

COE awards internal research support

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Four projects were awarded College of Education Seed Grants by the College's Research Committee during the 2018 academic year.

Faculty members Kelly Brooksher, Ph.D., Karin Fisher, Ph.D., Sally Brown, Ph.D., Antonio Gutierrez de Blume, Ph.D. and David Owens, Ph.D. were recipients of seed grants.

Brooksher and Fisher, both of the Department of Elementary and Special Education, received funding to begin their investigation into the attendance and participation of students with disabilities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) extracurricular activities. Also on the grant team is Department of Curriculum, Foundations and Reading assistant professor Peggy Shannon-Baker, Ph.D., and Institute for Interdisciplinary STEM Education coordinator Kania Greer, Ed.D.

Focusing initially on Bulloch and Bryan Counties, the team will gather data on existing STEM opportunities and activities in these counties as well as their recruitment of students with disabilities and credentials of those working with the students.

"This project will afford us the opportunity to start some of the foundation work to eventually answer the question, 'Does participation in an extracurricular STEM club support, enhance or improve students with disabilities performance in the classroom?'" Fisher said.

Brooksher added that general participation in clubs, sports and school-sponsored activities helps mold all students to be successful in the community.

"This project goes beyond academic performance and test scores," said Brooksher. "We hope to gain insight into the power of unleashing a child's potential to better understand the classroom that he/she is in every day. It is about a child feeling success, understanding who he/she is and how he/she learns, and developing confidence. When a child has this, she/he can do great things in the world."

Brown, professor in the Department of Curriculum, Foundations and Reading, will be conducting research that extends her current work in investigating the multimodal literacy practices of students learning English as a new language in elementary classrooms.

"As students engage with technology in classrooms and write in ways where more than the written word is valued, they produce texts that are rich with communication elements like visual and aural modes," Brown said. "As a result, teachers need a means to evaluate these forms of composing in order to document literacy growth over time."

Currently, school systems rely on writing assessments developed exclusively for monolingual English speakers, and there are no assessments that take into account 21st century texts produced using technology. This project is designed to evaluate the multimodal compositions of young multilingual students by highlighting the assets that students bring to the composing process and applies a translingual orientation towards composing that values all forms of communication. The goal is to establish a holistic, developmental scale with scoring indicators to assist educators in evaluating the writing strengths of multilingual learners.

Ed.S. School Psychology candidate Alexandra Allmond will be assisting with the project.

Gutierrez de Blume's project focuses on metacognition, the awareness and understanding of one's own thought process. While current research has monitored this process for children 8-10 years of age, Gutierrez de Blume will focus on children 4-5 years old. Working with kindergarten and first grade teachers, the team will use tests and measures of performance that teachers are already utilizing in the classroom as metrics of achievement.

"We will then ask children how confident they are about whether their answers are correct," Gutierrez de Blume explained. "We plan to use something akin to a visual analog scale to convey to children what we mean by more or less confidence in correct or incorrect performance. Our intent is to provide classroom teachers with additional information of how they can teach self-regulation of learning skills at ever-younger ages. The earlier we can 'catch them' in the developmental trajectory, the better."

Investigations will determine whether children that young are able to accurately convey what they know or do not know about a given topic or whether this requires additional regulatory skills in metacognitive monitoring that appear at about 8-10 years of age.

Owens, assistant professor in the Department of Middle Grades and Secondary Education, is focusing research on socioscientific issues, or issues that are based in scientific understanding but also require the recognition of non-science considerations such as ethics, economics and politics. For the purpose of this funding, Owens is specifically looking at ocean acidification, as it is regionally relevant to the Savannah area.

"The increasing production of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) through fossil fuel burning is resulting in more CO₂ being absorbed by the ocean, especially in areas where the water is colder," Owens explained. "This is changing the chemistry of the ocean and making it more acidic. Ocean acidification is especially problematic, as the acidity interferes with the ability of aquatic organisms, such as clams, mussels or oysters, to make shells, which provide a significant amount of food internationally and serve as an important economic stimulus here on the east coast."

