

College of Education News

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Georgia Southern University

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College of Ed undergraduates present at GERA 2017

October 25, 2017



Pictured (l-r): Abigail Slattery, Professor Meca Williams-Johnson, Ph.D., Amy Rustine, Ashleigh Marion, Maci Wood, Alana Bray and Megan Fromme

Georgia Southern University College of Education (COE) undergraduate students participated at the recent [Georgia Educational Research Association \(GERA\)](#) conference on October 6 in Augusta, Georgia.

Megan Fromme, Ashleigh Marion, Amy Rustine and Abigail Slattery completed presentations centered on research compiled for their honors thesis. All four seniors are enrolled in the University Honors Program, which requires students to complete a research project.

Professor Meca Williams-Johnson, Ph.D. serves as the faculty mentor for the honors students in the COE, guiding their research interests and assisting with research methodologies.

“It is encouraging to see our undergraduate students formulate their ideas and create a plan to answer research questions that will later influence their teaching practice,” said Williams-Johnson. “They’re excited about the process of distributing a survey or interviewing educators in the field. When the

students present at conferences, I continue to be amazed at their development and how much confidence they gain from the experience.”

Megan Fromme, a special education major, presented “Special Education Teachers’ Response to Consistent Changes in Curriculum Standards.” To show the influence Georgia curriculum standards have had on special education instruction, Fromme explained the methodology she intends to use to showcase teachers’ efforts to meet state requirements alongside their perception of the standards.

“I got helpful feedback from the three educators who attended the session,” said Fromme. “I also really enjoyed the conference as a whole because it gave me the opportunity to hear what professionals in the field are interested in and how it may relate to my future students and my own research.”

Ashleigh Marion, a early childhood education major, presented “Read, Write and Relax: Teacher’s Perspectives on the Decrease of Nap Time in Kindergarten.” The purpose of her research is to explore teacher perspectives and experience with decreased nap time and perceived effects observed in the early childhood classroom.

“Overall, I loved the experience at the GERA conference,” said Marion. “I enjoyed presenting, and I liked that it felt like people cared what I had to say.”

Amy Rustine is majoring in early childhood education. Her presentation, “Developing Identity Among Third Culture Kids (TCKs),” explores the experiences of TCKs, referring to children raised in a culture other than their parents’, to better understand dilemmas with transitions, and how this impacts their identity or sense of belonging.

“I found it to be valuable and enjoyable,” said Rustine. “The challenge of presenting my research in front of educators and other researchers was a stretching experience but well-worthwhile. I was able to receive feedback and advice, and also gain useful information from other presenters. I am thankful I had this opportunity.”

Abigail Slattery, a early childhood education major, presented “Supporting Mainstream Teachers of English-Language Learner (ELL) Students.” Her research provides a case study of strategies used by teachers when working with ELL students in one rural, southeastern Georgia elementary school including district policies, school administration supports, individual teacher practices and perceptions from the ELL students in reference to speaking, reading and writing the English language.

“Attending this conference was a very positive experience for me,” said Slattery. “I have learned that undergraduate research is important for [pre-service] teachers because it helps you to become an expert on a topic that will help to improve your presentation as a teaching candidate, to grow as a professional and ultimately, to add more skills to your teacher repertoire that will help to make you a more effective educator for individual students.”

Two additional College of Education majors attended GERA. Maci Wood and Alana Bray, who are also students in the University Honors Program at Georgia Southern, took the opportunity to attend sessions and learn from professionals in the field of education. Wood and Bray are both pursuing undergraduate degrees in early childhood education.

The [Georgia Educational Research Association](#) (GERA) is a state affiliate of the national organization, the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and one of Georgia’s most dynamic research

organizations. GERA has approximately 150 members from universities and colleges; public and private schools; and state, local, public, and private educational agencies and institutions, covering disciplines in education, psychology, statistics, sociology, history, economics, philosophy, anthropology, and political science.

The GERA 2017 Annual Conference was “Knowledge to Action: Achieving the Promise of Equal Educational Opportunity.”

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