

College of Education News

August 6, 2018

College of Education, Georgia Southern University

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i2STEMe School Outreach accepting memberships for 2018-19 school year

August 6, 2018



Georgia Southern University College of Education will soon begin offering materials and supplies for K-12 science and social studies content and curriculum through the Institute for Interdisciplinary STEM Education (i2STEMe) School Outreach program.

Formerly hosted by the Georgia Southern Museum as Project SENSE (Science Education Network for the Southeast) and Project BESST (Be Engaged in Social Studies Teaching), the i2STEMe School Outreach program offers equipment, materials and activity kits that enhance science and social studies curriculum and provide hands-on, inquiry based learning.

The program is a paid service that provides opportunities for membership at the school system, individual school or individual teacher level. Annual memberships range from \$2,500 for entire school systems to \$250 for an individual teacher.

“We are in the process of organizing and preparing a warehouse full of materials that teachers will be able to check out for a complete lesson in their science or social studies course without having to stress about the school purchasing the equipment or materials for the lesson,” explained Kania Greer, i2STEMe Coordinator. “We have Vernier and additional lab equipment that most schools do not have access to, and this program would allow teachers to utilize that equipment in their classroom to reinforce hands-on learning that students find engaging and exciting.”

Greer also explained that materials provided include consumables that are needed for instruction of a lesson as well.

“Say that a teacher wants to reinforce the concept of the effects of erosion,” said Greer, “all the materials needed for that lesson from the soil and rocks to the water quality testing kits would be available for checkout. All the teacher has to do is request the materials or kit, and set a pick up date. The teacher has the non-consumable materials at their disposal for two weeks.”

Greer says they hope to start lending materials by mid- to late August and are accepting memberships at this time. To inquire about membership information, please contact the i2STEMe administration at stem@georgiasouthern.edu or call (912) 478-8650.

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School psychology graduate student attends advocacy institute in Washington, D.C.

August 6, 2018



Courtney Smith, far right, takes a picture in front of the U.S. Capitol with her Georgia colleagues.

Throughout her graduate education at Georgia Southern University, Courtney Smith has become an advocate for her future career field of [school psychology](#).

“Not many people know what school psychologists are,” Smith said. “They often get us confused with school counselors, and that is why it is so important to advocate for the profession and awareness of our role in the schools.”

Smith serves as the University’s student representative on the Georgia Association of School Psychologists (GASP) Executive Board and has been an active member of the Georgia Southern School Psychology Student Association (SPSA). Throughout her time in the Educational Specialist program, Smith has participated in career events, speaking to prospective applicants and coordinating campus activities for School Psychology Awareness Week.

It was not until recently that Smith realized that she could do more. After being nominated by a faculty member, Smith received the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Graduate Student Advocacy in Action Scholarship. This award provided free registration for the annual Public Policy Institute. A partnership between NASP and Georgia Washington University, the Institute offers intensive learning experiences that help build foundational knowledge of education public policy and grassroots advocacy skills.

“Prior to attending the Institute, all of my advocacy efforts had been trying to recruit students to our program and trying to let people in different fields know what school psychologists do,” Smith said. “But the Institute really shifted me towards legislative advocacy and the importance of legislation and policies that affect our students and their access to mental health services.”

Held July 16-18 in Washington, D.C., the Public Policy Institute culminated with participants visiting Capitol Hill where they met with representatives and staff members from their regional districts.

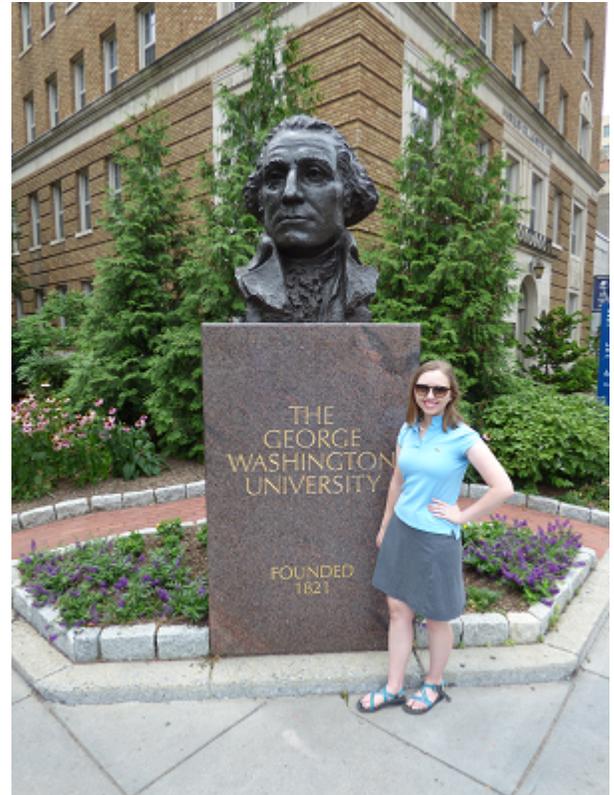
“The main thing I advocated for was the Increasing Access to Mental Health in Schools Act, Smith said. “This act looks at lowering the ratios of students to school psychologists, school social workers and school counselors in schools.”

