Honors @ Georgia Southern

Spring 2017

University Honors Program Students and Staff

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TONY HUDSON, JR. NAMED RANGEL FELLOW
FROM THE DIRECTOR

Steve Engel  
Director, University Honors Program

If you are curious about the hard work our students develop during the year, you need look no further than the pages of this magazine. The Honors Program saw a large number of students present their research at local, regional, and national conferences this year, and we have stories on a good number of those presentations. Quite honestly, there is no substitute for hearing the students in person and asking them questions about their work. You will find photographs of our Spring Honors Research Symposium in these pages as well.

We were fortunate to have some Honors Program alumni join us at the symposium, and they were able to see firsthand how today’s students are carrying on the legacy left behind by 35 years’ worth of alumni. Yes, we celebrated 35 years of Honors at Georgia Southern with alumni, current students, faculty past and present, and the current honors administration in April. It was a fun evening of telling stories, advice for the current students, good food, and good music (provided by a band fronted by a current honors student). While we looked to the past at that event, we also anticipate the future. As many of you have heard, Georgia Southern is consolidating with Armstrong State in Savannah, and so two strong honors programs will join together. You might remember from these pages a few issues ago that we partnered with Armstrong State’s honors program to host the Southern Regional Honors Council annual meeting in Savannah, and we know from that success and our ongoing friendship that our joined future looks bright.

Sincerely yours,

Steve Engel

MISSION STATEMENT

The University Honors Program provides a small college atmosphere in the context of a large comprehensive university. The program is designed to foster the development of a critical sense of inquiry, a spirit of creativity, a global perspective, and an ethic of civic responsibility. A hallmark of the program is the emphasis on bringing ideas to life through undergraduate research, experiential learning, and service-learning opportunities. The University Honors Program at Georgia Southern University rests on a foundation of the following ideals that are inspired by the institution’s emphasis on engaged learning.

Critical Sense of Inquiry

Honors students will explore a variety of approaches to research designed to foster the pursuit of knowledge. Students will develop the ability to question with a healthy skepticism toward accepted opinion. The culmination of the undergraduate experience is an independent research or creative project designed to exemplify a critical approach to inquiry.

Civic Responsibility

Honors students will demonstrate an ethic of civic responsibility and exemplify the motto of the program, “Humility before Honor.” Students will be challenged to use their abilities and talents for the advancement of humanity and the pursuit of a greater good. The primary vehicle for the expression of civic responsibility is through service both to the university and the community.

Spirit of Creativity

Honors students will embrace the idea that creativity is a virtue that should be experienced by all students, regardless of discipline. This spirit involves a respect for different ways of knowing and an openness to intellectual discussion and challenge.

Global Perspective

Honors students will develop a perspective which allows them to approach their chosen discipline from an international point of view. This outlook involves the critical exploration of global concerns and generation of proposed solutions to international problems. Honors education provides this worldwide perspective through academic courses, study abroad opportunities, and co-curricular experiences.

HONORS @ GEORGIA SOUTHERN

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Writer and Editor

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Tony Hudson, Jr., Named Rangel Fellow

TONY HUDSON, JR. NAMED RANGEL FELLOW

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TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM YEAR ROUND

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35 YEARS OF HONORS

Alumni Updates

Tony Hudson Jr., recipient of a Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Fellowship

L-R: Aleyna Rentz, Else Rustine, Sarah Ryniker, Brady Gwynn, Melissa Hinely, and Kelley Nemec

Honor student assistants bowl together
While sightseeing in Washington, D.C., Tony Hudson, Jr. (international studies ’17) received a phone call that would alter his future. He had come to city as one of sixty interviewees chosen from several hundred applicants for the Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Fellowship, a nationally competitive award that provides graduate students with funding for study, internships, and entry into the Foreign Service. The day after completing his interview, Hudson decided to explore the city, and it was while visiting the Smithsonian Post Office that the news was delivered to him—he was named one of this year’s thirty Rangel Fellows.

The chief goal of the Rangel Fellowship is to prepare outstanding young people for careers in foreign affairs, a subject with which Hudson has become well-acquainted with during his time at Georgia Southern, particularly through writing his honors thesis, “Individual Domestic Terrorism: An analysis of the Motivations and Radicalization of Terrorism in the United States.” Mentored by Dr. Srobana Bhattacharya, Hudson’s thesis took root during her terrorism class.

“It started off when I took the international terrorism class here at Georgia Southern with Dr. Bhattacharya,” Hudson said. “I was really intrigued about the entire concept of how do we counteract terrorism. I wanted to look at more so what is happening here in the United States. Where does that fear come from? These experiences at Georgia Southern are what lead me to choosing the topic. Also, I love international security, so it was a natural fit.”

Hudson researched individual terrorist attacks in the United States and tried to discern what motivated these individuals to engage in political violence. His qualitative analysis examined rational choice as well as socio-psychological theories, factors that all enter into the radicalization process.

Of the writing process, Hudson said, “Writing, especially this type of writing, is a marathon. My mentors were very supportive, especially Dr. Bhattacharya. She had to push me. There was definitely plenty of constructive criticism throughout the process. All of my mentors have provided me with support, whether it was reading over different sections or pushing me to give more and do more.”

Dr. Jamie Scalera, honors coordinator for the Department of Political Science and International Studies, praised his efforts. “I saw Tony refine his talents through his honors thesis, and especially working with his mentor Dr. Srobana Bhattacharya. His accomplishments speak not only to his work ethic, but also to the quality of our program at GSU. Tony made full use of our program to help him succeed: rigorous courses, independent honors research, study abroad, and extra curriculars.”

In addition to accepting the Rangel Fellowship, Hudson was admitted to Pennsylvania State University, where he will work with experts in his field while pursuing his Masters in International Affairs. Pennsylvania is just one of the many new places Hudson’s fellowship will take him. This summer will find him in Washington again, completing a congressional internship, while next summer he will work for one of the United States Embassy’s headquarters in another country. Although he does not know where he will end up yet, he has his fingers crossed for the Middle East or North Africa, areas he has become interested in through his studies. After graduating from graduate school, Hudson will serve as a diplomat for the State Department for five years, a future about which Hudson is keeping an open mind.

