

## **Craig M. Turner Excellence in University Service Award (2025-26)**

**Doug R. Oetter**

**Professor of Geography**

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**Department of History and Geography**

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January 7, 2026

College of Arts and Sciences and Office of Academic Affairs  
Faculty Excellence Awards Review Committee  
Georgia College & State University

Dear Colleagues;

I write to you today to recommend Dr. Doug Oetter for the Faculty Excellence Award in University Service. I have worked with Dr. Oetter as both a colleague in Geography and now also as Interim Chair of the History and Geography Department for almost 18 years and can provide testament to his service to students, his departmental colleagues, and to the university as a whole. Additionally, he provides an enormous amount of service to community organizations as well.

Before describing some of the formal service that Dr. Oetter has provided (and that he has documented elsewhere) I would like to say that Dr. Oetter provides a lot of assistance to colleagues and students on a daily basis in a way that does not receive documentation or credit. For instance, in Spring 2025, I completed my Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in GIS. Because this was an online program, I had some difficulty in asking the instructor of the courses for help. Dr. Oetter helped me trouble-shoot some technical issues and offered his professional advice numerous times, helping me to successfully complete the program. That is not something that he listed on his Individual Faculty Report or received any credit for. This is just one example of likely thousands of small acts of assistance that Dr. Oetter has provided to colleagues and students over the years, not to build up his CV, but because he has an intrinsic motivation to be of service. It is a part of his worldview, and in his establishment of the BA Geography, the Certificate in GISc, and Sustainability Certificates on campus, is now built into our curriculum and is passed onto the students who study with him.

Dr. Oetter has a long list of services he provides to the department that go beyond the description in his contract. He manages the GISc lab (A&S 347) and the Geographic Research Commons (Beeson 251), installing software, maintaining printers, and keeping our licenses up to date. He is the coordinator for the Sustainability and GISc Certificates and has not ever received compensation for these roles. Dr. Oetter routinely provides guest

lectures or technical assistance to others in the department. He has also served on the IFR committee for many years.

Dr. Oetter sees Geography as an “interdisciplinary” discipline meant to solve complex problems, and because of this, his service does not have disciplinary boundaries. He often works with students in other programs—particularly Environmental Sciences and Biology, and others—who need spatial analysis for their projects or are interested in Sustainability. The majority of the students who take GIS classes with Dr. Oetter are not Geography majors, but Environmental Science or Political Science majors. He routinely takes these students out to fly drones, collect imagery, and do surveying work, whether they are majors or not. He recently helped a Biology student who was interested in doing some mapping for her project on vulture roosting/nesting sites. Dr. Oetter has also collaborated with other Colleges—such as the School of Health and Human Performance—on an annual GIS- and public-health related speaker series that has brought experts from a wide variety of fields such as the CDC, Mercer University, and Baldwin County Emergency Response. In addition to working with students and colleagues with his GIS skills, Dr. Oetter serves as the faculty advisor for the Men’s and Women’s Ultimate teams, who have gone on to place highly in national competitions.

Dr. Oetter has been a founding member of the Sustainability Council and the Digital Humanities Collaborative, which involves monthly or weekly meetings and a variety of funding complexities, events coordination, and communication across departments. It is really in the area of Sustainability that Dr. Oetter has made some of his biggest contributions: establishing the Certificate, introducing Sustainability into the Core curriculum, working to establish a Sustainability director on campus (and hire her replacement), doing grant-funded research on our own campus to improve the quality of life for current and future students and employees. Some of these research projects included surveys of food waste and recycling habits on campus. He has also worked with Facilities Management in mapping critical infrastructure on campus. These projects were fundamentally designed to help the campus community and provide students with hands-on learning opportunities in the world of sustainability-oriented service.

