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# Music professor strengthens Georgia Southern's international links

*DECEMBER 21, 2007*

Professor Michael Braz has provided a vital part of Georgia Southern University's music curriculum for 20 years. For year 21 he decided to try a change of scenery, and so far, he reports, it's been great. He spent the fall semester teaching a variety of music classes at one of Georgia Southern University's partner schools, St. Benedict's Catholic School and Performing Arts College in Derby, England.

'I met students from St. Benedict's when they came to the U.S. last summer, and I was very impressed, so it was an easy decision to choose the school for the first part of my sabbatical year,' said Braz.

'Braz spent three months at St. Benedict's, a school that emphasizes the performing arts across the curriculum, but especially in the sixth form, which is similar to America's high school. In addition work in the classroom and occasional recital and concert performances, Braz worked with Marion Chester, musical director for St. Benedict's, to produce the school's annual show, 'Dracula Spectacula,' a musical take-off on the legend of the infamous vampire.

'The show had music written just for piano, but we wanted to use an orchestra,' said Braz. 'So I wrote the orchestral parts and played piano for the show, which involved 150 students.'

While he was there, two students from Georgia Southern University visited St. Benedict's as part of the College Education's International Studies opportunity. Braz served as the Georgia Southern supervisor and mentor for student teachers Megan McMahon and Katie Jones. Through its College of Education, Georgia Southern is part of the International Learning Community and has developed a partnership with St. Benedict's School.

'The people at St. Benedict's made sure my time was filled,' said Braz. He visited Scotland, London, and many sites near Derby. He even took part in an evening of music at a local pub, joining a local group named 'Please Yourself' for a half-dozen tunes.

'The people at St. Benedict's in Derby couldn't have been nicer to me,' said Braz, who will continue his sabbatical by traveling to Nepal, where he will spend the next six weeks months teaching piano to young people there.

To hear a BBC Radio Derby interview with Dr. Braz, go to <http://www.georgiasouthern.edu/strategic/index.php?s=73>

# Georgia Southern University professor says: Time to start thinking about filing your 2007 taxes

*DECEMBER 21, 2007*

As 2007 draws to a close, Americans will soon face their annual nemesis: filing their income tax return with the Internal Revenue Service.

'It's not too early to start thinking about the process,'" says Jill Lockwood, professor of accounting at Georgia Southern University. 'If you've got the documents you need and know what's new this year, it's easier to get started.'

Lockwood, who teaches tax law at the undergraduate and graduate levels in the University's College of Business Administration, offers several tips to help make filing easier:

- You'll be receiving important tax documents such as W-2 forms, dividend and interest statements, and mortgage interest statements in January. Keep a box close to the place where you open your mail, and put each tax document there as you receive it. When you start your tax forms, the information you need will be in one place.
- The personal exemption for 2007 is \$3,400 per dependent.
- The standard deductions for 2007 are:
  - Single: \$5,350
  - Married filing joint return: \$10,700
  - Married filing separate return: \$5,350
  - Head of household: \$7,850
  - Surviving spouse \$10,700
- You may be entitled to a \$4,000 tuition deduction for tuition paid for post-secondary education that was not covered by HOPE or other scholarship money.
- The 2007 mileage rate for the business use of a car is 48.5 cents per mile.
- All contributions, no matter how small, must be substantiated by a cancelled check or a receipt from the charity.
- All single contributions of \$250 or more must be substantiated by a letter from the charity. Your cancelled check will not be enough.
- If you own stock and asked the company to use your dividends to purchase more stock, the cash would have received still must be reported as dividend income.

- If you changed jobs and want to move your 401(k) to an IRA, ask the bank or brokerage firm holding the IRA to send a form to your former employer requesting a "trustee to trustee" transfer. If you do, the transfer will not be taxed to you as a taxable distribution.
- If you sold stocks or bonds this year, you will need to know what you paid for the stocks or bonds that were sold. Don't wait until the last minute to look for this information.

"Prepare in advance, get your information together," says Lockwood. "Then relax and enjoy the new year."