“My ultimate hope is to stay on and maintain my role as diplomat, although I’m also interested in working with different bureaus of the State Department. I want to be where the action is. I am not one-hundred percent sure what my future holds, but maybe I’ll take a stab at running for office. International politics are something I am definitely interested in. I’m just excited to make a difference in the world.”

Dr. Scalera said, “Tony’s acceptance to the Rangel Fellowship and to Pennsylvania State University are significant accomplishments. They speak to Tony’s unusual talent and motivation. I think he has a deeper appreciation for the collaborative nature of academic research and has positioned himself well for his graduate studies.”

Georgia Southern will certainly miss him while he is gone. Dr. Scalera said, “Tony’s acceptance to the Rangel Fellowship and to Pennsylvania State University are significant accomplishments. They speak to Tony’s unusual talent and motivation. I think he has a deeper appreciation for the collaborative nature of academic research and has positioned himself well for his graduate studies.”

“HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS SPEAK NOT ONLY TO HIS WORK ETHIC, BUT ALSO TO THE QUALITY OF OUR PROGRAM AT GSU.”

DR. JAMIE SCALERA
A CLEAR PATH ON CUMBERLAND ISLAND

The slam of a mallet against the trunk of a tree. The sharp clip of a lopper. The soft hum of a saw. These sounds provided the soundtrack for the May 2016 alternative break trip. Under the leadership of faculty mentor Dr. John Peden and Cumberland Island volunteer coordinator Laura Buckmaster, seventeen Honors students spent five days camping on Cumberland Island while helping to make it a more accessible place for visitors.

The group worked hard in the May heat and humidity to make one of the overgrown trails walkable for the island’s visitors. Each person had either a lopper, a saw, or a rake with which to widen the trail, which stretches two miles inland from the beach. The hope was that the group’s labor would pull down a never-ending wall of vines that had overtaken the trail. Though this task was difficult, teamwork made it possible to complete.

“Working on the trail was overwhelming and physically demanding, but also really rewarding when we were able to look down and see all of our progress,” said Abby Stattery.

In their down time, students were able to learn about Cumberland Island’s history and natural environment. They explored several of the famous Carnegie family houses located on the island, such as Plum Island’s history and natural environment. They explored several of the famous Carnegie family houses located on the island, such as Plum Island’s history and natural environment. They explored several of the famous Carnegie family houses located on the island, such as Plum Island’s history and natural environment. They explored several of the famous Carnegie family houses located on the island, such as Plum Island’s history and natural environment. They explored several of the famous Carnegie family houses located on the island, such as Plum Island’s history and natural environment. They explored several of the famous Carnegie family houses located on the island, such as Plum Island’s history and natural environment.

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One of the greatest takeaways from the trip was personal and group growth. Cara Pierella said, “I went on this trip to push myself and try new things, and I didn’t expect to like it as much as I did.” For many people, this was their first time camping and the new and experienced campers helped each other along the way, whether it be setting up a tent, helping make dinner or stuffing a sleeping bag into its bote. Stattery said, “Everyone was really comfortable with one another and was able to show their true personalities.”

This opportunity to meet and work with more students within the Honors Program was something Abi Johnson did not take for granted. “My favorite thing about this week was getting to meet more people in the Honors Program because after freshman year, it is harder to get to know the new incoming students,” she said. The 2017 alternative break trip to Cumberland Island was in session as this went to press.
The best way to learn about a culture is to immerse oneself in it. For five honors students studying abroad in Argentina this summer, this meant exploring neighborhoods in Buenos Aires, marveling at waterfalls, tutoring local children, and even taking a little time to pursue individual research. Kyle Hess, Bernadette O’Donnell, Sophie Fleri, Malik Raymond, and Derrick Herrin were among several Georgia Southern students who took part in the Foreign Language Department’s study abroad program to Argentina, which focused on building students’ speaking and comprehension skills in Spanish.

For Sophie Fleri (mechanical engineering ’17), signing up for the trip was a no-brainer. “I want to do the study abroad for knowing I wanted to travel to a Spanish-speaking country. I had already been to Buenos Aires before during a mission trip to Las Terminas del Rio Hondo in Northern Argentina, and if I decided I really wanted to go back again.”

Sophie Fleri and Kyle Hess help lead classroom activities at a school in The Villas, an underprivileged Buenos Aires neighborhood.

Derrick Herrin (mechanical engineering ’17) had a similar experience. While he had not visited Argentina before, an honors alternative spring break trip in Costa Rica left him with the desire to return to another Spanish-speaking country.

“My senior year was coming up, and I realized if I wanted to graduate with no regrets, then I needed to study abroad,” he said.

The students, including Malik Raymond (history ’17), expressed a desire to improve their Spanish abilities during their summer abroad. However, Raymond also had other plans—conducting research. He studied Buenos Aires’ population of Afro-Porteños, citizens of African descent, during the late 19th century. His interest in their culture began last spring when he discovered their poetry.

“One day, I was reading an essay from a student the following day. For some reason, I was reading all about the Afro-Porteños, and I decided I really wanted to go back again.”

His research included visiting the National Library of Buenos Aires, which had an exhibit on the Afro-Porteños currently on display. It featured newspapers the Afro-Porteños had licensed themselves, filled with articles, poems, and other missive literature.

In spite of his busy research schedule, Raymond still had time to enjoy other activities in which the group took part. Places visited included a street museum called Passos de la Carta, which pays homage to the characters of famous Argentine comics; the La Boca neighborhood, where the famous Boca Juniors soccer team is located; and several art museums and shopping districts. As a writing minor, Raymond enjoyed being in a place famous for having more bookstores per block than any other city in the world.

“I got lost there trying to find particular books that I wanted,” Raymond said. “It was a great place to explore.”

After acquainting themselves with the city, Herrin says they also got to know some of the local population.

“We helped tutor a group of underprivileged kids in English and Math. I really enjoyed that opportunity. It was a good way to become more than a typical tourist and experience a more extensive range of Argentine culture.”

When asked about his favorite part of the experience, Herrin said, “I really enjoyed talking with the people of Argentina about their culture, history, and so much more. Not only was I learning from them, but they were learning from me about U.S. culture, history, etc. We compared our countries and cultures in a very refreshing, nonjudgmental way that put aside the cultural boundaries in favor of understanding of each other.”

