Georgia Southern University students Chelsea Ritter, Meghan Mauceri and Matthew Monaco won $500 for "Wisdom of the World," their entry in the 2012 Vista Higher Learning Video Contest. The Georgia Southern team was one of six national winners representing various universities, including University of Florida, Georgetown University, Michigan State University, Utah Valley University and University of Virginia.

Ritter, a senior hotel and restaurant management major and business administration and Spanish minor, said the group learned about and participated in the contest through Professor Jose Manuel Hidalgo’s Spanish class this fall and says the video aims to communicate the importance of learning foreign languages.

“This summer, Meghan, Matthew and I went to Spain, and living with a Spanish family, as well as among the Segovia community, showed us just how important other languages are. The message of the video is that languages are important because the people who speak them have so much knowledge and wisdom to offer us, so why limit ourselves to only speaking English?,” she said.

“‘Wisdom of the World’ consists of several inspirational quotes and proverbs in foreign languages,” Ritter said. “The Spanish one, ‘dime con quien andas y te diré quien eres’ is actually a phrase we learned while in Spain. It means ‘tell me who you walk with and I’ll tell you who you are,’ or that who you associate with dictates who are you are, a message that has changed how I see many aspects of my life.

“Learning another language has opened so many doors for me, and this video’s purpose was to help others do the same.”

Ritter’s classmates Meghan Mauceri and Matthew Monaco also participated in creating the winning video.

“We all became friends during the Segovia trip, so naturally we grouped up for the contest,” said Mauceri, a junior biology and Spanish double-major. “We were inspired by the ‘refrains’ or Spanish sayings that we learned in Spain, which we thought would be great to feature in a video.”

“I decided to make this video because language is important to me and my life, so if there is any way I can share that importance with others, I will do it,” said Monaco, who is pursuing pre-medical degrees in biology and chemistry and a minor in Spanish. “Language comes alive to me every time I speak with someone from a foreign country because I realize that they had to overcome the obstacle of learning English in order to succeed here.”

“It is important to encourage our students to participate in any academic competition through which they can share their passion and hard work with peers from different colleges,” Hidalgo said. “Since we live in a multilingual and multicultural society, it is vital that we educate our students, who will need the skills to function in this society, to understand the many advantages of being proficient in a second language and to appreciate the values of cultures different from their own.”

The Vista Higher Learning Video Contest is open to students enrolled in a higher-education foreign language course and the 2012 theme was “Live Language,” in which students were encouraged to communicate in their videos how language comes alive for them as they study and plan for their futures. Each of the six winners received $500 and had their videos displayed at VistaHigherLearning.com.