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Novotny's research results in 'This Georgia Rising'

MARCH 15, 2008

Patrick Novotny researched political, social, and educational trends in Georgia during the WWII and postwar years of the 1940s to create his new book, "This Georgia Rising: Education, Civil Rights and the Politics of Change in Georgia in the 1940s." Published earlier this year by Mercer University Press, the volume provides a rich and detailed history of that time.

"[This Georgia Rising] is filled with stories rather than statistics," says Novotny, who is associate professor of political science at Georgia Southern University. "There are so many untold stories [from this time period], so many unsung women and men who were committed to change."

To research the time period, Novotny focused primarily on small town daily and weekly newspapers and prominent African American newspapers of the time. The rich and detailed view of small town Georgia Novotny provides is important because, as Novotny points out, "it was the small towns where veterans returned and wanted to make change, and could make a change."

In his research Novotny found the University of Georgia and Georgia Southern University itself, then called Georgia Teachers College, embroiled in controversy surrounding access to education and racial equality.

"Here in Georgia we saw the beginnings of an equality movement that the rest of the Southern United States wouldn't experience until decades later. This was at a time when Martin Luther King Sr. was the influential figure," says Novotny.

Much of the social controversy chronicled in "This Georgia Rising" involved the firing and dismissing of several faculty and administrators of Georgia colleges who were advocating progressive reforms in education. Progressive platforms were also a major part of political campaigns in local and state elections.

Georgia Teachers College, which eventually became Georgia Southern University, is often mentioned in "This Georgia Rising."

"Georgia Southern has a legacy of a determination to move forward, take progressive steps, and look toward the future. That commitment to positive change is part of our institutional DNA," says Novotny.

Novotny's work has been published in *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics and Social Science Computer Review*. His book "Where We Live, Work and Play: The Environmental Justice Movement and the Struggle for a New Environmentalism" was published in 2000. Novotny's latest publication "The Impact of Television on Georgia, 1948-1952" in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* came directly from historical research used for "This Georgia Rising."