Fleri undoubtedly enjoyed their experiences, as well, for she opted to stay in Las T ermas del Rio Hondo for two weeks after the program ended.

“I highly encourage anyone studying Spanish to go on study abroad, but go early,” she said. “Don’t wait, because you have fewer opportunities as time goes by. I promise it’s worth it.”

Sophia Fleri and Kyle Hess help lead classroom activities at a school in The Villas, an underprivileged Buenos Aires neighborhood.

Jenny Shaffer (German/mechanical engineering ’17) spent her third summer in Germany gaining professional experience through the Materials Science Internship at Robert Bosch GmbH Center and Research and Advanced Engineering in Renningen. This highly competitive internship only accepts roughly thirty graduate students or alumni of the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst Research Internship in Science and Engineering (DAAD RISE) program, a program Shaffer participated in during summer 2015 at Ruhr-Universität in Bochum. Shaffer’s exemplary work from the previous summer provided her with skills to success in this advanced, graduate level internship.

Shaffer’s roles included “designing and implementing experiments to program the global conditions inside a corrosion chamber and comparing the effects of the local environmental load on the corrosion rates of stainless steel, aluminum, and titanium parts inside the chamber.” Shaffer felt that she had freedom to design and test her own experiments.

Shaffer felt that she had “freedom to design and test her own experiments.”

The professional atmosphere provided Shaffer with real life experiences of what a career in engineering has to offer. Working at the Robert Bosch GmbH Center, Shaffer utilized her classroom knowledge to flourish in a corporate environment. “This trip felt more like a ‘trial run’ if I were to actually live and work in Germany someday,” said Shaffer.

Because she took part in the internship program twice, Shaffer was invited to serve as keynote speaker for the 2016 DAAD RISE conference on July 7-9, 2016 in Heidelberg, Germany, a conference whose audience included the program’s current students, employees, and alumni of the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst Research Internship in Science and Engineering (DAAD RISE) Germany program, which is sponsored by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). The professional atmosphere provided Shaffer with real life experiences of what a career in engineering has to offer. Working at the Robert Bosch GmbH Center, Shaffer utilized her classroom knowledge to flourish in a corporate environment. “This trip felt more like a ‘trial run’ if I were to actually live and work in Germany someday,” said Shaffer.

Her journey last summer was not confined to her work. While traveling throughout Germany, she made new friendships that will last beyond the weeks spent interning.

One day, Shaffer was traveling by train, when a small engine fire caused an evacuation. She was left to spend four hours in a small town, which she used to her advantage and “ended up meeting two wonderful ladies, one of which who ended up giving [her] a ride home and becoming a pen pal! Deutsche Bahn [the town] certainly knows how to make memories,” said Shaffer.

Spending a summer abroad is an amazing experience, but spending three summers abroad is a chance of a lifetime. Shaffer’s advice to students who are looking for adventures abroad is to simply apply. “Never pass up an opportunity simply because you think the odds are low.”

In the fall, Shaffer will embark on yet another adventure, this one in America. She has received a full doctoral fellowship from Clemson University, where she will pursue her PhD in mechanical engineering.
In preparation for Georgia Southern’s upcoming consolidation with Armstrong, six honors students from both schools have taken initiative in bridging the gap between the two schools’ honors programs.

Students from Georgia Southern include Hannah Dorough (psychology ’18), Morgan Gallashaw (biology ’18), and Caitlin Shelby (graphic design/interior design ’20), and students from Armstrong include Rakyel Peters (biology ’18), Linesa Ryan (history ’19), and Laleh Caughran (ASL interpretation ’20).

At this year’s annual Southern Regional Honors Conference (SRHC) in Asheville, North Carolina, they led a panel titled “Bridging the Gap: Attempting to Foster Community Among Honors Students in a Consolidation.” Their discussion focused on methods of fostering community and building rapport between multiple campuses, something they all consider important for honors students in the upcoming years.

Ryan said, “I got involved with this project because I wanted to connect with the students in the honors program at Georgia Southern, and be involved with the consolidation process as much as possible. What I’ve learned is that the honors programs at both ASU and GSU have a lot to learn from each other and great potential for growth.”

Dr. Roberts agreed, saying, “For the better part of the last decade Armstrong and Georgia Southern’s Honors programs have collaborated quite well with one another. I feel strongly that the consolidation of Armstrong and Georgia Southern’s Honors programs will help students connect with others who share an interest.”

These six students come from a larger group of honors students that travelled to the conference in late March. Twenty-nine students from Georgia Southern and eight Armstrong students had proposals accepted by SRHC, which brought in around 700 students. Their presentations included posters, papers, and thesis work from all disciplines.

Galashuh discussed the experience. “Our goal at the conference was to begin to open doors and form the beginning bands of friendship and community between attending Georgia Southern and Armstrong students. The initial reaction to the consolidation was not enthusiastic from either campus, but when this group of students from Georgia Southern and Armstrong came together in the same room, there was nothing but warm welcome and excited anticipation of what will come as we continue merging both our academic and social programs.”

Finding informed and accurate perspectives on politics has lately been difficult. From poorly-researched clickbait articles to television pundits pushing their network’s agendas, the mass of misinformation sometimes feels nearly impossible to sort through. However, five honors students have found a way to contribute meaningfully to our country’s ongoing political conversation by creating and hosting their own radio show, Modern Political Debate (MPD), on the Georgia Southern radio station.

Takign inspiration from his honors First-Year Experience (FYE) class of the same name, Jarvis Steele (political science and philosophy ’19) founded the show last year when he was still a freshman.

“I got the idea from my professor, Dr. Chris Caplinger. In class, we debated modern political issues, and I thought a radio show would be an appropriate and interesting way to build on those discussions.”

“One of the programmatic goals of FYE 1220 is to help students connect with others who share an interest,” Dr. Caplinger said. “This can lead to friendships and other connections that are lasting. Sometimes, though, students take this a step further, and institutionalize the theme of the seminar into a student group, or in this case, a radio show. Jarvis Steele and his colleagues have used the seminar as a jumping off point to add meaningfully to the Georgia Southern community. They are great examples of what we’re seeking to do in FYE.”