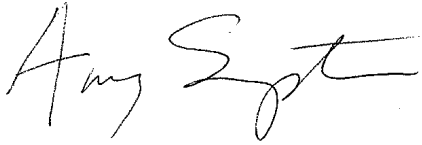
Outside of the university, Dr. Oetter has served with several organizations or provided mapping services for local partners. Several years ago, he helped Baldwin County modify their school zones based on demographic changes; he was then invited to the School Board meeting where the changes were introduced and had to explain the rationale and science behind the changes. Answering questions from angry parents is never an easy thing, and this was a service that Dr. Oetter provided to the county. He also serves on the board of the Central Georgia Rail-to-Trail Association and the Oconee River Greenway Association. I know he has spent many an hour at the Greenway doing garbage/recycling pick-up or working on invasive species removal.

There are more ways that Dr. Doug Oetter provides service to the students and employees of Georgia College, but I believe the description I have provided demonstrates a continued dedication to this institution and community. With his skills in GIS and Environmental Geography, Dr. Oetter could have chosen to work anywhere; we are fortunate that his

support for his family and community in Middle Georgia brought him here to GC&SU, where he shared his life of service with us.

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Sumpter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy R. Sumpter  
Interim Chair, Department of History and Geography  
Geography Program Coordinator  
Professor of Geography  
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**Facilities Management**  
Campus Box 85  
Milledgeville, Georgia 31061-0490  
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February 23, 2026

Craig M. Turner Excellence in University Service Award Committee  
Georgia College & State University

Dear Members of the Selection Committee,

I'm pleased to offer this letter in support of Dr. Doug Oetter as a nominee for the Craig M. Turner Excellence in University Service Award.

For many years, Dr. Oetter has provided invaluable support to Facility Operations through Geographic Information System (GIS) expertise, student intern placements, and ad-hoc mapping projects. His contributions have been central to the development and ongoing maintenance of our facility utility system maps and tree inventory—work that has both streamlined our utility maintenance operations and helped us earn our 8th consecutive Tree Campus Higher Education certification. Alongside this achievement, we maintain our ArbNet Arboretum accreditation, a rare dual distinction shared by only one other public university in the state.

Dr. Oetter's mapping support also proved indispensable to the recent reconstitution of our cross-country trail. Without his contributions, we could not have completed the course reconstruction in time to host the Peach Belt Conference Cross Country Championships this fall. The result spoke for itself—our Athletic Director described the finished course as "one of the finest courses anywhere—a showpiece!" Beyond these specific projects, Dr. Oetter continues to contribute as a long-tenured member of our Sustainability Council, providing steady guidance and engagement to our Office of Sustainability.

Dr. Oetter's service extends well beyond our campus. In my former capacity as City Public Works Director, I witnessed firsthand his support for the City of Milledgeville's efforts to program and develop the Fishing Creek Community Trail, as well as his contributions to our successful application for Bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community designation. These efforts reflect a genuine commitment to the broader community that surrounds and sustains our institution.

Having observed Dr. Oetter's work across both the City of Milledgeville and Georgia College & State University, I can attest to the breadth and depth of his community outreach and service. He exemplifies the spirit of this award in every sense, and I know of few individuals more richly deserving of this prestigious recognition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Baugh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Frank Baugh, P.E.  
Assistant Vice President  
Facilities Management



**Biological and Environmental Sciences**

College of Arts and Sciences

Campus Box 81

Milledgeville, Georgia 31061-0490

Phone (478) 445-0809

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1/22/2025

The Craig M. Turner Excellence in University Service Award Committee

Re: Letter of Support for Dr. Doug Oetter

Dear Members of the Selection Committee,

I am writing to offer my support for Dr. Doug Oetter's nomination for the Craig M. Turner Excellence in University Service Award. Over the many years I have worked alongside Doug, I have seen firsthand his extraordinary dedication to Georgia College & State University and his unwavering commitment to fostering sustainability, student development, and interdisciplinary collaboration across campus.

Doug's service record spans more than two decades and touches nearly every dimension of the university community. His long-term advisement of the Men's Ultimate Club, Women's Club Ultimate, and Disc Golf Club exemplifies his devotion to student engagement and well-being. His years of coaching (first the men's team and later the women's team) have shaped hundreds of students, providing them with mentorship that extends far beyond athletics. His leadership in establishing and managing the campus disc golf course since 2005 is just one example of how he consistently contributes to projects that enhance both the student experience and the reputation of the university.