This research will provide students with an inquiry-based means for understanding how increases in atmospheric CO₂ can increase acidity and hinder the ability for calciferous shell-forming organisms to survive, and provide teachers with a means for integrating STEM instruction in their classrooms within the context of socioscientific issues, such as ocean acidification.

Seed grants are funded by the College of Education for the purpose of providing initial, or "seed," funding for research proposals that align with the general mission of the college. The faculty-led College of Education Research Committee reviews proposals and makes decisions about awards.

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COE to host free screening of educational reform film, 'The Cartel,' Q&A with area experts to follow

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On March 5, Georgia Southern University College of Education (COE) will host a free screening of "[The Cartel](#)," a film that examines concerns for educational reform such as the dangers of teacher unions, administrative waste and performance of charter schools. The screening, which is free and open to the public, will begin at 6 p.m. in the Ogeechee Theatre, located in the Student Union on the Armstrong Campus in Savannah.

The documentary captures multiple vantage points of the educational system and attempts to take viewers beyond the statistics, generalizations and abstractions that typically frame debates about education. The film's director Bob Bowdon, a former reporter and news anchor, tells the story of a national crisis that underscores issues of dropout and school failure despite funding being available to U.S. educational systems.

Bowdon explains that the increase in educational spending has long been speculated to be the remedy for problems in public schools, however where spending has increased locally, regionally and even nationwide, the country continues to lag behind most other large, industrialized countries in educational efficiency.

At the time of the film's creation in 2009, Bowdon highlighted that New York had the largest investment in state education expenses. Spending exceeded \$400,000 per classroom, yet only 39 percent of the state's eighth-graders were proficient or advanced readers, and only 40 percent of its eighth-graders were proficient or advanced in math.

Following the screening, the COE will host a Q&A session with local professionals in the fields of education and government, as well as board of education members.

This screening is a part of the Education Exposed Film Series that is taking place on the Armstrong Campus during the Spring 2019 semester. A Campus Life Enrichment Committee grant written and received by COE faculty members Regina Rahimi, Ed.D., Kathleen Burke-Fabrikant, Ed.D., and David Owens, Ph.D., is providing funding for the series.

Remaining screenings include: "The School in the Cloud" on March 27 and "Elementary Genocide" on April 16.

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Georgia Southern's College of Education master's programs ranked No. 14 in nation

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Georgia Southern University has been ranked No. 14 on the “30 Best Online Master’s in K-12 Education” list by TheBestSchools.org. TheBestSchools.org specifically review programs in elementary, middle and secondary grades for this ranking.

“Our M.Ed. programs in elementary, middle and secondary grades provide advancement to classroom teachers and are offered fully online to ease the hardship of working while pursuing a graduate degree,” said Tracy Linderholm, Ph.D., professor and associate dean of graduate education and research for the College of Education. “M.Ed. programs are a crucial stepping stone to teachers in the classroom to enrich their practical theory and knowledge in preparing challenging and diversified learning opportunities to their students.”

According to TheBestSchools.org, national rankings are determined based on six informational categories: academic excellence, strength of faculty scholarship, reputation, financial aid, range of degree programs and strength of online instruction methodology.

The three master’s programs reviewed for this ranking, M.Ed. in [Elementary Education](#), [Middle Grades Education](#) and [Secondary Education](#), all require 36 credit hours completed fully online in 18 to 24 months.

Master of Education programs offer certificate upgrades to teachers who currently hold a level four Georgia certificate or equivalent. Georgia Southern M.Ed. programs are approved by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) and meet the GaPSC’s certificate upgrade requirements.

“Our M.Ed. programs provide students and teachers with opportunities to critically examine their classroom practice, deepen their knowledge of research-based instructional strategies and develop leadership skills essential to school renewal,” said Michelle Reidel, Ph.D., program director of the M.Ed. middle grades and secondary education programs.

