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Opportunities Adding Up

May 10, 2018



As her final semester at Georgia Southern University ended, things began to add up for Bailey Kirk (mathematics '18). Kirk has participated in the University Honors Program since her first-year in 2014. Throughout her time, she has taken advantage of opportunities such as peer leading, participating as an alternative break trip leader, and presenting her research at conferences. Each of these individual experiences inspired her decision to continue her education and pursue a master's degree in teaching.

This June, she will begin graduate studies at Georgia State University. She was awarded the fully-funded Woodrow Wilson Fellowship. Her

focus in graduate school will be on teaching in low-income schools. The next chapter of her life will be greatly influenced by her four years at Georgia Southern University.

Like any typical freshman, Kirk was placed in an Honors First-Year Experience course (FYE) during her first semester. Her class, Hispanic Culture through Film, helped to open her eyes to all of the opportunities offered to her by the Honors Program. Kirk grew very fond of her FYE professor, Doctora Leticia McGrath. Because of their close relationship, she was inspired to travel with Dra. McGrath to Costa Rica to participate in the Honors Program's alternative break trip, Project Pura Vida.

"I loved being able to travel there and explore, but most importantly to volunteer in La Carpio. Working in that town literally changed my life. It influenced me to go on more alternative breaks, which solidified my life goal: to teach in low-income areas. This dream may be more difficult but ultimately so worth it by seeing the inspiration and life changing moments in people that need it most," Kirk said.

This relationship also prompted Kirk's choice to become a Peer Leader for Dra. McGrath's FYE class in her second year. Kirk also became an Honors Ambassador where she talks with potential students about the opportunities in the University Honors Program. One of her proudest moments was during a scholarship event last year.

"I will never forget when one of my current FYE students came to me and said I was the Honors Ambassador that she talked to at one of the admission events. She said that I was the person that helped her decide to come to Statesboro, by talking to her and making her feel comfortable," Kirk said.

Kirk also presented research at a conference during her first year in the Honors Program, and in the ensuing years, she continued to present her ideas at conferences, including her research for her honors thesis. "Everything I have presented had some roots in Honors, whether it be from Costa Rica or my honors thesis," she said.

Like many honors students, Kirk was intimidated by the honors thesis. However, despite these initial fears, Kirk finally realized her passion for research. "My research presents the further analysis of the assessment data on College Algebra and prerequisite skills for Calculus. I found trends within the data that can be used to improve the teaching and learning of some concepts in College Algebra and Calculus," Kirk said.

Now, through all these experiences, she has had the opportunity to travel abroad, present research at professional conferences, create lasting relationships with peers and professors, and influenced potential and first-year students through her Honors Ambassador and Peer Leader positions. Kirk knows that her experiences in the University Honors Program have allowed her to grow in and outside the classroom, and all of it has prepared her for her next steps as she moves on to graduate school.

"Volunteering becomes something that you just do naturally, and it never feels like a chore," she said. "The research is something that you are passionate about and truly care to learn more about in order to expose others to new material. Everything may seem difficult, but there is so much support in the Honors Program. All that you need to do is reach out to a peer, a professor, or just take a short walk down to the Eidson House."

Honors Students Win Awards at Eagle Showcase

May 10, 2018



Andrea Appleton (center) with Dr. Jerri Kropp (left) and Dr. Trent Maurer (right).

Georgia Southern University annually hosts the Eagle Showcase: Excellence in Service-Learning. The Office of Leadership and Community Engagement works with The Honors Society of Phi Kappa Phi to make this event possible for undergraduate and graduate students to present posters on service-learning projects. Two honors students were recognized, at this event, Vernon Herrington and Andrea Appleton. Herrington received first place in the undergraduate poster category, and Appleton received the People's Choice Award.

Herrington worked with a group of students, developing a 3D model of local intersections. Herrington specifically made a model of the Brampton Avenue and Bermuda Run intersection to make recommendations on improving traffic flow. After their research, the group donated the model to the City of Statesboro engineers to help

the redesign process.

Appleton worked with Dr. Jerri Kropp and Dr. Trent Maurer during her First-Year Experience course, *Animal-Assisted Therapy*. The class worked with the Statesboro Parks and Recreation Department's program, *Stirrup Some Fun*. The program provides therapeutic horse-riding for children with disabilities. Appleton explained the benefits such as increased self-esteem and confidence while reflecting on her own journey volunteering with the program.

Herrington and Appleton are active students both on and off campus. Their projects exemplified the importance of civic engagement, and both of them are using their time and resources to help the Statesboro community.

Click [here](#) to see the award-winning posters!



Vernon Herrington (left) at the Showcase.

First-Year Experience Awards Honors

May 10, 2018



Francis Desiderio and Morgan Gallahue surrounded by the students in Soccer Cultures around the World.

Every year, the Office of First-Year Experience recognizes a student, a faculty member, and a staff member whose work with first-year students is exceptional. This spring, two of these three winners were from the same honors section of a First-Year Experience class. Peer Leader Morgan Gallahue (biology '18) was recognized as the 2018 Peer Leader of the Year, and Dr. Francis Desiderio, the Associate Director of the University Honors Program, was recognized as the 2018 Outstanding Advocate for First-Year Students.

During her freshman year, Gallahue was a student in Dr. Desiderio's Honors FYE, *The Meaning of Place*. That course explored the built environment from an interdisciplinary perspective with a particular focus on how people attach meaning to place. This year, the course theme is *Soccer Cultures around the World*. While Gallahue was not well-versed in the sport, she agreed to work with Desiderio in the year-long course that covered the fall seminar and the connected spring Global Citizens course.

"Morgan's help in developing this course to hit the right level of academic rigor while still being accessible to the soccer novice was invaluable," Desiderio said. "She had an excellent rapport with the students, and it was clear that they were comfortable approaching her with questions about the class, the program, and Georgia Southern. It was exciting for both of us to receive awards!"

Dr. Desiderio has been coordinating the Honors Program's sections of FYE since 2010 and has been the program's point person on the first-year Honors Living Learning Community. "Francis has been an instrumental reason for the success and retention of honors first-year students, and I am delighted he is being recognized for these efforts along with his peer leader Morgan." Dr. Steven Engel said of Dr. Desiderio's recognition.

Morgan enjoyed working with the students in the class, outside of class, and in her capacity as a community leader in the Honors Living Learning Community.

"It felt nice to be recognized, but I know there are also many peer leaders that do just as good a job and are just as deserving. None of us are doing this for recognition. We just care about our students and want them to succeed. My favorite part of this experience was watching the freshmen present at the Honors Symposium with their research projects. I was proud to see all their work on display," Gallahue said.