Doug has also been a deeply influential figure in advancing environmental awareness and hands-on learning. As a founding advisor to the Environmental Science Club and an active supporter ever since, he has inspired students for over twenty years through cleanups, programs, and technical guidance. I have witnessed his willingness to devote his personal time and professional expertise to create opportunities for students to learn, serve, and lead.

Perhaps nowhere is his impact more visible than in his longstanding leadership on sustainability initiatives. His efforts since 2009 to develop and guide the Sustainability Council, collaborate closely with the Office of Sustainability, and support numerous Student Green Fee proposals demonstrate a remarkable level of commitment. I know from direct experience how much time, energy, and patience it takes to help students build successful green initiatives. Doug has been essential in revamping recycling programs, engaging students in environmental stewardship, and ensuring that sustainability remains a vibrant, student-centered endeavor on campus. His volunteer contributions to the Sustainability Certificate program further underscore his deep investment in educating the next generation of environmental leaders.

I have also worked closely with Doug on developing the Geographic Information Science and the Sustainability Certificates. I have also worked with him in providing community engagement through course work and research. In his leadership role on the Oconee River Greenway Authority board he provided my hydrology students resources and site access to train on Phase I site assessment, training that is highly valued in the environmental sciences field. As someone who collaborates with him in these

academic efforts, I can attest to his vision and his ability to bring colleagues together across disciplines. Our work from 2010 to 2015 mapping the greenway basin and McMillan Island stands as a clear example of how Doug connects student learning with community relevance and environmental responsibility. His leadership has elevated GIS education at Georgia College and strengthened the university's role in local conservation and development efforts.

In all of these endeavors, Doug's contributions have been volunteering in nature, driven not by obligation but by a genuine desire to serve students, colleagues, and the broader community. His sustained, meaningful service represents the very essence of the Craig M. Turner Excellence in University Service Award.

It is with great respect and full confidence that I endorse Dr. Doug Oetter for this prestigious recognition. His record speaks not only to the quantity of his service, but more importantly to its quality, impact, and consistency over time. The university is unquestionably a better place because of his efforts. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at +1 478-445-5858 or [samuel.mutiti@gcsu.edu](mailto:samuel.mutiti@gcsu.edu).

**Sincerely,**  
Sam Mutiti



Samuel Mutiti (PhD)  
Professor of Geology  
Fulbright and Cambridge Commonwealth Fellow  
Georgia College and State University  
Biological and Environmental Sciences Department

## Narrative Statement

When I began my career at Georgia College & State University in August 2002, I was excited to become a university professor because of the many opportunities I would have to promote the academic field of Geography through teaching and scholarship. It did not take long, however, to realize the public liberal arts mission of our institution, and add to my delight the pleasure of serving GCSU and our greater community. My skill sets as a long-time volunteer and organizer have helped me engage our students in meaningful ways to benefit the university and our community. I frame my commitment to excellent service using the values of our institution as a guide, especially:

*The transformative effect of service, leadership, and collaborative engaged learning experiences both in and beyond the classroom.<sup>1</sup>*

The guidance of the preeminent educational scholar John Dewey has been formative to my philosophy of service. One hundred years ago, Dewey envisioned a college that promotes learning by doing, engaging students in physical work as well as intellectual knowledge, all promoting the greater good of cultivating citizenry.

*“Dewey believed that a philosopher should not only reflect but also act, both to improve society and to participate in ‘the living struggles and issues of his age.’”<sup>2</sup>*

David Orr, a founder of developing sustainability in higher education, has inspired me to consider my role as a professor as being critical to the advancement of humankind in a turbulent world where young people are longing for understanding and belonging.

