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## Georgia Southern launches NASA-funded engineering mentorship program with Savannah-area high schools

December 8, 2022

Savannah-area high school students are getting a first-hand look at engineering concepts through the Eagle Engineering Ambassadors (EAA) program, a new NASA-funded mentorship program that partners students in Georgia Southern University's [Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Computing](#) with teams of high school students.

The new program, much like its predecessor the Engineering Design Challenge (EDC), introduces high schoolers to engineering concepts through hands-on projects and mentorship from Georgia Southern students. Led by [Priya Goeser, Ph.D.](#), professor of [mechanical engineering](#), and [Thomas Murphy, Ph.D.](#), associate professor of [electrical and computer engineering](#), the program is funded through a grant from the [Georgia Space Grant Consortium](#).



Savannah-area high school student works on 3D printer in preparation for EDC 2022.

“Historically, we had an outreach program on the Armstrong Campus in Savannah that was called EDC,” said Goeser. “This year, our approach is to have a program where the schools are not competing against each other. Instead, we’re meeting them where they’re at. This gives us flexibility in training teachers, training students and giving them the tools that they need to connect with engineering and STEM-related topics.”

Goeser also hopes that the shift in program format will help participants build on their engineering knowledge through increasingly difficult tasks, rather than once-a-year, standalone projects. The program, which began in August and will continue through the spring semester, already boasts eight Georgia Southern mentors from the Armstrong Campus and 22 Savannah-area high school student participants. Goeser hopes to expand the program to the Statesboro Campus and to Statesboro-area schools in the future.

“Participating in this program has made me appreciate the early education of engineering in local high schools,” said junior mechanical engineering major Emma Kurtz. “I was part of the team who delivered 3D printers and trained staff on their use. I got involved because I was excited to be involved with the community, but this program has also impacted how I understand engineering and how I explain it to others.”

Other student mentors in the program shared similar sentiments to Kurtz. Tyler Nagy, an electrical engineering major with a military background, initially joined the program to help distinguish himself from fellow engineering students.

“With my background in the military, I spent a lot of time training and managing a small team, so EEA was a really natural place for me to start outside of my schoolwork,” Nagy said. “But working with EEA also forced me to improve my skills as an educator, gave me valuable experience managing a project on a tight timeline and helped me gain a deeper understanding of additive manufacturing.”



Tyler Nagy works with a student from a Savannah-area high school during EDC 2022.

Nagy's favorite part of participating in the program had little to do with coursework and everything to do with the ingenuity of the high school teams.

"By far, my favorite part of EEA is seeing the creativity and problem solving from all of the teams," Nagy said. "The high school students have an inspiring level of motivation, along with an assortment of problem analysis methods. Their varied experiences and approaches let everyone leave with a new perspective, which is really an invaluable aspect that would be hard to get any other way."

Goeser hopes that experiences like this continue to come from the EEA program for high school and Georgia Southern students alike.

"We want students to know that studying engineering is not unreachable," Goeser said. "Math and physics are important, but there are also skills like spatial visualization and design that involve creativity, and that can make the difficult pieces more workable and fun. You just need to find the resources to help you get there, and we are here to help."

EEA is expected to be hosted each fall and spring semester. Learn more about EEA at [GeorgiaSouthern.edu/EEA](https://GeorgiaSouthern.edu/EEA).

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