nature and full of positivity in the lab."

[Read the full story](#)

[Scan the QR Code](#)



# OUR UNITS //

## Department of Curriculum & Teaching

Curriculum and Teaching has approximately 1,000 students and 13 different subject areas. C&T specializes in educator preparation and teacher development at undergraduate and graduate levels.

### By the Numbers

- Top 6% U.S. News and World Report online graduate education
- 95% Teacher certification eligibility rate
- 83% Employment rate within six months of graduation

### Featured Professor

Learn more about Jennie Bauman, an assistant professor of Reading Education:



*Dr. Jennie Bauman's Story*  
**Scan the QR Code**



## Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, & Technology

The Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology prepares exemplary educational practitioners and develops cooperative partnerships with university departments, schools, community agencies, and industry to provide outstanding educators, trainers, and leaders.

### By the Numbers

- No. 99 Best graduate education programs
- No. 4 Best online programs for veterans
- Top 6% U.S. News and World Report online graduate education

### Featured Professor

Learn more about Jill Salisbury-Glennon, a professor of Educational Psychology:



*Dr. Jill Salisbury-Glennon's Story*  
**Scan the QR Code**



## Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, & Counseling

Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counseling students develop tools to address psychological, social, and environmental barriers to educational achievement and personal development.

### By the Numbers

- 90% Accepted to graduate/professional school
- 83% of graduates hired upon graduation
- No. 13 Clinical Rehab Counseling Program and No. 14 Special Education Program, U.S. News and World Report

### Featured Professor

Learn more about Marilyn Cornish, a professor of Counseling Psychology:



*Dr. Marilyn Cornish's Story*  
**Scan the QR Code**



## School of Kinesiology

The School of Kinesiology improves the health of society through research, outreach, and teaching, providing students with mentorship and hands-on experience.

### By the Numbers

- 94% of graduates accepted into graduate/professional school
- 68% of undergraduates participate in research
- No. 12 kinesiology doctoral program in U.S.

### Featured Professor

Learn more about Christopher Wilburn, an associate clinical professor of Exercise Science:



*Dr. Christopher Wilburn's Story*  
**Scan the QR Code**



## PHILANTHROPIC IMPACT //

The Auburn Family's generous support ensures our exceptional students have the access and opportunity to attend our college and that our academics, research, and outreach programs thrive.

Total: **\$10,976,702**

**Student Support:** \$8,508,454

**Programmatic Support:** \$2,076,786

**Facilities Support:** \$391,462



Gifts/Pledges: \$4,067,770

Planned Gifts: \$6,908,932

# of donors: 839

Average Gift: \$13,083

Largest Gift: \$5,000,000

At almost **\$11 million** raised, 2024-25 was a record-breaking year for the college. Already for the first two and a half months of the 2025-26 year, **more than \$4.7 million has been raised.**

## OPENING DOORS //

### Tour Time

Now that Auburn University's College of Education has opened the doors of its brand-new building to students, it is also excited to offer tours to members of the public interested in experiencing the new, 167,000-square-foot,

state-of-the-art instructional and research facility.

New building tours are currently available to interested students and their parents as well as community groups. Scan the QR code to find out more about tour options.





For tour options  
Scan the QR Code





**AUBURN UNIVERSITY**  
College of Education

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