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Georgia Southern hosts nearly 300 high school students for Future Georgia Educator Day

October 15, 2019



Keynote speaker for FGE Day was Double Eagle Alumna Teresa Thompson.

Nearly 300 high school students from across the state of Georgia traveled to the Statesboro Campus of Georgia Southern University on Thursday, September 26 to participate in the Future Georgia Educators (FGE) Day, an initiative coordinated by the [Professional Association of Georgia Educators \(PAGE\)](#) in conjunction with colleges of education in Georgia institutions to provide professional learning, networking and college visitation for students who are considering teaching as a profession.

“PAGE’s hope in co-hosting these events with the Georgia Southern College of Education is that these students will begin to envision themselves pursuing a degree in education and joining Georgia’s teacher workforce to make a difference in the lives of children,” said Mary Ruth Ray, FGE Coordinator and PAGE College Services Representative.

During the event, students heard from keynote speaker Teresa Thompson, Tattnall County Teacher of the Year, a top ten finalist for Georgia Teacher of the Year and Georgia Southern Double Eagle alumna (B.S.Ed. Middle Grades, M.Ed. Instructional Technology).

Attendees were also provided various opportunities to learn about the teaching profession. Georgia Southern College of Education faculty and students presented workshop sessions on topics such as children's literature, assistive technology for students with disabilities, international teaching opportunities, counseling, music education, virtual classrooms, and hands-on science activities and learning. Through the event, the students were also able to learn about Georgia Southern and the college experience by touring the campus.



Workshop sessions were hosted on various topics to provide high school students with a better understanding of the teaching profession.

"I have students who are thinking about becoming teachers," said Jonnie Larson, Liberty County High School's early childhood education pathway teacher. "I graduated from Georgia Southern in 2011, and I loved showing off the campus and telling stories about my wonderful college experience as a student."

During the event, PAGE hosted the FGE Knowledge Bowl, where students are challenged with curriculum from their education pathway courses. For the second year in a row, a team representing Effingham County High School won first place in the competition. Second place went to Statesboro High School and third place was earned by a team from Columbia County's Greenbrier High School.

Students attended the day-long event from 13 different schools including: Bryan County High School, Claxton High School, Effingham County High School, Greenbrier High School, Jeff Davis High School, Jones County High School, Liberty County High School, Long County High School, Screven County High School, Southeastern Early College and Career Academy, South Effingham High School, Statesboro High School, and Tattnall County High School.

"It is no secret that there is a teacher shortage in Georgia," said Ray. "There is an urgent need to encourage our young people to consider a rewarding career in education, and these events serve to give them information, inspire them, and put them in touch with the folks at Georgia Southern that can help make that happen."

Larson added that bringing her students to FGE Day helped her students to understand the requirements of a degree in education as well as the everyday role of a teacher both in and outside of the classroom.

"Teachers are able to build a person's confidence by being their personal cheerleader. When a student sees 'that' teacher in the hallway, the student will tell the teacher how they are doing, ask for advice, and sometimes give a simple hug," she said. "Teachers can be the rainbow in a child's rainy skies."

For more information on Future Georgia Educator Day, visit <https://www.pageinc.org/fgeday/>

[View more photos from FGE Day 2019.](#)

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[Georgia Southern education professor, Dalai Lama join for first international Human Education in the Third Millennium project in India](#)

October 15, 2019



COE Professor John Weaver, Ph.D., meeting the Dalai Lama.

Georgia Southern University College of Education professor John A. Weaver, Ph.D., recently joined with the Dalai Lama and 14 other leading scholars from 10 countries for the first Round Table Conference of the Human Education in the Third Millennium project. The conference for the project, which addresses the obstacles of educational equality on a world level and proposes a renewal of educational values utilizing different traditions from across the world, was hosted in the personal residence of the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India. He served as the honorary keynote speaker.

Weaver, a faculty member at Georgia Southern for 18 years who teaches in the doctoral program in curriculum studies, was one of two participants from the United States.

Invited for his research and expertise in post-humanism, theories that critically analyze the traditional ideas about humanity and the human condition, Weaver joined the group of scholars in July to begin discussions to articulate the significant challenges of education.

One of the common concerns identified was a tendency to view education through an economic lens.

“It’s this idea that everything that is private is good, and everything that is public is not good,” explained Weaver. “Nobel Prize-winning economist Kenneth Arrow said that under perfect conditions there is no government involvement and a perfect balance of supply and demand. However, there are two aspects where he says this does not work — health care and education. We should be listening to Arrow.”

The Dalai Lama offered his thoughts on ethics and education for the new millennium.

“If education is supposed to have produced individuals living a happy life in happy communities in a happy world, it seems to have failed,” he said to the group.

