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STEM Institute staff complete underwater ROV training to assist regional teams

August 18, 2020



Mary Thaler

While many people were looking to slow things down in the summer, the [Institute for Interdisciplinary STEM Education](#) (i²STEM^e) staff members Kania Greer, Ed.D., and Mary Thaler, decided to take on a new challenge.

Both enrolled in the 2020 Marine Advanced Technology Education (MATE) Workshops, Thaler in the intermediate level training and Greer in the advanced level course. The key outcome of the workshop was focused on how to teach the engineering design process of using underwater robotics.

“With education at the forefront of our mission, the idea was to increase our knowledge to be able to provide support to our regional school ROV teams and coaches,” said Thaler.

Each year, the i²STEM^e assists regional middle and high school teams with forming and competing in the MATE Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV) Competitions.

“During the ROV competitions, student teams need to demonstrate skill sets such as maneuvering their watercraft to complete designated tasks,” said Thaler. “As many times as I have provided assistance and guidance to

students, I have actually never had the opportunity to build my own from scratch. The construction of the vehicle plays a pivotal role in its ability to complete the tasks, so our guided training during this workshop provided us with the opportunity to build and complete these tasks.”

Greer echoed that their experience building their own ROV guided by experts will provide them the opportunity to serve as coaches for the teachers who would like to lead teams as well.

“A lot of what we do at the Institute is trying to promote STEM education and create interest in STEM within K-12 students and the community,” said Greer. “This workshop put us back in the role of the student and really allowed us to refine our skill set in this area. I am excited to think about how we can share our experiences with teachers across Southeast Georgia, and how it may help students advance in the competition.”

To create their underwater ROVs, Greer and Thaler were challenged to design and construct an ROV frame, wire their own circuit boards, implement housing for a camera, and properly connect motors that would allow the ROV to complete maneuvers for various missions.

“My skill set in circuitry has improved immensely as well as my problem solving skills,” said Thaler. “This was a challenging workshop, and I can now relate to the challenges students and coaches face when trying to construct their rovers. It was a feeling of accomplishment to see your build go from a pile of PVC pipes to an actual motorized underwater robot.”

For more information about how the Institute for Interdisciplinary STEM Education can help you or your school, visit <https://coe.georgiasouthern.edu/stem/> or email stem@georgiasouthern.edu.

Posted in [Staff Highlights](#)

Tags: [i2STEMe](#), [Kania Greer](#), [Mary Thaler](#), [STEM](#)



Kania Greer, Ed.D.

Education faculty equip Savannah-area educators with trauma-informed practices for the new school year

August 18, 2020



T.I.E.S. Breakout - Shared screen with speaker view



Snapshot from Symposium session hosted by Phylcia Anderson, MSW, LCSW

When three Georgia Southern University education professors began researching trauma-informed practices, it quickly became apparent that educators and youth professionals wanted assistance with their student populations experiencing trauma.

Trauma-informed practice provides structure or framework that helps adults to understand, recognize and respond to the effects of various forms of trauma that youth may experience.

After surveying 800 educators in the state of Georgia, Regina Rahimi, Ed.D., professor of middle grades and secondary education; Delores Liston, Ph.D., professor of curriculum studies; and Ameer Adkins, Ph.D., professor and department chair of middle grades and secondary education, said that the overwhelming majority of educators refer students with trauma to a school counselor.

With a shortage of mental health professionals present in schools, the research team realized a need and responded with the creation of the Trauma Informed Education Symposium of Southeast Georgia to assist local educators.

“Through that study, it was clear that this is an area of deep concern for area teachers and other professionals that work with youth,” said Rahimi. “This need was further underscored when we began collaborative research with staff from Savannah Chatham-County Public Schools (SCCPSS) in the Department of Specialized Education with Dr. Vanessa Keener.”

The symposium was originally slated to take place in May as a part of the post-planning experience for SCCPSS teachers and school professionals but was put on hold due to the pandemic.

“Quickly, it became apparent that the pandemic generates another form of trauma for both teachers and students,” said Liston. “We felt the symposium was more important than ever.”

The team regrouped and proceeded with an online symposium held on August 4 to help prepare participants for the return of students to school, whether in person or virtually, and incorporate the trauma-informed practices as a part of their teaching and classroom management for the coming school year. More than 150 educators virtually attended the event.

The keynote speaker for the event was Joe Hendershott, co-founder of Hope 4 The Wounded LLC, an organization that provides training for social-emotional learning strategies and trauma-informed practices for mental and social wellness. As a previous teacher, coach and administrator in the alternative and correctional education settings, Hendershott focused on practical skills and practices that can be implemented in the classroom.