Steele enlisted several other honors students to co-host, building a cast that currently includes students with ideas and outlooks that span the entire political spectrum. Bryce Colvin (political science ’19) represents the left, Dantrell Maeweather (history ’20) and Steele provide moderate perspectives, and Matthew “Big” Taylor (mechanical engineering ’19) speaks from the right. With a cast and crew full of diverse viewpoints and academic backgrounds, MPD is able to maintain a sense of neutrality while providing perspectives that cross party lines, an aspect of the show they consider extremely important.

“On the show opened me up to different opinions, made me do more research, and helped me overcome my own biases,” Taylor said. “We may not always agree, but that’s what keeps it interesting.”

Colvin agreed. “Having a conversation with someone like Matthew with such radically different views than mine has helped me grow as a political analyst.”

Steele described the show as “format-less,” a guided conversation that allows for organic discussion rather than following a rigid script.

“T en years from now, if I come back to GSU and walk into Sanford Hall, I want MPD to still be a show,” Steele said. “I want that lasting legacy. I want to build something that’s going to become a part of Georgia Southern.”
HONORS IN ACTION

There are few places in the world where one can attend lectures by famous writers like Jonathan Franzen and Roxane Gay and then potentially run into them at yoga class or a restaurant the next day. In fact, the Associated Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) Conference might be the only place on earth where this is possible. Attracting over 12,000 writers, editors, and educators annually, this year’s AWP Conference, located in Washington, D.C., included both Georgia Southern honors students and alumni.

Along with four other writing and linguistics majors and creative writing professor Jared Yates Sexton, senior honors students Maggie Delisle, Devon Pride, Summer Kurtz, and Aleya Renzi spent three days attending readings, networking with publishers and editors, and perusing the largest book fair in America.

“The Associated Writing Programs Conference is the premier writing conference in America and provides an incredible learning opportunity for students interested in publishing, production, and simply looking for advice and support,” said Sexton. “This is the third consecutive year I’ve taken students and they seem to learn and find inspiration every time.”

Kurtz certainly did. “I loved being in a place where I felt like everyone pretty much had the same passion as me,” she said. “It was both validating and life-affirming. Getting to talk to editors of journals and magazines was really helpful and it gave me a clear idea that I definitely want to be an editor.”

In addition to helping solidify career paths, the conference also related back to some of the students’ honors thesis work.

Pride said, “Attending panels helped me with certain aspects of my thesis. I went to one that focused on writing from the perspective of the ‘outsiders’ of society—murderers, kidnappers, terrorists, etc.—and because my thesis is a novel that uses psychological horror, the information that I absorbed was helpful.”

As the largest conference of its kind, AWP attracts several well-established writers each year, something this year’s students enjoyed. Delisle was able to attend a reading by National Book Award winner Jacqueline Woodson, a writer she had previously only encountered in class.

“One of my favorite parts of AWP was seeing Jacqueline Woodson read from her poetry. I read her memoir in my Children’s Literature class, and actually hearing her read passages from it made her work that much more meaningful to me,” said Delisle.

Renz had a similar experience. “I got to meet Dave Eggers and tell him how much I loved reading his memoir, A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius, for my creative nonfiction class. I also really enjoyed meeting some the editors who have previously published my work. It helped me really expand my professional network.”

When they weren’t making connections or readings, the students had the chance to catch up with other Georgia Southern alumni. The Writing and Linguistics Department has sent several of its graduates to creative writing MFA programs, and three of them—Parish Turner, Yovania Ryan, and Michael Conner—all attended the conference with their respective programs. Turner came down to Washington from New York City, where he is a student in creative nonfiction at The New School, while Ryan travelled with Fairfield University Conner, a fiction student at American University, was fortunate to have the conference take place in his own backyard. Since last fall, he has been living in Washington and enjoying both his classes and the cultural opportunities going to school in a large city affords.

“It’s no secret that Washington’s a vibrant cultural hub, but I find the most excitement in workshops,” Conner said. “Without the program, I’d never have been exposed to the writers I so desperately needed to study, nor to the writer’s lifestyle of going to readings multiple times a week, establishing consistent writing goals for my own work, and reaching out to others in the literary community for advice and support.”

When asked to recount his favorite part of the conference, he turned to his former classmates. “Seeing my old classmates was a wonderful pleasure and always leaves me yearning for a slower clock. They’re the people I write for.”

HONORS TAKES THE STAGE AT TEDx GEORGIA SOUTHERN

Finding creative solutions to the world’s problems is a goal shared among students in the Honors Program. Students are encouraged to connect their research and experiences on the TEDx stage. Jenny Shaffer, a German and mechanical engineering double major, gave talks at the event, and were joined by a number of other speakers from across campus and the community, including Dr. Steven Engel, the director of the Honors Program.

TEDx is a program devoted to sparking discussion and deep thinking in local communities and on college campuses. (TED is an acronym for Technology Entertainment Design.) The theme at Georgia Southern was “Connecting Creatively,” and the three speakers shared their own unique perspectives on using creativity as a problem-solving tool and means to realize that leadership arises from many, many places and people, and ideas are the catalyst for great leadership to emerge. By hosting TEDxGeorgiaSouthernU, we are hoping for that sort of leadership to emerge from our students and in our community.”

About the student speakers, he said, “The reason that we are hosting this TEDx event is, simply, students—their growth as leaders, their opportunity to interact with speakers, and their opportunity to speak at a TEDx event. We actively sought out and encouraged students to apply to speak at the event, and we are thrilled that we have two undergraduates and a graduate student as speakers.”

The students were thrilled as well. Loveless said, “The speech didn’t go exactly planned, but I certainly am thankful for the opportunity, all the connections made along the way, and everything that I learned.”

Shaffer agreed, “I want to say thank you to those who listened, even though I spoke a million miles an hour. Really, though, I just hope these talks prompted discussions about creative connections in our world, and I hope to see the TedxGeorgiaSouthernU conference grow over the years.”

