

College of Education News

August 2, 2017

Georgia Southern University

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Free instructional technology development offered to area educators

August 2, 2017



GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY



On Saturday, September 9 from 9 a.m. to noon, Georgia Southern University's College of Education will host its first EduMakers Unconference for area teachers, media specialists and other educational professionals to share expertise in creating and teaching in makerspaces and STEM/STEAM labs.

In today's schools, there is a growing push for STEM and computing skills alongside creative spaces (often referred to as makerspaces) that allow students to learn by hands-on activities.

"As educational researchers of instructional technology, we are excited to see teachers incorporating such learning activities in their classrooms and schools," said Assistant Professor Mete Akcaoglu, Ph.D. "This type of engagement and learning is long lasting and possibly life changing."

The event, hosted by instructional technology faculty members Akcaoglu and Charles Hodges, Ph.D., will be organized in an 'unconference' structure allowing participants to determine, drive and even lead the learning sessions of the day. Possible topics include: coding/programming, game design, 3D printing and laser cutters, robotics and makerspace design and organization.

"This free event will bring together teachers from our region to share their experiences and resources in helping each other to create and maintain makerspaces in their schools and form a professional learning network to support each other's ongoing learning needs," said Hodges, associate professor.

Reserve your free ticket for the EduMakers Unconference by visiting <http://bit.ly/EduMakers2017>. For more information about EduMakers Unconference, visit <https://spark.adobe.com/page/LMg8ozNJQIPCU/> or email innovationstudio@georgiasouthern.edu.

A continental breakfast and lunch (for the first 100 participants to RSVP) will be provided. Door prizes will also be awarded throughout the day's events.

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COE faculty receive funding for pilot study on fostering social justice education

August 2, 2017



Sabrina Ross, Ph.D.

Ming Fang He, Ph.D.

College of Education's (COE) [Sabrina Ross, Ph.D.](#) and [Ming Fang He, Ph.D.](#) will begin a pilot study this fall to explore the processes and outcomes associated with the development of a university sponsored professional learning community to foster social justice education in P-12 settings.

"A professional learning community (PLC) is a group of educators who meet regularly, share knowledge and work together to improve teacher expertise and student achievement," said Ross. "A university sponsored PLC receives support—in terms of time commitments from university faculty and staff and/or educational resources or support—from a partnering university."

Recently funded by an internal seed grant totaling \$6,538 from Georgia Southern University's Faculty Research Committee (FRC), the pilot study will include current COE graduate students working within traditional school settings and will provide learning support using online platforms including the University's Folio system, as well as additional tools such as blogs and social media outlets.

Study objectives identified by Ross and He include understanding how a university sponsored PLC develops and meets the needs of Georgia teachers, examining the extent to which participation in this learning community fosters the abilities of teachers to implement social justice action research projects in their classroom and the association of teacher participation with student academic gains.

"The research will help us to better understand how university sponsored PLCs evolve and develop over time," said Ross. "The research on this specific university sponsored PLC can aid in the education and academic success of culturally and linguistically diverse learners through the provision of training and support to their teachers."

Both faculty members in the Department of Curriculum, Foundations and Reading, Ross and He, were instrumental in developing the new graduate Certificate in Curriculum and Pedagogy for Social Justice.

The six-course certificate provides educators with the tools needed to become reflective practitioners who successfully integrate social justice education into their classrooms.

“Social justice education is vital in today’s classrooms,” said He. “It affirms students’ cultural and linguistic diversity; works against the structures of oppression such as racism, classism, homophobia, and gender oppression that perpetuate educational inequalities in schools and societies; and challenges teachers who work with all the stakeholders to create equitable opportunities and inspirational learning environments where all students can reach their best potential.”

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Harris returns to China to deliver keynote address

August 2, 2017



COE's Kymberly Harris, Ph.D. pictured with Meng Deng, Ph.D., professor at Beijing Normal University and director for the Research Center for Inclusive Education.

On July 2-7, College of Education associate professor [Kymberly Harris, Ph.D.](#) delivered a keynote address to special education professionals in Beijing, China.

This is Harris' second trip to China this year. She traveled to Xiamen in January to present to over 500 special education teachers and administrators.

On her most recent trip to China, Harris spoke at the 2017 Haidian International Conference on Inclusive Education. Her keynote address discussed on the principles of differentiated instruction in successful inclusion of diverse learners. The conference was co-hosted by the Haiden Institute for Special Education and the Research Center for Inclusive Education of Beijing Normal University.

"It was a great experience presenting to special education teachers," said Harris. "The teachers I met are dedicated advocates for their students and promote equity in educational experiences for students with disabilities."

While in Beijing, Harris met with the University of Sydney clinical instructor Cathy Little, Ph.D. to discuss the Georgia Department of Education's initiative of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a proactive approach to establishing the behavior supports and social culture needed for all students in a school to achieve social, emotional and academic success.

"Dr. Little and I discussed the implications of PBIS on the educational system of China for further comparative research," explained Harris. "This is one of my primary research interests."

Harris added that since having been to China a total of three times now, she is forming relationships with many local educators and researchers.

“I consider many of the faculty and students there to be colleagues and friends,” she said. “I look forward to the interesting research and collaborative projects that will arise from my opportunities to visit and speak in China.”

Harris has already collaborated on research projects with colleague and professor at Beijing Normal University, Meng Deng, Ph.D. Deng also serves as the Director for the Research Center for Inclusive Education.

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