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[Graduate student named Rural Scholar by national board](#)

February 10, 2021

Plans to serve rural communities with five degrees from Georgia Southern



Recently, Georgia Southern University graduate student Brandon Wilcher ('09,'10,'15,'20) was named one of five Rural Scholars by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) Foundations. This honor provides Wilcher with an \$8,000 scholarship for the completion of a [Master of Education \(M.Ed.\) in Counselor Education](#) at Georgia Southern, as well as training, mentorship and professional development services from members of the NBCC.

Wilcher is scheduled to graduate from the clinical mental health counseling concentration of the M.Ed. Counselor Education program this fall. However, it will not be the first time he has walked the commencement stage at Georgia Southern. Wilcher is a four-time graduate of the University, holding a bachelor's in health science, a bachelor's in child and family development, a master's of healthcare administration and Doctor of Public Health.

"I was writing my dissertation in the public health program when I got accepted into the M.Ed. in Counselor Education program," said Wilcher. "This program brings my academic experience full circle.

Mental health is a part of the conversation when you are discussing overall wellness, community and public health."

Wilcher grew up in rural Georgia and said he witnessed firsthand that mental health is not valued as much as physical health.

"To be healthy, people discuss eating habits or going to the gym, but they are not discussing self-care practices for their mental well-being," he said. "Seeing the health disparities and lack of promotion for counseling and mental health in rural areas, I wanted to help make a change."

Post-graduation, Wilcher plans to dedicate much of his time to serving rural areas. He has "entrepreneurial aspirations" for the future to utilize all the information he has gained at Georgia Southern.

"I am in the process of creating a comprehensive family service company," said Wilcher. "From childcare, family life education, professional counseling and home care services, I want to improve the quality of life for people living in rural communities by providing care that serves them throughout their life span."

Wilcher opened Aspired Unity Homecare, a licensed, non-medical agency established to assist in-home senior care within a 50-mile radius of Statesboro. The agency offers services including companionship, personal care assistance, grocery shopping, running errands, and accompanying individuals to doctor appointments.

Future plans include opening a childcare center for children with mild illnesses in order to assist parents who cannot miss work and a counseling agency, with services offered by Wilcher, once he completes his licensure.

“The counselor education program at Georgia Southern was the best way to finish my studies at Georgia Southern,” said Wilcher. “The faculty are phenomenal, and I am supported in my academic pursuits. Everything I am learning translates to the real world in real time. This program has even encouraged me to practice mindfulness and self-care so that I can care for others.”

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