

10-2-2017

## School of Nursing News

Georgia Southern University

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### Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "School of Nursing News" (2017). *Nursing, School of - News*. 4.  
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# School of Nursing Receives \$1.6 Million Grant

October 2, 2017



Georgia Southern University's School of Nursing recently received a \$1.6 million grant for a Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) program. The BHWET program aims to develop and expand the behavioral health workforce serving populations across the lifespan. This program will increase the number of providers prepared to deliver team-based psychiatric/mental health services to rural and medically underserved populations in South Georgia.

"Primary care providers continue to be the most common portal of entry into our health care system. Area mental health providers are few and mental health needs currently overwhelm area primary care settings, emergency rooms and communities," stated Melissa Garno, EdD, RN, professor and BSN program director. "This program will provide support over the next four years for the education of psychiatric/mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP) students in settings practicing an integrated model of mental health and primary care using a team approach." Support from this grant will enhance interdisciplinary educational partnerships between the Georgia Southern University School of Nursing PMHNP program and statewide community service boards (CSBs) and Southeast Georgia federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) that implement interprofessional care. All Georgia counties are served by one of 13 CSBs. Southeast Georgia FQHCs that provide comprehensive behavioral health and primary services include J.C. Lewis Primary Healthcare Center, Savannah, GA; Curtis V. Cooper Primary Health Care, Savannah, GA; and East Georgia Healthcare Center which has ten satellite clinics throughout Southeast Georgia.

BHWET will provide much needed subsistence stipends to BSN-DNP students choosing the psychiatric/mental health nurse practitioner specialty during their clinical education when placed in these or other approved agencies that provide interprofessional or team-based care, including primary care (PC) services. "The program's clinical requirements often necessitate reducing professional practice schedules to a part-time basis, thus severely impacting the student's financial resources during this year. Without this support, many students would have difficulty incurring the costs of graduate school," stated Garno.

Clinical placements at qualified agencies will assist in closing the gap in access to mental health services. "The project not only creates an avenue for PMHNP students to participate in interdisciplinary education at selected clinical partner sites, but will also create a pipeline for CSBs and FQHCs to recruit and hire additional PMH providers upon graduation," noted Garno.

The grant is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), on behalf of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Garno serves as the BHWET grant principal investigator/director, along with co-authors Lee Broxton, scholarship and research specialist at the Center for Nursing Scholarship and Research, and Stephanie Broxton, administrative assistant for the PMHNP Track in the graduate program.

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