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Georgia Southern University confers 1,700 graduate and undergraduate degrees during Fall 2016 Commencement

DECEMBER 9, 2016



Held for the first time at Allen E. Paulson Stadium, the 25th annual Georgia Southern Fall 2016 Commencement ceremony represented a momentous day as approximately 1,700 of Georgia's best and brightest undergraduate and graduate students received degrees from the University's eight colleges.



University President Jaimie Hebert, Ph.D

Approximately 400 graduate degrees were conferred, while around 1,300 undergraduate students received degrees. University President Jaimie Hebert, Ph.D., congratulated students and recognized their achievements.

"Graduates, I extend to you my personal congratulations on your academic success," said Hebert. "Your University salutes you on your success and sends you off soaring on wings of eagles."

Outstanding Georgia Southern alumnus [Mike Royal](#) served as the guest speaker for this year's ceremony. Royal is the chairman of the Georgia State Board of Education, and has served on this board since 2012, when he was first appointed by Gov. Nathan Deal. He also serves on the Board of Advisors to the University's College of Education, and is the the founder of Partners Risk Services – a fast-growing risk management and insurance firm with offices in Georgia and Colorado.

Royal encouraged the graduates to keep an optimistic mindset for their future and the choices they make in life.

"Life is full of choices and decisions, and ultimately, your life will become a sum of those choices and decisions you make," Royal said. "The bad ones, learn from them, and the good ones, learn from them and replicate them."

"One of biggest choices you have ahead of you right now is what to do next," Royal continued. "And just like many of you here today, I was not sure what my dream job was, and if that's you right now, if you're not sure what your big 'why' is in life, that's fine. Many successful people take years or even decades to find that."

He also reminded graduates that life is full of uncertainty, and not to let that, or fear, get in the way of accomplishing their goals.

"You'll also find the challenges in your life there is uncertainty, but uncertainty is an ingredient for opportunity, however uncertainty is also very main ingredient of fear," he said. "Do not let that be."

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers more than 125 degree programs serving 20,674 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. Georgia Southern is recognized for its student-centered and hands-on approach to education. Visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu.

Local school applies for STEM grant: University FabLab inspires need

DECEMBER 9, 2016

The Georgia Southern Business Innovation Group's Fabrication Laboratory (FabLab) at City Campus has inspired local schools to enhance their own Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs.

William James Middle School has submitted a grant application for \$100,000 for equipment for an expanded FabLab for their STEM program. This upgrade was largely inspired by the University's FabLab at the City Campus downtown. The GS FabLab currently has 3-D printers, table saws, a laser cutter, CNC Router and hand tools to allow students, faculty and community members to bring their ideas to life.

The grant WJMS applied for is run as a contest through the Northrop Grumman Foundation, and WJMS is one of the top 25 finalists nationwide for the grant. This is the second year the contest has returned to help middle schools across the nation grow their STEM programs. Winning schools are selected through a voting process on Facebook based on video submissions. Only votes cast on Friday, Dec. 9 on the Facebook page will count toward helping WJMS.

Director of the WJMS STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) Amy Smith submitted the original proposal to the Foundation earlier this fall in the hopes of updating the school's electronics and project storage as well as adding 3-D printers, a small greenhouse and group tables.

The University was awarded a grant for nearly \$1.1 million from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to help build their FabLab in 2013. The Northrop Grumman Foundation grant will offer similar funding to help enhance the WJMS FabLab.

"William James Middle School partners with Georgia Southern University in many ways," said Smith. "We have our annual Science & Engineering Fair with many faculty from Georgia Southern volunteering to judge student projects. GS professors have also mentored students with research projects. WJMS competes annually at the GS Science Olympiad Competition in February. Working together as a team, we are able to build community relationships and improve the quality of education that our students receive and the quantity of opportunities they have available for them. As a result, our students achieve more because of our partnership with Georgia Southern University."

Click [here](#) to learn more about the WJMS' entry in the contest, for which voting closes on Dec. 9. For more information about the Georgia Southern FabLab and Business Innovation Group, visit <http://coba.georgiasouthern.edu/big/big-programs/fablab/>.

Third time's the charm: Triple Eagle walks in December

DECEMBER 9, 2016



This Fall, nearly 1,700 graduates will walk across the stage in Paulson Stadium to become University alumni. One Eagle in particular will make this walk for the third time, giving her an official "Triple Eagle" status.

Erin Lawson ('11, '14, '16), began her academic career with Georgia Southern as a pre-communications major in 2007. The Portal, Georgia, native had a hunger for learning and a drive to succeed. Choosing Georgia Southern came naturally to Lawson, as she had grown up falling in love with her "hometown" university.

"I remember taking field trips to the [Georgia Southern] Museum in elementary school and having picnic lunches on Sweetheart Circle," said Lawson. "It was an amazing opportunity to be able to go back as an adult and have a newfound appreciation for the University I so loved as a kid."

After taking her first introduction to psychology course, Lawson changed career paths with more drive than ever.

“Once I took that first psychology course, I was hooked,” said Lawson. “I knew that no matter how long it took or how much effort it required of me, I would be a psychologist someday.”

Upon graduating with her B.S. in psychology in 2011, Lawson began the Psy.D program at the University. She earned her M.S. in psychology in 2014 and later moved to Delray Beach, Florida, to complete an internship for her Psy.D. at the Faulk Center for Counseling in September 2015.

“The psychology department at Georgia Southern University is filled completely with knowledgeable, genuine, enthusiastic and truly phenomenal faculty,” said Lawson. “I can’t say enough about how much each of my professors encouraged and supported me through coursework, practicum experiences, dissertation and so many other components of the program. I wouldn’t be the person I am today, both personally and professionally, without having been touched by each of their individual influences.”

Lawson currently resides in Florida and is working toward licensure as a psychologist as a postdoctoral resident at Caron Renaissance, a substance abuse treatment center. In her free time, she loves to do improv and is training to become an instructor for beginner improv classes.