Additional sessions included topics such as impacts of trauma on the brain, forming therapeutic relationships with youth, trauma and the juvenile justice system, self-care for educators, and implementation strategies for trauma-informed classroom practices.

“Getting this information to the faculty of schools, particularly schools that are fraught with behavioral issues and lower performance is a game changer,” said Lila Black, a school counselor at Haven Elementary School who attended the symposium.

Rahimi, Liston, Adkins and SCCPSS partner Vanessa Keener said they hope to continue the event annually to provide support and education for youth professionals.

“We have realized an even greater need for this work, as more students have experienced various levels of trauma-like experiences during this pandemic,” said Rahimi. “We feel like this symposium will continue to be of importance to educators and hope to continue it in the future.”

Lizann Roberts, executive director Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition and coordinator of Chatham Family Connection Collaborative and Alisa Leckie, Ph.D., assistant dean for partnerships and outreach, provided additional support for the symposium.

Posted in [COE Events](#), [COE Sponsored Events](#), [Community Outreach & Partnership](#), [Faculty Highlights](#)

Tags: [Alisa Leckie](#), [Amea Adkins](#), [Delores Liston](#), [Regina Rahimi](#), [SCCPSS](#), [Vanessa Keener](#)

[New master's program at Georgia Southern inspires alumnus for work, doctoral program](#)

August 18, 2020



COE Alumnus Jerry Oliver, M.Ed., pictured teaching at Augusta University.

Growing up in Douglas, Georgia, Jerry Oliver didn't know if he'd attend college. However, after high school he became the first in his family to make the leap.

Staying close to home, he completed an associate's degree in psychology and was hooked on learning. He went on to complete a bachelor's in psychology from Augusta University and a master's in higher education administration from Georgia Southern University.

Serving as the student success and learning skills coordinator at Augusta University for the last 6 years, Oliver jumped at the chance to be a part of the Georgia Southern College of Education's first cohort of students into the newly formed M.Ed. Evaluation, Assessment, Research and Learning (EARL).

"The M.Ed. EARL program was intriguing to me," he said. "In my current role as a learning skills coordinator and also as the director of the African-American Male Initiative, I saw many opportunities where this program would directly benefit what I am doing on a daily basis."

Once in the program, Oliver knew he had made the right choice.

"I enjoyed this program so much," he said. "It was almost an escape for me. There were challenges, but the faculty were particularly great. I cannot say enough about Dr. Zinske. I never even met her in person, and yet she is very approachable and helpful."

The program has been especially helpful in strengthening his writing and research skills.

“I now have more confidence in my writing ability, and the program taught me everything I needed to know about research — how to read it, understand it and do it,” he said.

With an interest for researching the impact of elementary education for African-American male students, Oliver realized that the M.Ed. EARL program also prepared him for a doctoral program.

“A lot of that thanks to the great faculty and especially Dr. Zinskie,” said Oliver. “She gave us what we needed to succeed, and I put a great deal of stock in her opinion because I have so much respect for her.”

Between Cordelia Zinskie, Ed.D., professor in the Department of Curriculum, Foundations and Reading, and Oliver’s parents, he received the encouragement and support to continue his studies and pursue a doctorate degree. Oliver applied to three educational doctorate programs across the country and was accepted to all three. He chose Georgia Southern and will begin this fall.

“In doing my research on doctoral programs, the Ed.D. programs at Georgia Southern have helped launch the careers of some really great people,” Oliver said.

During his studies in the M.Ed. EARL program, Oliver says he found his purpose.

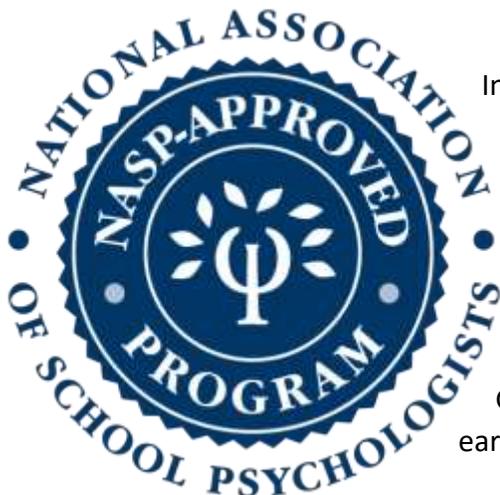
“I am going to continue my research, and one day I hope to work in policy, as true change cannot happen without policy change.”

