

# University Honors Program News

May 1, 2018

Georgia Southern University

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## Kristi St. Clair Receives Highest Honors

May 1, 2018



Every year, Georgia Southern University hosts the Honors Day Convocation, which recognizes the achievements of students' work throughout the year, new members of honors societies, and graduating seniors. Kristi St. Clair (chemistry '18) was one of the many graduating seniors this year, but in one particular way she stood out. President Dr. Jaimie Hebert awarded St. Clair the highest honor at the convocation, the University System of Georgia Academic Recognition Award.

This award recognizes the student that exemplifies the most outstanding academic achievement as well as their dedication to the campus community. "I was very happy when I walked on the stage to receive my award. I was so proud that my hard work has been recognized."

Her time with the University Honors Program has given her countless opportunities. However, her favorite memory with the program was when she gave back to the local community. During her freshman year, she was in Dr. Francis Desiderio's Honors section of the First Year Experience course (FYE), *Meaning of Place*. In the University Honors Program, students are required to complete experiential learning and in their first year, they complete the requirement with their FYE class.

Dr. Desiderio's students volunteered with the Averitt Center for the Statesboro Ghost Tours by Lantern Light. "My favorite memory of the Honors Program was during my FYE class we volunteered as tour guides for the Statesboro ghost tour," she said. "We turned the old hospital into a haunted house which was the final destination of the tour. It was so much fun and I learned all of Statesboro's spooky stories!"

St. Clair also volunteered twice for the Honors Program's alternative break trip to work with Camp Blue Skies at Camp Twin Lakes. Camp Blue Skies makes use of Camp Twin Lakes' site and professional staff when they host their yearly camp for adults with developmental disabilities. In her first year at the camp, St. Clair worked as cabin counselor and activity leader, but in her second year, she found a place with the medical staff and got to see another side of camp, helping the staff assist campers with their health needs.

In the classroom and the lab, St. Clair excelled as well. Her honors thesis examined "gold nanorods as a source of energy to increase the function of a catalyst that was attached to the nanorod in order to make the catalyst more efficient at lower temperatures." She also presented research at several conferences, including the American Chemical Society national meeting, the Georgia Academy of Physicians Annual Scientific Assembly, and the American College of Physicians Georgia Chapter meeting.

After graduation, St. Clair will attend the Medical College of Georgia. The Honors Program wishes Kristi all the best as she graduates from Georgia Southern and begins the next chapter of her studies and career.

## Jordan Salvador Wins Best Paper Award

May 1, 2018



Jordan Salvador (marketing '18) received the Best Student Paper award for a presentation based on her honors thesis research at the recent meeting of the Association of Marketing Theory and Practice (AMTP). Georgia Southern University business faculty regularly attend and present their research at AMTP, and Dr. Lindsay Larson recommended attending this conference to Salvador and to her other students as well. However, Salvador was the only one among the students to present work.

Salvador's research, "Beyond Higher Ed Marketing: Unsanctioned User Generated Content," analyzes the purity of brands marketing content formed when students create accounts affiliated with certain universities. "This may be done through students creating various Twitter and Instagram accounts that affiliate themselves with the school but are not regulated or filtered by the university. I looked at whether students actually identified with the accounts, asking the question, 'Are these accounts an accurate representation of student experience at Georgia Southern University?' We also looked at whether students see these accounts negatively affecting the brand of the University," she said.

Salvador worked closely with Dr. Larson in preparation for the conference. Together they created a poster presentation along with the research paper. "Dr. Larson has helped me tremendously over the past year. She was there for every step of the process, giving me guidance," she said. "For the conference, we met once a week for a month, and I practiced my presentation with her."

The conference consisted of mostly professionals and graduate students. Salvador was the only undergraduate in attendance. She was able to make connections with interested professionals in her field of study. "I really loved the flexibility and support that I was given at the conference. I was able to talk to some professors about the possibility of continuing my education further in grad school. I also had a few professors from other schools ask me to send them my paper so that they could use some of the information for their own personal research as well," she said.

Conferences provide the students with the ability to learn new information as well as different means of research. They allow students to transfer what they have learned in the classroom to a professional setting. "At the beginning of the conference, I was worried because I do not like public speaking. However, the experience gave me so much more confidence in myself after presenting. Also, conferences are just a lot of fun and are definitely worth it," Salvador said.

## Honors Travels to Washington, D.C.

May 1, 2018



This April, the Georgia Southern University Honors Program attended the Southern Regional Honors Council (SRHC) annual conference (SRHC) in Washington, D.C. Students in the program from both the Armstrong and Statesboro campuses traveled together as a united program for the first time, with thirty-eight students delivering panel presentations and displaying research posters. The conference took place over three days, allowing the students to attend sessions as well as explore the nation's capital.

The honors programs on both campuses have historically participated in the SRHC annual meetings, including jointly hosting the conference in Savannah in 2014. However, this year marked the first time the honors students on the Armstrong and Statesboro campuses attended as a unified program. Both programs have always emphasized the importance of undergraduate research, and so it seems fitting that one of the first unified activities was to present research at a conference for honors programs and colleges.