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i2STEMe partners with STEM development in India

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Classroom in India

Kania Greer, Ed.D., and Lisa Stueve, Ed.D., of Georgia Southern University's Institute for Interdisciplinary STEM Education (i²STEM^e), recently traveled to India to continue work that began in 2016 as a partnership with the STEM Academy of USA.

College of Education's (COE) Greer and Stueve worked with students as young as preschoolers at the Edistaa School in Mumbai.

"We worked closely in helping teachers utilize best practices in allowing kids to discover and learn basic STEM concepts," Greer said. "We also participated in a school carnival and oversaw the management of four STEM-related tables where very young students could explore and engage with puzzles, sorting, drawing and creating stories."

Greer and Stueve also traveled to Kolkata to work with teachers and students in fourth through 10th grades to create hands-on, place-based activities for students.

"During day one, students were given a mobility challenge and separated into groups to design the next generation of assistive devices for people with mobility impairments," Greer explained. "Given that this school has no elevators, very few ramps and no automatic doors, this challenge provided very useful for students who mimicked all manner of mobility impairment from paralysis to amputation."

Greer explained that the central objective for the partnership with STEM Academy of USA has been to help provide more engaging interdisciplinary STEM curriculum for K-12 schools in India.

“We want to help teachers develop lessons that are more integrative and give the students a challenge that they have to work out themselves,” she said. “It is important that they know that solutions must go through a design and testing phase to see if it works in the real world, but also to know that there is not just one right answer to each challenge.”

For the next phase of the partnership, curriculum is being developed by COE and other Georgia Southern faculty to be used by teachers in India. They are also creating professional development opportunities to model what interdisciplinary STEM lessons look like.

Currently four COE faculty and staff have developed modules with collaborations from other colleges including: COE’s Bob Mayes, Ph.D., and biology faculty Checo Colon-Gaud, Ph.D., have developed a module on population dynamics; COE’s Lacey Huffling, Ph.D., and chemistry faculty Shainaz Landge, Ph.D., have developed a module on water quality; COE’s Heather Scott, Ed.D., and biology faculty Denise Carroll, Ph.D., have developed a module on seed dispersal; and Greer is completing an aquaponics module with FORAM Sustainable Aquaponics Research Center’s Brigitte Brinton.

“We look forward to continuing our collaboration this summer when we host up to 40 teachers from India K-12 schools for a three-week intensive professional development training at Georgia Southern,” Greer explained. “We plan to utilize these four curriculum modules as the basis of the training, and then return to India after the professional development to follow up with in-class supplemental training and modeling, as this is often a key missing piece in professional development.”

The STEM Academy of USA and i²STEM^e completed their first visit to India as a part of the collaboration in September 2016. The partnership has spurred the STEM Academy of USA to make plans to launch STEM Centers of Excellence in West Bengal and New Delhi and to continue to collaborate with Georgia Southern in training STEM education specialists in India.

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National Youth-At-Risk Conference seeking volunteers

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The 30th annual National Youth-At-Risk Conference to be held March 3-6 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Savannah is seeking volunteers. Two types of volunteers are needed:

- **One-Day Room Monitor:** Serve as a room monitor at the conference for one full day, and you will earn an additional full day to attend the conference free of charge.
- **Full-Time Star Monitor:** Serve as a room monitor at the conference for the entire conference, March 3–6, and you will be provided a room at the hotel and basic meal allowance.

Serving as a conference volunteer gives you an opportunity to meet nationally and locally recognized professionals within the education field and learn about current evidence-based educational programs and strategies, which empower children and youth to overcome at-risk conditions that may threaten their safety, health, emotional needs and academic achievement.

If interested in serving as a conference volunteer, email Kiersten at yar@georgiasouthern.edu indicating which type of volunteer, and she will reply with more detailed information. Please respond by February 22.

For more information about the conference, visit <http://www.nationalyouthatrisk.org>