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Georgia Southern alumna encourages rural students to take to the skies with drone technology curriculum

July 14, 2021



Instructional technology alumna La'Quata Sumter

La'Quata Sumter ('13, '18), has taught, led the online education efforts of colleges, authored a book and is in the final stages of a doctoral degree. However, when she evaluated her success, she realized what she wanted most was to return to her roots, offering rural minority students access to STEM fields — with the help of drone technology.

A native of Red Top, South Carolina, Sumter completed a bachelor's in computer science from Albany State University. While working as an instructor at Albany Technical College, she pursued a M.Ed. in Instructional Technology from Georgia Southern University.

"I originally planned to complete a master's in computer science, but realized I didn't want to do programming for the rest of my life," said Sumter. "I enjoyed teaching, and I thought advanced degrees in instructional technology would help. While working on my master's I realized that pedagogy was the part I was missing in my career. Understanding how individuals learn and best practices to teaching, especially teaching online, were vital techniques I immediately applied to my job while completing both my M.Ed. and Ed.S. in Instructional Technology."

During the last semester of her master's degree, Sumter was offered a position as the director of Academic Online Instruction at Albany State where she worked with faculty to enhance their online teaching skills and use of technology integration into curriculum. During the consolidation process of Albany State University and Darton State College, Sumter was tasked with serving as the lead of web services and software to integrate and merge software systems of the two institutions successfully to one. After the consolidation process was completed, Fort Valley State University offered Sumter the opportunity to direct their online learning.

All throughout her career, Sumter continued to teach as an instructor of computer information systems and computer and electrical engineering at Albany Technical College and continued her education. She completed an Ed.S. in

Instructional Technology in 2018 at Georgia Southern, and immediately started a Ph.D. in Learning Technologies from the University of North Texas. Sumter is currently completing her dissertation, "Faculty's Perception of Online Learning at Technical Colleges in South Georgia."

With a passion for technology, Sumter has long been drawn to drones. From taking them apart to learn their inner workings to providing aerial footage for clients, Sumter found her niche in drone technology and saw it as an opportunity to spread her love of STEM—and a message of inclusion.

"You do not see many women, and especially African American women, who are in the computer and electrical engineering field in south Georgia," said Sumter. "Our students can see someone who grew up in an area like where they did, who looks like them and has a career in STEM — and know that they can too."

Today, Sumter continues to teach at Albany Technical College and also serves as the college's Electrical and Computer Engineering Program Chair. The rest of her time is dedicated to her nonprofit agency, Focusing on Me, and the organization's new education outreach programs, which include STE(A)M Thru Drones and Drones in Education.

"I want to build lessons and curriculum for rural areas and schools to teach drone technology," she explained. "It's not just about flying drones, but the computer science, electrical engineering, mathematics and art curriculum that can be taught through drone technology."

Sumter spent June offering summer camps to local organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, teaching STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) concepts to students as young as third grade.

"The students are so excited to learn about drones that they don't even realize they are learning in the process," said Sumter.

Currently Sumter has seven drones in her personal collection and 13 mini drones for children. She is also one of 72 individuals in the state of Georgia who holds a Federal Aviation Administration drone pilot license.

"Drones aren't going anywhere," she said. "Robots aren't going anywhere. So I am building a curriculum to emphasize to our students how we are making all the technology around us work."

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[3D art students create collaborative public project for College of Education](#)

July 14, 2021



“Birds of a Feather” is now on display in the College of Education classroom building on the Statesboro Campus.

Following more than a year of preparation for an interactive artwork display based on Georgia Southern University’s bald eagle mascot, “Birds of a Feather” is now on display in the College of Education’s (COE) classroom building on the Statesboro Campus.

“We discussed how the College and University host numerous events in this location, and it would be mutually beneficial to promote the work of art students at Georgia Southern as well as serve as a photo destination for students, alumni and visitors alike,” said Cinnamon Dowd, communications coordinator for the COE.

Collaborating with the Betty Foy Sanders Department of Art (BFSDoArt), the artwork came to life under the leadership and guidance of Kimberly Riner, adjunct professor of art.

“I was excited to participate in this project,” said Riner. “I had the advanced ceramics students assist with the overall design while allowing students in all levels of ceramics courses participate in creating the pieces that would create the overall image.”

Students began work on the collaborative project in spring 2020, but were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lyndsey Frantz, Master of Fine Arts alumna ('21), provided the sketch of the eagle after visiting the University's Center for Wildlife Education to view the eagles and feathers in person. The individual feathers were crafted by students from two introductory ceramics courses while two advanced ceramics students on the Armstrong Campus, Jamel Richardson and Sabrina Harn, glazed and fired all of the pieces.

“It was an interesting project because we had several people working on it at different times and from different perspectives,” explained Riner. “It was a bit challenging with getting quarantined in the middle of the project and my original plans being thwarted. I think it all came together well in the end because students from both the Statesboro and Armstrong campuses were able to be involved in the project.”

Installed by BFSDoArt studio technician Jason McCoy, “Birds of a Feather” will be on display ongoing in the COE classroom building lobby.

“This piece is a true representation of a collaborative art work that we are elated to have on display in the College,” said Dowd. “To Kim Riner, Jason McCoy, and all of the students who were a part of this project, we would like to thank you for sharing your hard work and creativity with us.”

Additional students contributing to the public art display include: Jalen Austin, Ronald Brow, Sara Califf, Carlos Carvajal, Anna Forbes, Lindsay Getz, Michael Harper, Kristin Johnson, Breanna Majors, Morgan McClain, Stella McDaniel, Taylor McMahan, Amanda Rothenberg, Ainslee Silverthorne, Rachel Borkowki, MacKenzie Cintron, John Ewald, Patrick Galula, Henvil Grant, Francis Hampton, Quinderrious Humphrey, Anna Jackson, Dejon Johnson, Sydney Kiewit, Christian Maude, Loudashia McCall, Katherine Naude, Anna Raley, and Chad Reese.

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