HONORS WRITING MAJORS IN ACTION: ASSOCIATED WRITERS AND WRITING PROGRAMS CONFERENCE IN D.C.
ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY AT THE COUNCIL FOR UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Each year, all honors freshmen take part in a year-long First-Year Experience (FYE) class tailored toward preparing students for success in the Honors Program. Among these classes is Animal-Assisted Therapy, an intensive experience in research methods and service-learning taught by Dr. Jeni Kropp and Dr. Trent Maurer. While learning how to utilize both physical and online databases to look at findings from an international perspective, students also participate in a hands-on service project that pairs them with either a certified therapy dog or a local therapeutic horseback riding program. Some fun.

Students emerge from this class fully prepared for tackling future research projects, such as their honors thesis; some are even inspired to continue working with therapy animals. For Caroline Lathi (health education & promotion '18), the class provided her with the opportunity to attend the annual Council for Undergraduate Research (CUR) conference in Tampa, Florida this summer as one of only a few students in attendance. Alongside Dr. Maurer and Dr. Kropp, Lathi helped deliver a presentation titled "Integrating Scaffolded Research with Service-Learning in a First-Year, Two Course Sequence." The presentation focused on applying scaffolded research methods to a classroom setting, scaffolded research being research that builds on prior knowledge "held by the students.

"We set up our class based on a model by Dr. Jenny Shonahan, the director of undergraduate research at Bridgewater State University, that provides thirty research skills for students," said Dr. Kropp. "This is a process that could take four years for a student to accomplish, but one of the things that we are proud of is that we do all of them in the two course sequence, and with freshmen."

Both professors wanted to share their unique, rigorous approach to teaching research in a condensed timeframe, but they felt a student’s voice was necessary for their presentation.

Dr. Maurer said, "Although CUR is focused on undergraduate research, very few of the presenters are actually undergraduate students, so getting that ‘voice’ represented is extremely important.

"I was really nervous going in because I was addressing these professors whose careers are dedicated to undergraduate research, but once I started talking it was very easy to speak to the crowd. It was fun." Preparing for the presentation proved slightly challenging, since the conference was at the end of June and Lathi was attending a leadership retreat the week before. While the group had discussed their plans before the semester ended, Dr. Kropp and Dr. Maurer did not see Lathi’s contributions to their PowerPoint until the day before the presentation.

"This was not an accident," Dr. Maurer said. "It was because we completely trusted in her ability and her professionalism—based on her performance in our course sequence—and we knew whatever she created would be a perfect fit for the presentation. I can’t think of a better representation to her ability than placing that kind of trust in her."

The presentation was an inevitable success; in fact, Dr. Shanahan, whose research made the animal-assisted therapy class possible, was actually in attendance.

"She’s someone we look up to as a mentor, so we were really pleased that she came to our presentation," said Dr. Kropp.

Once the presentation was over, the group was able to enjoy the rest of the conference, which included listening to panels and, in the spirit of global citizenship, meeting researchers from around the world. Lathi was able to meet the presenters on Dr. Maurer’s other panel: one faculty member from Canada, one faculty member from the UK, and one undergraduate student from the UK. While encountering many new people and ideas, Lathi was also able to see her own experience as a student researcher from another viewpoint.

“I liked going to the other presentations as one of the only freshmen there,” she said.

“Being a student and listening to professors talk about how you learn was very interesting to me, but to see their side, as well, was very rewarding. I have developed a little bit of a different perspective.”

Lathi’s student voice was just as valuable to the professors in attendance. Caroline Maurer said, "Student voices are important to the conversations had there, and certainly for our outcome, but they are few and far between. Students like Caroline help those of us who work with undergraduates on research to see the impact of our work. Being able to give any student an opportunity like that is a rare and precious thing.”
Compliance to Ethical Practice."

"My project bridges the gap between art and law to explore and analyze the role that the fashion industry has in the movement of accepting and implementing corporate social responsibility, particularly in European countries," Amiel said.

Other presenters included a large number of athletic training and exercise students, including Lacey Dennis (athletic training '17), Diana Tyler (exercise science '16), Molly McLaughlin (exercise science '16), and Chelsea Rodriguez (exercise science '18). With encouragement from kinesiology professor Dr. Daniel Czech, these students presented original research.

STEM students also took their research and honors theses to the conference, including Kelvin Rasado-Ayala (computer science '18), Carlie Novak (chemistry '18), Wesley O'Quinn (electrical engineering '18), and Chelsea Rodriguez (exercise science '18). With encouragement from kinesiology professor Dr. Daniel Czech, these students presented original research.

"The conference was a wonderful experience for me personally," said Blais. "I was amazed by not only the intellect of others attending the conference but the open-mindedness and friendliness I received as a fellow researcher. I would definitely recommend it to other Georgia Southern students thinking about attending conferences in the future."

Even their down time was full of educational experiences, such as visiting the Spalding National Running Center to see the latest research in Running Science, exploring Boston, and touring a lab at Harvard Medical School.

Rodriguez said, "We got to make connections with students from other renowned universities and participate in public discourse with different keynote speakers including Jill Abramson and Harold E. Varmus. We were also able to participate in various workshops which included discussions about graduate school, entrepreneurship, ethics in research, and much more. It was incredible getting to hear about all the participants’ research. From neuroscience, to research in curing cancer, it’s amazing to see so many students discovering new knowledge."

The conference presented them with multiple opportunities for engagement with other like-minded individuals.

"The conference was an incredible experience because it provided the opportunity to meet and talk with other undergraduates who are doing research. This was beneficial because I was able to talk about future research project ideas with them."

One of Novak’s favorite aspects of the conference was its interdisciplinary nature. She said, "Presenting at GURC gave me the opportunity to share my research with my peers in different departments. This was a great opportunity to expose my research at a conference that was not solely dedicated to chemistry; something I do not get to do often."

With original research topics and strong commitment to academics, Georgia Southern's honors students are on par with students from some of the best institutions in the country. Lacey Dennis (athletic training '17), Eva Blais (exercise science '17), Chelsea Rodriguez (exercise science '18), and Kolyse Wagstaff (exercise science '17) proved this by presenting their research at Harvard University's National Collegiate Research Conference, a symposium whose application process is highly competitive and attracts scholars from all over the world.

