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# [COE Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Events in October](#)

October 13, 2020

The College of Education (COE) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee is hosting several events in October for members of the University to increase discussion and engagement on critical issues.

## **Panel Discussion, “Being an Anti-Racist Educator” | Oct. 15 at 9:30 a.m.**

On Thursday, October 15 at 9:30 a.m., the Committee is hosting a virtual panel discussion on “Being an Anti-Racist Educator.” Panelists include Chelda Smith Kondo, Ph.D., Ameer Adkins, Ph.D., Jemelleh Nurse Coes, Ph.D., and David Lewis, M.S.

Chelda Smith is an associate professor of elementary education at Georgia Southern where she has been a part of the College of Education since 2014. Smith was instrumental in redesigning the Master of Arts in Teaching Elementary Education degree to provide a fully online delivery format with a consistent theme of cultures and communities, and she serves as the director of the degree program. Smith’s research interests and scholarship center culturally relevant pedagogy including the intersections of race, culture and gender as well as preparation of teacher candidates for diverse student populations. Smith was also recently named the first-ever recipient of the COE’s Commitment to Diversity Award.

Adkins serves as the chair of the Department of Middle Grades and Secondary Education. A Double Eagle alumna, Adkins studied German, history and international studies before earning a Master of Education at Georgia Southern. She completed a Ph.D. in Social Foundations of Education from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. A former professor at Illinois State University for 20 years, Adkins returned home to Georgia Southern College of Education in 2017. Adkins specializes in sociology of education, educational policy, equity, and social justice.

A Georgia Southern Double Eagle, Coes earned a bachelor’s in special education and master’s in teaching and learning from the College of Education. While teaching special education in Bulloch County, Coes was named the recipient of the 2014 Georgia Teacher of the Year by the Department of Education and served as a board member for the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education. She earned a Ph.D. in Educational Theory and Practice in 2018 from the University of Georgia, and serves as a clinical instructor at the University. She is also a public speaker and consultant for NaviCation, LLC.

David Lewis is a scholar athlete who graduated from the University with a bachelor’s degree in psychology, and player on the football team. He started his career in the non-profit sector working with young men in under-resourced communities to assist with academic and coaching as well as personal mentorship. Lewis then joined Teach for America and became an eighth grade science teacher and football coach. After years of service in K-12 schools as a classroom teacher; diversity, equity and inclusion facilitator; instructional coach; and dean of students, Lewis is now the Freshman Academy Principal at Pearl-Cohn High School in Nashville, Tenn. Lewis holds two Master of Education degrees, one in instructional practice and the other in educational leadership.

No registration is required. To join the webinar, use the following link:

<https://georgiasouthern.zoom.us/j/93202585431?pwd=TkhERFJWREJgMytzaTZDWU9tYjB0UT09>

Or enter the webinar identification: 932 0258 5431, and passcode: 290497.

## **Community and Conversation Series:**

### **Discussion on “The Kids are All Right” | Oct. 20 at 1 p.m.**

The purpose of the Community and Conversation Series is to provide an informal venue for College and University members to learn together. The sessions are discussion-based and feature a different diversity topic and resource each month.

On Tuesday, October 20 at 1 p.m., the Georgia Southern community is invited to discuss an episode from NPR’s podcast, “Code Switch.” The episode, titled “The Kids are All Right,” is a part of NPR’s Student Podcast Challenge, a special series that asks students what they would like to talk about and share. “The Kids are All Right” discusses how adults struggle with discussing race, yet students seem to be able to openly discuss and express their thoughts on racial issues. The episode features the voices of middle and high school students who created their own podcast as a part of the Student Podcast Challenge. Two thousand students responded to the challenge and many of them focused on the pivotal question, “Who am I?.”

To listen to the episode, visit <https://www.npr.org/2020/09/08/910836728/the-kids-are-all-right>.

During the discussion on Oct. 20, attendees will share their thoughts on the episode and the central theme of environmental racism.

