University welcomes 450 middle schoolers for Model UN event

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Georgia Southern University’s Department of Political Science and Division of Continuing Education presents the Middle School Model United Nations Conference on Nov. 8 and 9 at the Fielding S. Russell Union. The all-day event will feature more than 450 student delegates from 20 schools across Georgia and South Carolina.

“This is actually the first of three Model UNs that the University is sponsoring this year,” said Barry Balleck, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Political Science. “The second will be tailored to high school students and held on campus in the Nessmith-Lane Conference Center, and the third will feature another 400 middle schoolers and will be held at the Coastal Georgia Center in Savannah.”

The Model UN was created shortly after the founding of the United Nations in 1945 with the goal of providing students an opportunity to gain greater understanding of international events and the global community. To participate in Model UN, students select from more than 190 countries and nonprofit organizations – such as the International Red Cross or Greenpeace – and then serve as their organizations’ representatives during the conference. The students learn about their countries’ positions on critical domestic and global issues and act as diplomats to represent their countries’ points of view. Through Model UN, students learn the complexities of diplomacy – including the compromise associated with writing resolutions and securing their passage – and the art of parliamentary procedures.

“We feel that the diversity of schools participating in our Model UN indicates the reach and popularity of the conference and its continued reputation for academic excellence,” Balleck said. “Most, if not all, of the students come away from the Model United Nations experience with a renewed appreciation for the process of peace and understanding, and many, if not all, come to realize that global cooperation cannot be achieved by being passive bystanders.”

Georgia Southern’s Model United Nations program has been in existence for 40 years, making it one of the longest-standing continuous Model UN programs in the country. The University’s National Model United Nations delegation consists of 20 students who were competitively selected through a process that included interviews about their interest in and knowledge of global affairs. The University students have the full obligation of planning and implementing each of the three Model United Nations Conferences, and each member of the Georgia Southern delegation serves as a committee chair and/or rapporteur of the various committees represented at the conferences. Nearly 75 additional University students also participate in the Model UNs through classroom activities such as required observations of procedures during the conferences. This year, the Department of Admissions will also conduct campus tours as part of the Middle School Model United Nations Conference, a service that was requested by past conference participants and their teachers and parents.