Dr. Daniel Czech, honors coordinator in the School of Health and Kinesiology, urged them to seize this opportunity. "To me, transcultural learning experiences like our trip to Harvard can increase a student’s intellect, motivation and of course multicultural mindset," he said. "I asked Kolyse, Lacey, Chelsea and Eva to apply, and I am so proud of them for saying yes and following through."

Blais, Dennis, and Wagstaff’s theses are part of a three-port project, mentored by Dr. Li Li, looking at the effects of static stretching on the gastrocnemius muscle, while Rodriguez’s thesis, mentored by Dr. Czech, explores how different climatic factors affect body temperature before and after exercise.

"It’s amazing to see so many students discovering new knowledge," said Rodriguez. "I was amazed by not only the intellect of others attending the conference but the open-mindedness and friendliness I received as a fellow researcher. I would definitely recommend it to other Georgia Southern students thinking about attending conferences in the future."

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“When we got to Harvard, we were struck by how many students were there and the size of the conference which was an absolute eye-opener,” said Dennis. “I met a lot of other researchers and learned about their research and what was going on in other places.”

With the support of her family, Dennis realized her dream of attending the conference and presenting her work.

“People were so excited about my research which caused a revolution of my efforts,” Gunby said. “The topic is something that I really care about and people were so encouraging. I had some people give recommendations which was actually really cool.”

While Gunby enjoyed meeting people in her field, Bailey Kirk’s (mathematics ‘18) favorite part of the conference was its interdisciplinary nature, which allowed her to explore subjects outside of her usual coursework.

“I loved seeing presentations on topics that I wouldn’t normally see since they were not in my major. My favorite presentation was actually about making clothes out of bacterial cellulose. My friends and I attended that session for a different presentation, but that one blew us away.”

In addition to CURIO, Georgia Southern also recently hosted the Eagle Showcase. Excellence in Service-Learning event. Freshman Sarah Rogers (biology ‘20) presented a poster called ‘A Dog’s Love: Animal-Assisted Therapy and Service to the Community,’ which won the Best Poster Award. Her project stemmed from coursework in her Animal-Assisted Therapy FYE class, taught by Dr. Jerri Kropp and Dr. Trent Maurer.
ASHWOD AT THE AMERICAN PHYSICAL SOCIETY

After a year and half of research, Elizabeth Ashwood (physics ’17) presented her honors thesis at the American Physical Society (APS) March Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana. The goal of APS is to unify the scientific community to advance people’s awareness of physics. The conference separates over 8,000 presentations into specific categories such as “biological physics and chemical physics” over the course of a week, said Ashwood. She was given the opportunity to present at the level of professionals instead of presenting with other undergraduates.

“My research is a development of programming tools to rapidly evaluate experimental set ups in atom interferometry,” she explained. “Atom interferometry measures the interference patterns produced by a phase difference of atomic waves.” Her goal is for her research to be used on the International Space Station (ISS) in the Cold Atom Lab, which is being sent to the International Space Station in June 2017. This amazing opportunity would move Ashwood’s thesis, “Developing Tools for a Precision Measurement of Newton’s Gravitational Constant,” from the academic setting into a professional setting.

Ashwood says her mentor, Dr. Edwards, has been an influential aspect of her research. She said, “When I first started research with Dr. Edwards, I had only basic physics 1 and 2 level knowledge, and I was just beginning to take differential equations. Dr. Edwards helped in the start by teaching me what Bose-Einstein condensates were.” Dr. Edwards alerted her at the genesis of her project, explaining new, difficult concepts that would eventually become the overarching argument behind Ashwood’s thesis.

Dr. Edwards explored his experience with working with a dedicated student who genuinely loves learning: “I have enjoyed being Elizabeth Ashwood’s research mentor. She is quick to grasp new concepts, incorporates them into her skill set, and is able to think on her own. She is quite mature for her age and is a natural leader of other students.”

After graduation, Ashwood will enter the Peace Corps and spend two years in Swaziland.

THE YEAR OF 2016 PRESENTED DR. JERI KROPP AND HER STUDENTS WITH MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE THEIR RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF CHILDHOOD EDUCATION. IN ADDITION TO PRESENTING AT THE COUNCIL FOR UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH THIS SUMMER, KROPP RECENTLY SPENT A WEEK IN DUBLIN, IRELAND WITH HONORAS ALUMNAE MIKAELA SHUPP (BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND SPANISH ’16) AND MARY WALLACE-NOE (CHILD & FAMILY DEVELOPMENT ’11), WHERE THEY WERE ABLE TO PRESENT THEIR FINDINGS ON AN INTERNATIONAL STAGE. DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN SEPTEMBER, THEY ATTENDED THE 26TH ANNUAL EUROPEAN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (ECEERA) CONFERENCE HELD AT DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY, THE LARGEST CONFERENCE OF ITS KIND. THIS YEAR’S CONFERENCE INCLUDED 930 ATTENDEES FROM 44 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES REPRESENTING 6 CONTINENTS. OF ALL THE PRESENTATIONS GIVEN AT ECEERA, TWO OF THEM INCLUDED DR. KROPP AND SHUPP'S RESEARCH.

KROPP'S RESEARCH EMPHASIZES HOW TRULY VITAL THE STUDY OF THERAPY DOGS IS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION RESEARCH. BEFORE THE CONFERENCE EVEN BEGAN, A PROMINENT DIRECTOR FROM WALES WHO WANTED TO开始了 a research project on dogs in classrooms contacted Dr. Kropp based on reading just the abstract for her presentation.

“She contacted me and said she wanted to implement a program and collect data in several schools in Wales and wanted to meet us in person,” Dr. Kropp said. “Our session was in the last slot of the conference, so she had to leave early to catch her flight, but she ran to our session to briefly talk to us before leaving.”

Kropp and Shupp also made contact with other colleagues with similar interests, such as a professor and psychotherapist from Spain who presented a poster on a study of therapy dogs with children who have been abused. He plans on future studies involving therapy dogs in children’s hospitals and in classrooms—exactly Dr. Kropp’s avenue of research. Shupp also enjoyed the opportunity to meet researchers from other countries. “One of the most interesting aspects of the conference was meeting people from other places, especially considering that the topic was education and everyone was coming from completely different education systems,” she said. “Our session alone, which was on improving child outcomes, one set of presenters was from Denmark, and the other was from the UK. It was just really cool meeting people from other countries with the same interests.”