*“... it is difficult to envision a transformation to a more decent, inclusive, and durable world without universities and educational institutions at all levels stepping up to meet the largest challenges of our time. We need their leadership to repair public institutions and enlarge our vision of democracy. We need their help to restore respect for truth, facts, logic, data, and history.”<sup>3</sup>*

My work as a scholar and as a mentor is founded on the principle that service to our institution requires a commitment to engaging students in addressing the role of a citizen in society, using all the tools we have, from knowledge and technology to acting and caring for our common world. I have crafted several considerable involvements to accomplish this aim during my tenure at GCSU. Listed below are some of the more significant contributions.

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<sup>1</sup> Georgia College & State University. 2026. Vision, values & mission. <https://www.gcsu.edu/about/vision-values-mission>.

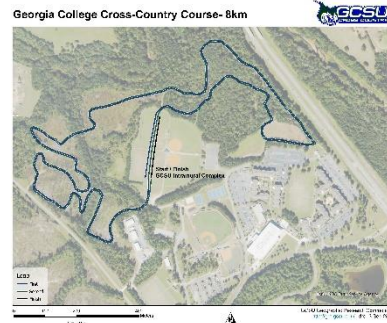
<sup>2</sup> National Endowment for the Arts. 2019. John Dewey: portrait of a progressive thinker. *Humanities*, 40:2. <https://www.neh.gov/article/john-dewey-portrait-progressive-thinker>.

<sup>3</sup> Orr, David. 2021. A new agenda for higher ed. GTI Forum: The Pedagogy of Transition, May 2021. <https://greattransition.org/gti-forum/pedagogy-transition-orr>.

## Facilities

Over the last twenty years, I have formed a productive relationship with **GCSU Facilities Management**. Because of my expertise in geographic information systems (GIS), I have been involved in dozens of projects to provide mapping and location analysis for the institution. Usually, I'm able to involve our students in some of the preliminary work, so that they can participate in realistic job training and dedicated internships. Currently, I'm working closely with the Facilities Planning office to build an database of campus infrastructure.

One recent project of note was the redesign and construction of the **GCSU Cross Country Course** at West Campus. Working closely with the team coach, athletic director, and grounds director, I developed and mapped a route for the 5-km and 8-km races, and directed student volunteers in preparing the facility for the Peach Belt Championships.



## Sustainability

Much of my service to the university is focused on an ongoing advisory role with the **Sustainability Council**, which I created in 2009 and served for five years as Chair. In 2017, a teaching circle team created the **Sustainability Certificate**. I have served without compensation as the coordinator of this program for eight years. In addition to instruction of the introductory course and instructor of record for most of the capstone internships and research courses, I dedicate a considerable amount of time to recruiting and advising students. I am currently a member of the **Sustainability Coordinator Search Committee**. In recent years, I have stayed very active, including performing these essential tasks:

- Sustainability Symposium Director
- Faculty Friends Program Chair
- GC Campus Bike Committee Chair
- Publicity Chair
- STARS Reporting Coordinator
- Webpage Manager



## Student Organizations

My work with student organizations is extensive and highly rewarding. I am the Faculty Advisor for the **Women's Club Ultimate** group and the **Men's Ultimate Club**. Each of these clubs has invited me to aid students in maintaining an active presence,



including educational activities and outreach, maintain media relations, manage budgets, organize events, recruit membership, publicize activities, provide coaching, and other routine duties.

I also serve as a de facto advisor for the **Geography Club**, **Environmental Science Club**, and **Disc Golf Club**. With all of these groups, I am a very active participant, including developing philanthropy projects, securing additional funding, hosting fundraisers, and maintaining the web presence across several platforms (University Communications, GC Connect, IMLeagues, Instagram, and Facebook). I am the designer and manager of **Myrtle Ridge Disc Golf Course** at West Campus, responsible for maintenance, improvement, and design of 18-hole disc golf course, as well as budgeting funds for upkeep and improvements, training and supervising volunteers, and course promotion.