Weaver will assist with organizing a Human Education in the Third Millennium World forum, which will take place in November 2020. Educators, politicians and philosophers will all be invited to gather for presentations and discussion on themes including policy, humanism, democracy and pedagogy.

“I get to play a part in shaping what the themes for this conference will be,” he said. “The goal is to bring as many people to the forum as possible with as much support as possible so that there is little expense to come, and we receive input and ideas from every area of the world.”

After the forum, Weaver and his colleagues will compile a book of their experiences that detail the future of education.

“We all have the common, shared vision that education is being threatened by various forces across the world,” Weaver said. “Neoliberalism was a recurring theme that we discussed — where, for instance, here in the United States, people are trying to turn public education into another site for profit.

“One thing that struck me — there were 15 different people from 10 different countries and yet we all had very similar concerns,” he added. “These are world problems.”



The Dalai Lama in conversation with the delegates of the conference on Human Education in the Third Millennium.

For more information on the Human Education in the Third Millennium, visit <https://humaneducation.net>.

Posted in [Faculty Highlights](#)

Tags: [John Weaver](#)

[Georgia Southern faculty take 20 state teachers to learn in the swamp](#)

October 15, 2019



Participants in the first summer of OUR2 SWAMP

This past summer, 20 Georgia teachers and six faculty and staff from Georgia Southern University's College of Education (COE) and College of Science and Mathematics (COSM) took professional development out of the classroom and into the Okefenokee Swamp.

In late 2018, the Georgia Southern grant team, led by COE's Lacey Huffling, Ph.D., was awarded a \$763,897 grant from the Gulf Research Program of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine

(under award number 2000009821). The grant funds two years of the Okefenokee Understanding Real-world Relevance through Suwannee Watershed Assessment and Monitoring Project (OUR² SWAMP). Created by Huffling and her colleagues, the project offers a summer on-site learning experience at the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia as well as continued professional development for both in-service and pre-service teachers.

“It was awesome,” said Huffling. “All of the teachers excelled and were really excited about getting students out in their communities. It was such an amazing group of educators who worked well together and were committed to learning and passionate about growing in their profession.”

Activities during the week included geological analysis of watersheds, water quality testing, species observation and macroinvertebrate collection, understanding pollutants to the environment and effects on plants and animals, and political influences and effects on the swamp.

By the end of the week, all participating teachers became Georgia Adopt-A-Stream-certified and designed semester-long projects for their students.



Participants wading in the waters of the Okefenokee Swamp.

“What I liked most about this experience is that we not only collaborated with teachers all week, but we are following up and providing them with the necessary supplies to complete their projects and practices in their classrooms,” said Huffling.

Currently Huffling and grant team member and COE faculty member Heather Scott, Ed.D., are traveling to visit the teachers, complete classroom observations and deliver supplies for their projects. Many of the teachers are collaborating to share data and information about their projects. Nearly half of the participants will travel in spring 2020 to the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream Confluence Conference to share their classroom progress and connect with the Adopt-A-Stream volunteer network.

“A community has developed out of the group that participated this summer,” said Huffling. “We have built relationships with these educators, and we are elated to see what they will expose their students to through the experiences they gained.”

Participating teachers for summer 2019 included: Tomika Everett, Mary-Melissa May, Martha Sanderson, Chloe Chambers, Samuelle Mangibin, Tiffany Hopek, Brittany Moss, Melissa Weeks, Joe Eichfield, Nicole Jones, Alison Hunt, Corey Orr, Claudia Fraire, Alejandra Salaises, Cynthia Dean, Nicholas Hodgson, Christine Jackson, Brittain Gantt, Lisa Henderson and Laura Ike. Teachers represented Georgia’s Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) from the First District, North Georgia District, Okefenokee District and West Georgia District, as well as 11 High Schools and three middle schools.



Jenkins County Teacher Brittain Gant spots an alligator.

For Jenkins County Middle School's Brittain Gant, the experience changed his perspective of swamps and provided strong curriculum to take back into his seventh-grade life science classroom.

"I really love swamps now," said Gant. "It was so much fun to be surrounded by 20 other science teachers all just as excited to learn about a swamp and outside ecology as you are. I honestly can't speak enough on how amazing this trip was."

The Georgia Southern grant team includes Huffling as project director; Heather Scott, Ed.D., middle grades and secondary education science faculty; Checo Colon-Gaud, Ph.D., biology faculty; Shainaz Landge, Ph.D., chemistry faculty; the Institute of Interdisciplinary STEM Education Coordinator Kania Greer, Ed.D., as grant evaluator; Mary Thaler, grant administrator; Leah Rush, graduate assistant; COE Professor Emeritus Missy Bennett, Ed.D., as an educational consultant; Chip Campbell, Okefenokee consultant; and Kathie Murry, Okefenokee RESA science education.

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