She also had the chance to see another Georgia Southern alumna in action—Mary Wallace-Noe, a current Masters of Public Health Candidate. Wallace-Noe emphasized the importance of their research. “The experience of play allows children to express fears and misconceptions they may not feel comfortable sharing in an openly vulnerable way. It presents them with the opportunity to play doctor and be in control of the situation so their fears can begin to diminish. Play is very powerful in the hands of a young child.”

Dr. Kropp agreed, saying, “Medical play sessions in childcare centers help children cope with repeated experiences with doctors and medical staff. Young children spend a lot of time at the doctor’s office for well visits, including vaccinations, as well as sick visits, including colds, injuries, and respiratory infections. Incorporating these sessions into preschool curriculum can help child cope with past medical experiences and prepare for future medical encounters.”

After the presentations were over, everyone was pleased with their results, particularly Dr. Kropp, who sees both presentations as opportunities for future research and publication.

OF DOGS AND DOCTORS: PRESENTING RESEARCH IN DUBLIN

The year of 2016 presented Dr. Jeri Kropp and her students with myriad opportunities to share their research in the field of early childhood education. In addition to presenting at the Council for Undergraduate Research this summer, Kropp recently spent a week in Dublin, Ireland with honors alumnae Mikaela Shupp (business management and Spanish ’16) and Mary Wallace-Noe (child & family development ’11), where they were able to present their findings on an international stage. During the first week in September, they attended the 26th Annual European Early Childhood Education Research Association (ECEERA) Conference held at Dublin City University, the largest conference of its kind. This year’s conference included 930 attendees from 44 different countries representing 6 continents. Of all the presentations given at ECEERA, two of them included Dr. Kropp.

She presented “Benefits of Having a Therapy Dog in the Classroom: A Content Analysis of 56 Reviews of the Medical Play Sessions.” The research focused on how therapy dogs in early childhood education can help children cope with past medical experiences and prepare for future medical encounters.

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After graduation, Ashwood will enter the Peace Corps and spend two years in Swaziland.
For honors political science and international studies students, this year brought multiple opportunities for sharing their research, most notably at the Georgia Political Science Association conference (GPSA) and the International Studies Association conference (ISA).

The GPSA conference is hosted annually in Savannah, making it the perfect place for Georgia Southern students to showcase their theses, and five honors students took advantage of this opportunity. Charlotte McDonald, Maria Alejandra Amiel, Carolyn Nisan, Tony Hudson, and Auburn Bell each gave presentations to an audience consisting of both political science educators and students from around the world.

“The conference was incredible,” said Maria Alejandra Amiel (international studies & French ‘17). “It’s an experience I believe more undergraduate students should get.”

Art and fashion have long interested Amiel, especially in how they relate to law, corporations, and human rights. Her presentation focused on the bridge between art and law, and the role that the fashion industry plays in corporate social responsibility. Mentor Dr. Flynn, Amiel has analyzed the interaction of corporate social responsibility, international law, human rights, and activist groups.

Charlotte McDonald (international studies & German, ‘17) presented on a comparative case study she conducted of European states. Under the mentorship of Dr. Maureen Stobb, she has been pursuing this study for some time. The presentation itself focused on the bridge between art and law, and how they relate to law, corporations, and human rights. Her research focused primarily on numerous international organizations which she has studied, and their reactions and decisions pertaining to specific conflicts.

“Helping Ourselves First: Conflict Management Strategies of Regional IOs,” presented by Carolynn Nixon (political science, ‘17) discussed the effectiveness of differing international organizations, such as the European Union. Her research focused primarily on numerous international organizations which she has studied, and their reactions and decisions pertaining to specific conflicts.

It was a great chance to meet people in the field and discuss my research,” Nixon said. “Getting to share your research in a professional atmosphere makes it feel so much more real.”

Nixon, Bell, Hudson, and McDonald also took their research to the ISA conference in Baltimore, Maryland this February. Being in close proximity to Washington, D.C. was appropriate for Auburn Bell’s (political science & Spanish, ‘17) thesis, “A Revolutionary Norm: Socialism in the United States vs. Europe,” which concerns itself with perceptions of the term “socialism” and socialist candidates, such as Bernie Sanders, in both the United States and Europe.

“I have always enjoyed examining the differences between the political activity and awareness of citizens in Europe compared to the United States,” she said. “Also, it was interesting to me to compare the candidacy of socialist Bernie Sanders, being so new and enthusiastic during the 2016 election cycle, to perceptions of socialism in Europe, where it’s the norm.”

Bell also said the conference was beneficial to revising her thesis for submission. “It was a bit intimidating presenting to professionals and academics with years of graduate work and research but I was welcomed and accepted as a peer. They tore my thesis apart, but it was all for the betterment of my research.”

Being in a metropolitan area allowed for new experiences and new connections. McDonald said, “My favorite part of the conference was seeing these ‘big name’ academics that I read every semester in my classes in their natural setting. They were laid back and approachable which was very refreshing to see.

It was interesting to hear their current research and just see how academics in my field interact, because as students we are usually very removed from this aspect.”

Undergraduates usually do not attend these kinds of conferences, something Nixon hopes changes in the future.

“Everyone in my presentation seemed surprised I was an undergrad because it isn’t common for students to attend these major conferences at this stage. Hopefully more Georgia Southern students will have opportunities to attend events like this, as it’s been extremely helpful in clarifying my career path.”

With a summer internship at Sow Much Good, Inc., a nonprofit farming organization in Charlotte, NC, Nixon has already begun moving toward a career as a lobbyist for nonprofits and social justice organizations. Amiel plans to work this summer as a film camp counselor at S[3] Film Camp in Savannah, and will seek a Master of Arts in Spanish and a Master of Arts in Teaching Spanish at Georgia Southern.