## Technology

I serve as the **University Site License Administrator** for ESRI ArcGIS and Hexagon ERDAS Imagine software applications. In this role I maintain, install, and license software for campus users, issue evaluation software and licenses, and organize training accounts and subscriptions. Six years ago, I designed and helped install an advanced computer lab dedicated to **Geographic Information Science**, with 19 powerful workstations and several peripheral devices. In collaboration with the technology department, I maintain this lab on a routine basis so that our students have the best available software and hardware for their wide-ranging projects. In 2024, I was a member of the **Director of Technology Support Services** search committee.

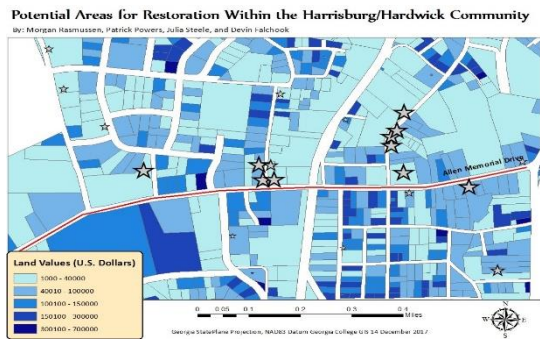
## Committee Service

At the college level, I have recently served on the **College of Arts & Sciences Tenure & Promotion Committee**. In the Fall of 2025, I was nominated to serve on the **History & Geography Chair** search committee.

In service to the university, I have been a member of the Center for Teaching and Learning **Teaching Excellence Awards Committee** for several years. I am an active member of the **Regents Academic Advisory Committee on Geological Sciences and Geography**. For over fifteen years I have worked with the **Center for Health and Social Issues** in support of Live Healthy Baldwin, and also served as

Coordinator of the **Geospatial Public Health Forum**, held each April at Georgia College.

To help improve our community, and at the request of former President Dorothy Leland, I volunteered to help build the **Central Georgia Rail-to-Trail Association**, a non-profit organization promoting the creation of a 33-mile rail-to-trail between Milledgeville and Macon. As chairperson, I have directed meetings, recruited board members, created a web presence, maintained our legal status, managed funds, solicited donations, created educational materials, presented at local/state meetings/hearings, mapped the trail, directed outings and represented the board at statewide functions.



My involvement with several community organizations allows me to develop relationships that enhance our student engagement and belonging. As an example, I was recently awarded a ENGAGE grant to design my introductory geographic information class into a service learning opportunity working with **Keep Milledgeville/Baldwin Beautiful**, **Memory Hill Cemetery**, and the **Lockerly Arboretum Foundation**, where I was a long-time trustee and vice president.

I have been an active member of the **Oconee River Greenway Foundation** and the **Oconee River Greenway Authority** since 2006. With student support, I have mapped the terrain to inform site assessment and planning, designed and mapped the Fishing Creek Community Trail, and conducted numerous cleanups of the river and floodplain as part of the Rivers Alive and Adopt-A-Stream programs of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.



## Summary

The unique environment of Georgia College, where we are encouraged to conduct the highest quality research and teaching while simultaneously developing engagement and belonging in the community, has enabled me to strengthen my commitment to service and citizenry as a professional goal. I am greatly indebted to the students, staff, faculty, and administrators who have encouraged and guided me on the pathway to success. The results of all our efforts will be a better place to flourish in the pursuit of excellence.

**Doug R. Oetter**  
*Curriculum Vitae (Abridged)*

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Milledgeville, GA 31061-0490

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**Education:**

<b>Doctor of Philosophy, Geography</b> Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon Minors: History, Water Resources Dissertation: 'Land Cover Change Along the Willamette River, Oregon'	2002
<b>Master of Arts, Geography</b> <b>Certificate in Environmental Ethics</b> University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia Thesis: 'Forecasting Municipal Water Usage for Albany, Georgia'	1990
<b>Bachelor of Arts, Geography</b> University of Washington, Seattle, Washington	1985
Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia	1982