Posted in [Alumni Highlights](#), [Student Highlights](#)

Tags: [Cordelia Zinskie](#), [Educational Leadership](#), [Jerry Oliver](#), [M.Ed. EARL](#)

[Georgia Southern school psychology program largest producer of certified professionals in southeastern US](#)

August 18, 2020



In July, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) released a report detailing the number of new nationally certified school psychologists (NCSP) in the nation. Georgia Southern University proved to not only be the top producer of nationally certified graduates in the state, but also outnumbered all neighboring states in the southeastern United States.

In one year of data collection, from June 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020, Georgia Southern’s [Ed.S. in School Psychology](#) program saw 16 alumni earn NCSP status, far outpacing competing state universities.

“The NCSP is the ultimate indicator of high quality training in our field,” said school psychology program director Dawn Tysinger, Ph.D, NCSP. “It makes graduates incredibly competitive in the marketplace, because it signals to employers that this person has been held to rigorous training standards.”

To earn credentialing from NASP, candidates must complete a NASP-certified graduate program and a 1,200-hour internship with a minimum of 600 hours in a school setting and pass the Praxis School Psychology exam. Alternatively, candidates can also complete an extensive, multiyear portfolio process.

“Because of the training that backs the NCSP, being certified simplifies the licensure process in many states and contributes to geographic flexibility for graduates in that they are not bound to only their training state for certification,” added Tysinger. “Many states and school districts offer recruitment and retainment bonuses or stipends for those school psychologists holding the NCSP.”

Georgia Southern’s school psychology program provides numerous opportunities to prepare students for field work and keep credentials up to date.

“The school psychology program candidates at Georgia Southern are exposed to didactic and experiential learning opportunities from the start of their training to ensure both knowledge attainment and skill development,” said Tysinger. “Additionally, the program is unique in some of its offerings for candidates including two partner preschools, a peer mentoring program and the School Psychology Student Association.”

While not required to complete the graduate school psychology program at Georgia Southern, Tysinger said that the faculty promote the attainment of the national certification throughout the program and dedicate a seminar course at the conclusion of the program to review program content for students taking the Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educations in School Psychology exam.

“The data support that the program is producing graduates of the highest quality,” said Tysinger. “The graduates are successfully attaining the most rigorous certification available to them.”

Posted in [Degree Programs](#)

Tags: [Dawn Tysinger](#), [School Psychology](#)

Georgia Southern alumna harnesses the power of children's literature in her college classrooms

August 18, 2020



Katy Basch, Ed.S.

For children's literature expert and educator Katy Basch ('17), picture books transcend elementary classrooms and have found a home in her college classroom.

"Children's literature is a powerful tool," said Basch. "You can pull from the wealth of knowledge in books. Everything you need to teach has a correlating book."

Basch has taught literacy education to college students for 18 years. Prior to that, she began her teaching career in a second grade classroom.

"I loved delivering that instruction to my second graders and now sharing that passion and knowledge with college students," she said.

In 2015, Basch pursued an [Ed.S. in Reading Education](#) from Georgia Southern University that allowed her to continue to work with students while enriching her classroom approach and deepening her theoretical knowledge.

"The reading education program is practice-based," said Basch. "And it provided me with great tools and models for creating more engaging learning experiences for my students."

A senior lecturer at Kennesaw State University (KSU), Basch searched for an effective way to engage her students and instill best practices for literacy education. She has taught content literacy courses for all age groups, but her area of focus is ages 3 to 5. It occurred to her that perhaps she could incorporate literature for elementary age students into her college classroom setting for demonstrative learning. She was pleasantly surprised with the results.

"When you select a text to study, that text can align to situational context," she explained. "For example, if your student needs help with a certain strategy, you can find children's literature that will support your instruction to teach that strategy. I read children's books to the class, and we work through the strategies as though they are the elementary students. This is practical experience."

When Basch began this practice, she was concerned students may feel like it was silly or childish, but she said it has been well received by all her classes.

As classes shifted to fully online delivery as a result of COVID-19, Basch continued her methodology of reading to her students.

"My classes have been delivered in virtual, synchronous format," she said. "So I still read to them and share my screen and write on it to keep them engaged. They miss the personal touch of in-person classes, and I do too, but we are definitely making it work."

Basch said having completed the fully online specialist reading program at Georgia Southern assisted with her online instruction.

“Validation of practice is good, but this program provided me with some new insights to instruction and technology in both in-person and distance learning,” she said.

While Basch has always thought she would remain at KSU indefinitely, she said this degree has opened her opportunities to do something that would bring her back to the K-12 realm as a reading coach, curriculum specialist or literacy-based position.

“I really enjoy working with university students,” she said. “But I also miss working with young children. It’s nice to know I have options.”

Posted in [Uncategorized](#)