No registration is required to attend. View the podcast episode prior to the discussion, and join us at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89585058823?pwd=VzVxcUdDT3dHRTNEL1NydkNLQjByUT09>

### **NOBA Inclusive Excellence Conversations | Oct. 20 at 7 p.m.**

The Office of Alumni Relations at Georgia Southern University is hosting a series entitled Network Black Alumni Inclusive Excellence Conversations. First up in the series will be several College of Education representatives from alumni to current faculty.

Alumni Dennis Carpenter, Ed.D. (BSEd, ‘96; EdS, ‘03, EdD, ‘09) and Dominique Quarles, Ph.D. (MEd, ‘11) and COE Professor of Educational Research, Meca Williams-Johnson, Ph.D., will be joined by Georgia Southern alumna Melissa Shivers, Ph.D. (BS, ‘96) to host a panel discussion on “Advocating for Diversity and Inclusion in Education.”

The webinar, taking place Tuesday, October 20 at 7 p.m. will be moderated by the University’s Director of Multicultural Affairs, Takeshia Brown.

Georgia Southern alumni are invited to attend, and asked to register at [GeorgiaSouthern.edu/alumni/NOBAConversations](https://GeorgiaSouthern.edu/alumni/NOBAConversations). Invitations with event links via Zoom will be emailed to registered attendees.

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Tags: [Amee Adkins](#), [Chelda Smith](#), [Meca Williams-Johnson](#)

## Chelda Smith named first-ever recipient of COE's Commitment to Diversity Award

October 13, 2020



The inaugural recipient of the College of Education's (COE) Commitment to Diversity Award was named this fall by the College's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee. Associate Professor of Elementary Education Chelda Smith, Ph.D., was the first member of the COE to receive the accolade.

"Dr. Smith's background in the area of teaching diverse topics, and leading a program that included diversity as one of its components was important," said Meca Williams-Johnson, Ph.D., chair of the COE Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee. "The application stood out among the group and left a positive impression from start to finish."

The College's Commitment to Diversity Award was designed to recognize a faculty or staff member who demonstrates a sustained commitment to diversity and inclusion.

A faculty member in the College since 2014, Smith was an essential member of the initial development team for the College's Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in Elementary Education program and has served as the program's coordinator since 2018. The program offers a specific focus on cultures and communities, with one of the first course requirements focusing on culturally responsive pedagogy and classroom management.

"Grasping the challenges associated with teaching complex topics through the online medium, I initiated and continue to lead a weekend-long orientation experience for newly admitted candidates to the MAT program," said Smith. "The primary goals include helping students build inclusive education fluency, which begins with unpacking individual and group identities, associated privilege and power, processing emotional responses, and to establish an initial commitment to becoming a social justice educator. Past attendees regard the orientation as transformative and life changing. An added benefit is the bond that candidates create with each other and with faculty."

Smith's scholarship also contributes to the exploration of diversity practices, as she investigates the professional and educational experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse people from traditionally marginalized backgrounds.

"From Somali youth refugees to university faculty of color, I explore how pedagogy, positionality, and institutional policies affect the socialization and learning experiences of underrepresented populations," said Smith.

Additionally, in efforts to provide an affordable graduate education experience, Smith sought to eliminate course material costs. In 2016, she and COE colleague Alisa Leckie, Ph.D., redesigned the College's cultural issues course to eliminate textbooks. Gathering the latest digital resources, Smith and Leckie found that course materials were well received by students as well as provided current, relevant information for rigorous learning opportunities.

In a letter of support written by current MAT Elementary Education student Laura Vines, she states, "I have known Dr. Smith for less than a year, but her influence has already left an indelible mark on my life, no doubt many of my cohort's lives, and our future students," Vines writes. "With Dr. Smith at the helm, not only has she ensured that we can become teachers of record but also teachers capable of reaching every child."

For more information about the Commitment to Diversity Award and the College's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, visit <https://coe.georgiasouthern.edu/diversity-and-inclusion-in-coe/>

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