**Professional Experience:**

<b>Professor of Geography</b> , Georgia College & State University	2012-
<b>Associate Professor of Geography</b>	2007-12
<b>Assistant Professor of Geography</b>	2002-07
Responsible for creation and implementation of 18 different college courses in geography, history, environmental science, and interdisciplinary studies. Coordinator of the Geography and Liberal Studies degree programs. Engaged in multiple research projects, from local to global scales. Academic advisor to hundreds of students and eight separate student organizations, including the Bobcat Frisbee Club, Environmental Science Club, Debate Society, and Geography Club. Active in several departmental, college, university, community, and professional service organizations. Elected member of University Senate and Chair of Resources, Planning, and Institutional Policy committee. Chair of the GC Sustainability Council and Student Green Fee Committee. President of the Board of Directors for the Central Georgia Rail-to-Trail Association. Trustee of the Lockerly Arboretum Foundation. Board of Directors for Oconee River Greenway Authority.	
<b>Geographic Information Systems Analyst</b> , Oregon State University	1999-2002
<b>Faculty Research Assistant</b> , Oregon State University	1996-2002
<b>Remote Sensing Technician</b> , Oregon State University	1995-96
<b>Aerial Photography Specialist</b> , Bohica Enterprises	1995

<b>College Instructor</b>	1991-95
Designed and conducted college courses in geography, environmental science, meteorology, and biology for three colleges: Mercer University, Macon College, and Oregon State University. Responsible for course content, lecture, lab, and grading.	
<b>Planetarium Curator</b> , Macon Museum of Arts & Sciences	1992
<b>Geography Tutor</b> , UGA Athletic Association	1987-88
<b>Aerial Photographer</b> , USDA ASCS	1987
<b>Graduate Assistant</b> , University of Georgia	1985-87
<b>Resource Aid</b> , Tongass National Forest	1985
<b>Senior Audio-Visual Technician</b> , University of Washington Instructional Media Services	1982-85

**Scholarships, Honors, and Awards:**

Georgia Chapter Sierra Club Outstanding Service Award  
 Georgia College Excellence in Service to the University Award, 2014  
 Georgia College 125 Most Influential Individuals in University History  
 Georgia Wilderness Society Earl Pearce Award for Community Service  
 International Association of Communicators and Information Technologies in  
 Education (ACE) Bronze Award  
 Ocmulgee River Soil & Water Conservation District Conservationist of the Year  
 Oregon State University Herbert Frolander Award for Outstanding Graduate Teaching  
 Assistant (nominated)  
 University of Georgia Graduate Award

**Professional Involvement:**

American Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing  
 Association for General and Liberal Studies  
 Association of American Geographers  
 Association of Pacific Coast Geographers  
 Georgia Academy of Sciences  
 Georgia Geographic Alliance  
 Georgia River Network  
 Georgia Urban and Regional Information Systems Association  
 Georgia View  
 National Council for Geographic Education  
 National Geographic Society  
 Southeastern Division of the Association of American Geographers

## **Community Involvement:**

Campaign for a Prosperous Georgia, Board of Directors  
Central Georgia Rail-to-Trail Association, Board of Directors, President, Vice-President, and Secretary  
Central Georgia Rivers Partnership, Steering Committee  
Representing Our Beliefs Political Action Committee, Campaign Manager  
Corvallis Parks and Recreation Department, City Ultimate League Coordinator  
Keep Macon/Bibb Beautiful Commission, Recycling Committee  
Lockerly Arboretum Foundation, Board of Trustees, Vice-President, Education Committee, Grounds Committee  
Macon/Bibb County Solid Waste Task Force  
Macon Earth Day 1990, Co-Director  
Oconee River Greenway Authority, Environment and History Committees  
Oconee River Greenway Foundation, Board of Directors, Secretary, Treasurer  
Sierra Club, Athens and Ocmulgee Groups, Chair  
Sierra Club, Georgia Chapter, Chapter Secretary and Executive Committee  
Sierra Club, Gulf Coast Regional Conservation Committee

Last updated: January 9, 2026