

College of Business News

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Georgia Southern faculty member's research making an impact in education

May 1, 2017

Georgia Southern University College of Business Assistant Professor of economics, Jeff Schiman, Ph.D., was recently mentioned on the National Council on Teacher Quality website in a commentary by Hannah Putman for research he conducted with Ben Ost from the University of Illinois at Chicago on teacher absence rates.

His research focuses on teacher absence rates counting only sick and personal days, not professional development absences, and how these rates correspond to their workloads with consideration to class size and years of experience

The study, using data collected by the North Carolina Education Research Data Center from 1995 to 2007 on elementary teachers in grades PK-5, shows that when faced with higher workloads, teachers are good at showing up to school rather than staying home. The article, published in *Economics of Education Review*, volume 57, April 2017, highlights that teachers are less likely to be absent when teaching larger classes, teaching new grade assignments or having fewer years of experience.

Schiman and Ost also found when a teacher transferred from one school to another, their rate of absence gravitated toward the average for that school, which suggests that school-level factors are important when determining absence rates. The research also shows that teacher absences reduce student performance, suggesting policies reducing absenteeism can improve performance as well as directly cut costs due to lower substitute usage.

It is important to note that the research is based on data from North Carolina, where absence policy is set at the state level; however, the basic structure of North Carolina's absence policy is very similar to that of absence policies in many districts outside of North Carolina.

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Jeff Schiman, Ph.D.