College of Public Health News

Georgia Southern University

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Georgia Southern researchers receive major grant, aim to improve water quality monitoring on Georgia beaches

December 11, 2019

Georgia Southern University researchers Asli Aslan, Ph.D., and Haresh Rochani, DrPH, of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) and Risa Cohen, Ph.D., of the College of Science and Mathematics, received a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) for a new research project at the Georgia Coast.

The one-year, $80,000 project will investigate the feasibility of adopting a rapid molecular method to replace the existing culture-based method used for statewide beach water quality monitoring. The current method to detect bacteria in beach water requires days to post a beach advisory after initial sampling. This delay in reporting causes misinformation on the actual water quality of a beach at a given time. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency suggests that the results from the new method are better predictors of the occurrence of gastrointestinal illness among swimmers at beaches.

The interdisciplinary team from Georgia Southern will include undergraduate and graduate students, and will partner with the scientists at the GA DNR Water Quality Laboratory throughout the project.

“This is a great opportunity for Georgia Southern students to network with professionals and improve their skills at the field and the laboratory while practicing their research communication skills,” said Aslan.

The project is expected to advance statewide water quality monitoring, fulfilling a major need for the coastal Georgia economy, which is heavily dependent on tourism. If the state of Georgia decides to adopt the rapid molecular method as their statewide monitoring method, same-day reporting to inform the public on current water quality would be possible and offer a more precise method to prevent exposure to waterborne diseases among swimmers. There are currently only a few states nationwide that have adopted the rapid molecular method to their beach monitoring programs.

The mission of JPHCOPH is to improve health, eliminate health disparities and health inequities of rural communities and underserved populations globally through excellence in teaching, public health workforce development, research, scholarship, professional service and community engagement.

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/R2 institution founded in 1906, offers 141 degree programs serving nearly 26,500 students through nine colleges on three campuses in Statesboro, Savannah, Hinesville and online instruction. A leader in higher education in southeast Georgia, the University provides a diverse student population with expert faculty, world-class scholarship and hands-on learning opportunities. Georgia Southern creates lifelong learners who serve as responsible scholars, leaders and stewards in their communities. Visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu.

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Georgia Southern improves health in Coastal Georgia through new partnership

December 11, 2019

The Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) at Georgia Southern University is partnering with the Coastal Health District (CHD) to train future health professionals through the formation of an Academic Health Department (AHD.)

“The goal of this partnership is to enhance the relationship JPHCOPH already has with the CHD,” said Angie Peden, assistant director of the JPHCOPH’s Center for Public Health Practice and Research. “We want to take what we are doing to connect the college and the district and bring it to the next level. My hope is that the formal partnership of an AHD will help us do just that.”

An AHD partnership is formed by the formal affiliation of a health department and an academic institution that trains future health professionals. AHD partnerships can enhance public health education and training, research and service, and may offer a variety of benefits, both for the organizations involved and for the community as a whole.

The CHD covers eight counties along the coast of Georgia with two district offices located in Savannah and Brunswick. Under the direction and leadership of Dr. Lawton C. Davis, CHD’s mission is to improve the health of those who live, work and play in the counties by preventing disease, injury and disability, promoting health and wellbeing, and preparing for and responding to disasters.

“We believe that this partnership will not only enable us to support professional development opportunities among our current staff but also help aid in the development of a future public health workforce,” said Davis. “The benefits of partnering with academia will strengthen our efforts around public health education, research and practice.”

The AHD Steering Committee is working to form a guest lecture exchange and an internship supervisor training program, designed to empower CHD staff to supervise and mentor JPHCOPH student interns.

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Georgia Southern’s Master of Public Health program ranked No. 1 in nation

December 11, 2019
The Master of Public Health (MPH) program in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) at Georgia Southern University has been ranked No. 1 in the nation by SR Education Group.

The list of the top 13 MPH programs, which includes Brown University and Emory University, is based on student reviews from 2018.

SR Education reports that the faculty, job preparation and research opportunities presented in Georgia Southern’s MPH program are especially notable.

“The entire public health college truly cares about each student,” said one student. “The professors would meet with each student on a regular basis to help the student figure out what specific area they are most interested in. I felt extremely prepared and confident during my internship.”

“I like how my graduate program is competitive and offers many opportunities for health research,” wrote another student. “I also like the accessibility of the classes and the relationships that can easily be formed with the professors who care and take time out of the day to work with their students.”

The MPH Program at Georgia Southern trains students to understand the role of community empowerment, community mobilization, networks and partnerships in the development of policies to help affected populations. For more information on the SR Education public health graduate program rankings, visit [https://www.graduateprograms.com/masters-degrees/best-public-health-schools](https://www.graduateprograms.com/masters-degrees/best-public-health-schools).

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