

## College of Education alumna named state's 2017 top school psychologist

November 27, 2017



Amy Pierce is pictured (left) receiving the GASP award from her supervisor Danny Hicks at a recognition ceremony held by Banks County School System.

Georgia Southern University College of Education alumna Amy Pierce ('08,'10) was named School Psychologist of the Year by the Georgia Association of School Psychologists (GASP) during the organization's 47th annual fall conference in Jekyll Island, Georgia held Oct.16-18.

This annual award recognizes an outstanding school psychologist in the state by examining the individual's range of psychological services, job performance, respect of fellow coworkers, students and parents, and a demonstrated pride of the school psychology career.

The school psychologist for Banks County School System in Homer, Georgia, Pierce is a two-time graduate of the University with a master's and specialist degree in school psychology. Prior to earning her graduate degrees at Georgia Southern, Pierce was working in the community mental health field in Maine.

"I loved my job," she said, "but I felt I wanted to pursue something more."

Relocating to southeast Georgia, Pierce chose Georgia Southern to assist her in reaching her new career goals. The school psychology program not only trained her for her career but provided a long-lasting network that she still utilizes today.

“I always felt like my cohort was a very close-knit group,” she said. “We have all stayed in contact over the years and collaborate with each other regularly, making us all better professionals. Additionally, the school psychology professors [at Georgia Southern] have always been so supportive, and they continue to be great colleagues to this day.”

School Psychology Professor Terry Diamanduros, Ph.D., said all the program’s faculty were very excited to learn of Pierce’s award.

“We are proud of Amy’s accomplishments since she graduated from the school psychology program at Georgia Southern University,” said Diamanduros. “She was a stellar student in the program and that level of excellence has continued in her work as a school psychologist in the field as well as her role as a school psychology internship field supervisor and her service on the Georgia Association of School Psychologist Executive Board.”

Pierce serves on the GASP Executive Board as the Regional 5 representative and is the current co-editor of the organization’s newsletter, *The Dialogue*.

In a letter of recommendation supporting Pierce for the award, her supervisor Danny Hicks, Ed.S., director of student services for Banks County School System said that she is a “valued consultant, professional trainer and researcher of varied school-based activities and projects related to improving student achievement.”

He also noted that Pierce is known for her willingness to volunteer to take on additional school-wide responsibilities, supervise school psychology interns and promote school psychology as a career by attending job fairs at the local high school.

“I was immediately impressed with her enthusiasm for the practice of school psychology, her interpersonal skills and dedication to the school system,” said Hicks.

Pierce said she is both honored and overwhelmed by the recognition.

“There are so many wonderful school psychologists in this state who work daily to improve the lives of everyone they come in contact with,” she said. “I have worked very hard during my short time as a practitioner, and I have the utmost respect and passion for the field of school psychology and my fellow school psychology colleagues.”

The GASP strives to provide school psychologist in the state of Georgia with the highest level of support and professional training to enable them to remain effective in a dynamic educational environment. The only state professional organization representing the field of school psychology, GASP provides valuable resources to their members including research opportunities, PLU hours, NCSP credits, regional and local workshops and conferences.

To learn more about a career in school psychology and the Ed.S. in School Psychology degree program, visit <https://coe.georgiasouthern.edu/espy>

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# Potential students join COE for fall Visit Day

November 27, 2017



Fall COE Visit Day attendees

Sixteen students interested in pursuing undergraduate degrees in education at Georgia Southern University attended the College of Education's Visit Day event held on Nov. 10.

The high school and potential transfer students participating in the event met faculty and current students, attended education degree program information sessions and took a campus tour. Students also had the opportunity to walk the University's Botanic Garden, learning about the opportunities the Garden staff provide to collaborate with preservice and in-service teachers.

During lunch, students heard from current health and physical education major Grayson Fincham. A junior at Georgia Southern, Fincham shared with the crowd a story of his work in a local school with a blind student and how that secured his decision that education was the right path for him.

"[The student] comes up to me and says, 'Coach, what is kickball?,' and I said, 'well, let's go find out.'"

Fincham explained that the student was doubtful, and reminded him that he could not see and therefore could not play kickball. However, Fincham guided the student, telling him when to kick and ran with him along the bases.

“He was ecstatic,” said Fincham. “He had never played kickball. It was the most beautiful thing I have ever done.”

“I remember everything about that day,” he continued. “On my way home, I called my mom and started crying...just because of how happy I was that I got to teach that little kid how to kick a ball. You guys will have an experience just like that...”



Attendees took part in a current student panel to ask COE students questions about their experience at Georgia Southern.

Attendees also heard from a panel of current education majors at the University. Representing a variety of education programs, the COE students participating in the student panel included: Fincham; Michelle Dorbu (early childhood education), Amanda Floyd (special education) and Michael Smith (middle grades education).

Of the potential students in attendance for Visit Day, many had already applied or have intentions to attend Georgia Southern thanks to the University’s positive reputation for teacher preparation programs.

“When I started looking for schools, I remember seeing that Georgia Southern is one of the best for education,” said high school senior Emma Vickers.

From Lawrenceville, Georgia, Vickers said she has always known she wanted to be a teacher and is looking to pursue a degree in early childhood education.

“I was the kid in school reading the big books in the teachers chair to the younger kids,” she said. “I’ve always liked teaching kids, and I love seeing the light bulb go off in their heads. I teach dance every week to three-year-olds, so that light bulb is always there, and just the small things are so important to them.”

Rebekah Lafontaine, a senior high school student from Evans, Georgia, was also interested in a career in early childhood education.

“All my teachers made me love school,” she explained. “I want to make kids love school and be creative and have everything I have experienced when I was younger.”

Taylor Girardeau, a student at Woodville Tompkins Technical and Career Institute in Garden City, Georgia, explained that she really loved Georgia Southern’s campus and what it has to offer.

“This campus is amazing,” she said. “I have met some of the professors, and they are really nice. And the student to teacher ratio is really good.”

Girardeau’s plan is to pursue a degree in secondary education with a concentration in physics and possibly even continue on to one day teach on the college level.

“I really like physics,” she explained. “It comes natural to me, and I want other people to interested in it like I am...Math and physics go hand in hand. I want to help students to understand the math part of it so they don’t get overwhelmed.”

The College of Education hosts Visit Day twice each year. The next Visit Day will be held on February 2, 2018. For more information, visit <http://admissions.georgiasouthern.edu/visit/on-campus-events/> and select “major-specific visits.”

To view photographs taken during the recent Visit Day, visit our facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/georgiasouthernuniversitycollegeofeducation/>

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