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Taiwan Student Teaching Pilot a Success

January 4, 2012

With the increasing diversity of American classrooms, new teachers need to be able to teach students whose first language is not English and to empathize and understand what it's like to be a member of a cultural minority. Four COE Early Childhood Education majors were able to have an experience in Taiwan fall semester that allowed them to do both. These soon-to-be teachers said what they learned will help them enormously in the classroom when they graduate. The students were part of a pilot project guided by COE's Dr. Hsiu-Lien Lu and Dr. Lina Soares that enabled the students to experience a complete cultural immersion as they taught children in public school settings in Taiwan.

The exchange was coordinated with National Taipei University of Education and placements were facilitated by the principal at Tainan Municipal Tu-Cheng High School. "Our students were so excited by the experience," said Dr. Lu. "They kept saying how much more they now understood about valuing and respecting different cultures, and how much better equipped they are to teach English language learners," she added.

The students underwent a rigorous evaluation process and all four completed 11 weeks of student teaching at Portal Elementary School prior to departing for Taiwan. They left November 11 and returned to Georgia Southern December 12. "These are some of our best students," Dr. Lu said. "The students knew they were representing Georgia Southern and the United States, and might be the only Americans some of the kids they met in Taiwan would ever interact with."

"We are pleased the pilot was beneficial and rewarding for our students as well as the students in the participating public schools in Tainan," said Dr. Deborah Thomas, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Teacher Education and Accreditation. Dr. Thomas said COE is evaluating the program to determine the feasibility of future student teaching placements in Taiwan.

Pictured in the photo above are (from left to right) Dr. Lu, Haley Wade, Stefanie Fialkowski, Chelsea Owen and Lindsay Goodman.