Smith explained that NASP recommends school psychologists serve 500 to 700 students for a comprehensive mental health service.

“In Georgia, school psychologists are only funded one to every 2,475 students,” Smith said. “It’s frightening to think about when you need to provide service and support to that many students. It’s really about meeting the needs of the children.”

Since attending the Public Policy Institute, Smith, who is scheduled to graduate in fall 2018, now says she plans to expand her advocacy for the school psychology field.

“Sometimes in education, we think we are not supposed to be political,” she said. “But I think it is important to know that there are policies being made that could either really help or harm children in our schools. The Institute really inspired me to bring these skills back on a state and local level and be an active voice for children on a legislative platform.”



Courtney Smith

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College of Education alumna, staff member selected as a Google Innovator

August 6, 2018



Hollie Sisk poses for a picture at the Google for Education Certified Innovator Program.

This summer, Georgia Southern University alumna and staff member Hollie Sisk ('01,'05) became one of only 1,700 individuals in the world and 14 in the state of Georgia who are Google for Education Certified Innovators.

Sisk, who joined the College of Education in June as the coordinator of the Instructional Resources Center on the Armstrong Campus in Savannah, attended the 2018 Google for Education Certified Innovator program in Venice, California on July 9-11.

The Certified Innovator program selects candidates based on their professional experience, passion for teaching and learning, innovative use of technology in school settings, potential to impact other educators, and their desire to tackle challenges in education. This year, Google will train five cohorts in countries including the United States, Netherlands, Spain, Denmark and Mexico.

"I was shocked that I got accepted the first time I applied," Sisk said. "Most people don't get in on their first try, so my expectations were to just go through the application process."

Thirty-seven candidates were selected to participate in the U.S. cohort. Participants attended the Google for Education Innovation Academy for three days, where they visited the YouTube headquarters and worked in the Google's Venice, California office. During the academy, Sisk and fellow cohort members focused on collaborative and innovative problem-solving based on the design thinking process.

"The design thinking process begins by breaking down a challenge in education to the root cause. It considers the user or others, how the problem affects the user, and then how you can relate that to your challenge," Sisk said. "A great deal of this process is learning to listen and empathize to create the most effective solution."

As a part of the application process for the program, Sisk was required to design an Innovation Project that will be carried out over the next year with the assistance of a fellow Google Innovator and mentor. Sisk's project, titled "Flame EDU: Ignite Change," seeks to build a framework specifically for school administrators to educate, encourage and empower their school's stakeholders on the use and integration of technology.

"So many school districts want to go one-to-one, which provides each student in the school with a device such as a Chromebook," Sisk said. "However, the administrators and teachers do not always have the proper training to know the value and potential of these tools in order to promote student engagement through effective integration."

Sisk explained that when technology is under-utilized, it becomes an "expensive pencil," serving only as a tool for word processing, when it can be used for so much more. Part of her Innovation Project is to offer free training for administrators using Google for Education to build school culture for proper use of the technology. The project also assists the administrators in supporting teacher instruction and development with technology.

As a part of the College of Education staff serving both students and faculty, Sisk says that this training will also help her to better serve the Armstrong Campus population with their instructional technology needs and questions.

"I want to be that person that fans their flames," Sisk said. "I hope to encourage, nourish and inspire people as so many have motivated me along my journey in education."



Hollie Sisk

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COE invited to serve Savannah community on Aug. 17

August 6, 2018

Georgia Southern University College of Education (COE) faculty have organized a community service opportunity with People of Action Caring for Kids (PACK) of Savannah, Georgia on Friday, August 17 at 11 a.m. Members of the COE are invited to come together to pack bags of food for local Savannah K-12 students.

“PACK is an organization that works with local schools to provide meals and basic necessities to all students who sign up,” explained Janel Smith, lecturer in the Department of Middle Grades and Secondary Education. “The organization also runs a clothes closet at the Chatham County DFACS office for foster families as well as supporting local charities.”

Smith explained that because PACK directly impacts the locals students in schools in which Georgia Southern serves, she and fellow faculty members wanted to donate their time to assist the organization in their efforts.

Members of the College interested in assisting are encouraged to RSVP or email any questions to Smith at jjsmith@georgiasouthern.edu.

PACK is a 501c3 non-profit organization that began in 2014 with the mission of ensuring that school-aged children have meals when they are not at school. Students receiving free or reduced lunches or recommended students from school counselors are offered the opportunity to opt into the program if they feel their family could benefit from the assistance. The PACK office building is located at 9150 Old Montgomery Rd., Savannah, Ga. 31406 (at the back of the Compassion Christian Church, East Campus parking lot.) For more information about PACK visit, PackSavannah.com.

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