Likewise, Hudson will complete his congressional internship as a part of his graduate fellowship with the U.S. Department of State. (For more on Hudson’s internship, see the story on page 5.) In the fall, he will begin his masters in International Affairs at the Pennsylvania State University. Following his completion of his studies, he will officially enter into the Foreign Service of the Department of State as a Foreign Service Officer as a diplomat. Bell and McDonald, meanwhile, will be preparing to move away from Statesboro to start graduate school. Bell will pursue her master’s in American Government at Georgetown University, and McDonald will attend Texas A&M University to pursue her masters in International Affairs at the Bush School of Government and Public Service.
35 YEARS OF HONORS CELEBRATION

The 35-year history of Honors at Georgia Southern was celebrated in April as University Honors Program and Bell Honors Program alumni, current students, and faculty and staff past and present gathered at Eidson House for an evening of storytelling, reminiscing, advice, good food, and good music. You will see the 35 years of honors represented in our photographs from the event, and a good number of alumni sent us updates as well. Be sure to keep the program apprised of your continued good work and success. We want to hear from all of you! And look for our next alumni events in the upcoming years.

After completing her honors thesis in 2011 titled “The Voices of the Lost: How the Poetry and Prose of the Great War Reveal the Mentality of the Lost Generation,” Danielle Blalock (history and Spanish) switched gears and focused her studies on Latin America while completing her Ph.D. in history at the University of Arizona. With the aid of a Fulbright grant, Blalock has the opportunity to travel to Chile to finish her research. She will live in the country for nine months, conducting research for her dissertation, tentatively titled “Collaborative Activisms: Chilean University Student Networks and Mobilization, 1964-1990.” Her research aims to contribute to the historical understanding of universities as political spaces.

Blalock further explained the goals of her dissertation: “I examine how Chilean university activists in Santiago, Valparaíso, and Concepción mobilized during this period, questioned the status quo, and gained leadership experience through the construction and maintenance of communication networks with political parties and other social movements to foster social change.”

While in Chile, she will also work closely with Professor Oscar Aguilera of the Universidad de Chile as an affiliated researcher on a Chilean Science and Technology Development Fund funded project, “The Visual Construction of Youth in Chile: Canon Representation, Intermediality, and Sensuum from Visual Images in Newspaper and Photographic Archives (1910-1973).” Her role in the project will include cataloguing and digitizing archival materials.

To keep up with her travels, you can visit her blog at chileanista.com
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You can invest in the outstanding students of the University Honors Program by visiting our website and clicking "Invest in Honors."
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Dr. Amanda Stwart

Tanner Perfect  
Political Science and Spanish  
Why do Latinos Vote Democratic in Presidential Elections?  
Dr. Joshua Kennedy

Andrew Perry  
Computer Science  
Development of the Fast Fourier Transform Algorithm in the Go Language  
Dr. Juan Vargas

Ray Pettit  
2D Studio Art  
How Perception Compromises Identity  
Prof. Jessica Burke

Jesse Powell  
Philosophy  
Half Mary, Full of Haze: Physicalism and the Knowledge Argument  
Dr. Joseph Pellegrino

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Aleyna Rentz  
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Prof. Jared Yates Sexton

Donald Roberts  
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Dr. Craig Roell

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Psychology  
The Mobius Strip of Total Health: Manipulation of Thinking Prior to Exercise Activity  
Dr. Shauna W. Joyce

Jennifer Shaffer  
Mechanical Engineering and German  
Investigation of the Thermal Performance of Small Sierpinski Carpet Fractal Fins in a Natural Convection Environment  
Dr. David Calamos

Andrew Perry  
Computer Science  
Development of the Fast Fourier Transform Algorithm in the Go Language  
Dr. Juan Vargas

Rachel Siclare  
Nursing  
Reported Self-Care Practices and Perceptions of Well-Being in Caregivers of Children with Cancer  
Dr. Sheri Carey

Sean Spurlin  
Chemistry  
Regioselective Electrolytic 5,8-Difluorination of Quinolines  
Dr. Abid Shaikh

Caleb Still  
History  
Lost Boys and Girls: Navigating Experience and Identity during Operation Pedro Pan  
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Jonathan Taylor  
Chemistry  
Controlled Drug Delivery Utilizing Thermo-Responsive Functionalized Nanoporous Membrane  
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Riley Theis  
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Dr. Ryan Forsteberry

Lauren Thompson  
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Cierra Tomas  
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Jewish Resistance in World War II & Zionism: Making Aliyah in the Death Camps  
Dr. Brian K. Feltman

Diana Tyler  
Exercise Science  
Reliability of Gastrocnemius Pennation Angle Using Ultrasound with 15 Degree Adduction and Abduction in Standing Position  
Dr. Dan Czech and Dr. Li Li

Serenah Tyson  
Multimedia Film & Production  
The Process of Directing for Screen: (Sincerely)  
Prof. Tyson Davis

Cassandra Villers  
Middle Grades Education  
Characteristics of a Motivating and Engaging Middle Grades Classroom  
Dr. Meca Williams-Johnson

Kolysse Wagstaff  
Exercise Science  
The Effect of Stretching the Gastrocnemius on Electromechanical Delay and Decreased Muscle Power Production  
Dr. Daniel Czech

Stacey Zeestraten  
Chemistry  
Product Optimization of Tire Pyrolysis for Oil Well Rehabilitation  
Dr. Don McLemore
**Honors Students by Academic College**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts and Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science and Mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering &amp; Information Technology</td>
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<td>Business Administration</td>
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<td>Undeclared</td>
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**2017 Incoming Freshman Class Projections**

- 139 New Freshmen
- 130 Georgia Residents (94%)
- 1289 Average SAT
- 28.2 Average ACT
- 3.84 Average GPA (Unweighted)

**Honors Freshman Retention Rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>2007 Fall</th>
<th>2008 Fall</th>
<th>2009 Fall</th>
<th>2010 Fall</th>
<th>2011 Fall</th>
<th>2012 Fall</th>
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<th>2014 Fall</th>
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**Number of Honors Students**

- 526 Honors Students (38% Men, 62% Women, 78% White, 22% Non-white)
- 468 Georgia Residents
- 19,667 Hours of Service and Leadership
- 95% Freshman Retention Rate
- 182 Faculty Teach Honors Courses and Mentor Students
- 91 Honors Courses Offered
- 48,503 Thesis Downloads