Kaley Powers (cell and molecular biology '18) felt that this academic conference aided the process of consolidation. "Students from each campus, Statesboro and Savannah, had the opportunity to get to know each other, especially on the bus rides to and from the conference," she said. "And students also got to know Dr. Engel and Dr. Roberts better," she said.

The thirty-eight students from Georgia Southern comprised the largest group from any school represented at the conference. Students' research was not limited to one discipline. Instead, the conference hosted a large variety of projects, such as engineering, education, and literature. This range gave attendees the opportunity to hear and learn from students in a variety of fields outside their major.

Sophie Fleri (mechanical engineering '19) said, "My favorite part about the conference was seeing all the great presentations from a diverse group of topics. You could find a presentation on gender studies and then go to one on the way agriculture affects the environment."

Research can be a daunting task, with many uncertainties. However, for many students this conference gave them insight on what to expect. Julia Thomas (anthropology '19) presented research on the aging population in Japan. She said, "The information from my poster presentation was adapted from a project for one of my previous anthropology classes. However, watching my peers present their preliminary Honors Theses made me excited to start my own research."

Throughout the entirety of the conference, honors community appeared in the camaraderie between the students. In most of the presentations, Georgia Southern University students saw a row of their peers, intently listening. "This is the sixth time presenting my honors research, around the southeast. It is so nice being able to see my friends support me even after watching my presentation several times," said Bailey Kirk (mathematics '18).

Tessa Wilkins (health science informatics '18) presented on how peer education could benefit the undergraduate nursing program at the Armstrong Campus. "My research focuses on how health informatics majors as well as nursing majors can work together educating the other. Health informatics can share the administrative side of medicine, and nursing can present the hands-on clinical side," she said.

This conference gave her the opportunity to share her research with others while gaining insight and suggestions. "I think the overwhelming benefit was to expose ourselves to new research while making new friends along the way," Wilkins said. This trip brought the two campuses together."

## Mary Carpenter Receives Prestigious Gold 'A' Award and Bhatia Foundation Award

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At the Awards Convocation for the Georgia Southern University Armstrong Campus on Thursday, April 19, senior Honors Program student Mary Carpenter (rehabilitation sciences '18) received two of the campus's most prestigious awards: the Gold 'A' and the Bhatia Foundation Award.

The Gold 'A' Award is given only occasionally, when a student wins both the Silver 'A' for Academics and the Silver 'A' for Service, which represent outstanding achievement in academics or service to the university, respectively.

The Bhatia Foundation Award was created in spring 2012 as an opportunity to recognize students who embody the ideals their foundation seeks to promote. The Bhatia Foundation Award is given to a graduate who is focused on the betterment of humankind and the promotion of friendship and goodwill for all cultures. The recipient must also hold the university's Gold or Silver 'A' for Academics or Service.

Carpenter found out she would be receiving the Gold 'A' award prior to the convocation and was proud to have earned it. "For me receiving the Gold 'A' symbolized how much I have grown as a person while at Armstrong. There is no way that as a freshman I would have been able to accomplish what was necessary for either of the Silver 'A's," Carpenter said. The Bhatia Foundation Award, however, she was not expecting. "After I received my Gold 'A' I thought was done going up on stage and I was completely surprised to receive the Bhatia Foundation Award. I am very honored to have been chosen to receive this award. I see it as a challenge to continue striving for my own self-improvement and the improvement of my community as a whole," Carpenter said.

Dr. Sara Gremillion, who knows Carpenter through the Honors Program and met her as a freshman, said, "Her active involvement in our program made her stand out from the start.... She was easily voted into the [Honors Ambassador] position by me and our Director, Dr. Jonathan Roberts." The duties of an Honors ambassador include representing the program at university recruitment events and freshman orientation sessions and serving as a mentor to incoming Honors students. Dr. Gremillion went on to say, "It also includes serving as a trusted peer who is willing to listen and help when a student has a personal problem. Mary has done a great job in the position and has represented our program well!"

Carpenter's Honors Project research mentor, Dr. Keri Mans, also spoke highly of her. For their study on behavioral memory and zebrafish, Carpenter was instrumental in helping to create an experimental method that Dr. Mans's lab will continue to utilize in future. "Mary's ownership of this project certainly never failed to impress. We are fortunate to have had Mary join our lab for the past year as our honors student," said Dr. Mans.

In addition to serving as an Honors Program Ambassador, Carpenter has served as Vice President of Rho Tau and Vice President of Phi Eta Sigma, as well as a volunteer for a variety of campus and community organizations, including West Rehab and the Armstrong campus's Youth Orchestra program. Carpenter has also presented research at multiple regional conferences and has received numerous awards for her excellence in academics and service, all while maintaining a 4.0 GPA.

Carpenter will graduate from Georgia Southern University on May 4, 2018, and then begin the Doctor of Physical Therapy graduate program at the Armstrong campus later in May. In the future, Carpenter would like to specialize in inpatient therapy and ultimately work abroad in the field of pediatric therapy for developing countries where there is limited access to medical care.

The Georgia Southern University Honors Program is proud to call Mary one of its graduates and wishes her the best in her future endeavors.