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Communication Arts students cover historical election

NOVEMBER 21, 2016



Director of the first segment of the five-hour election coverage, Kimberly Clark (left), communicates to her technical director, Nikki Willman (right) as they prepare for a full hour of live broadcasting. In the background, producer Cassandra Holmes (middle left) and Joel Boyter (middle right), instructor of Multimedia, Film and Production, work with students. (Photo: David Miller)

While Americans were on the edge of their seats throughout the presidential election evening, Georgia Southern University Communication Arts students were broadcasting live, debating and providing breaking news to the community the entire night.

For more than six hours, students broadcasted live on Channel 99 and through a live stream on YouTube. Students reported breaking news on the student-run radio station WVGS, on their website and on the Communication Arts Department's Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts.

"We began, as professors, planning for this since last semester, so this has been a long time coming," said Jennifer Kowalewski, Ph.D., assistant professor. "Students have worked hard all

semester learning about the issues and who they will see on the ballot. They have worked hard to bring this to fruition.”

This coverage required dozens of students and faculty and months of hard work and preparation. Several classes were involved in the coverage, including the Political Communication, Online Journalism, Multimedia Application and Media Production courses.

Tyson Davis, media production instructor, shared the value of working with his students to make this semester-long project happen.

“It is important for the students to have this opportunity, because it is the most realistic newsroom experience they will likely encounter in a class,” said Davis. “The nature of a live newscast, especially one that features breaking news coverage along with live interviews, cannot be properly reproduced without enmeshing students in the literal professional environment. With live election night coverage, we are able to do just that.”

Ristomatti Lanne, senior multimedia film production manager, acted as a producer and reporter for the event.

“The election time is definitely the best time to be a journalist, and [election] night proved that to be true,” said Lanne. “Yes, you are very busy throughout the night, especially when you have such a close race like we had, but I liked it.”

University faculty acted as experts in the coverage offering expert opinion on the effects of everything from comedy to religion on the election. Student leaders, including the president of the GS Association of College Republicans, Chase Davis, also weighed in on the coverage.

“Covering the election at the University is important because people our age are going to be as large a voting block as the Baby Boomers, so we need to be engaged,” said Davis, senior. “Also, as a journalism student, it helps get us used to what we’ll be doing for a living.”

Rashida Otunba, senior multimedia journalism major, was one of two Communication Arts students given the opportunity to act as an election stinger for the Associated Press throughout the evening.

“This was an amazing experience,” said Otunba. “It not only gave me a huge appreciation for the community, but it also increased my love of my major even more. Although it was tiring, and I had to be there until late at night, working election night was a really exciting time.”

Overall, the coverage was a success in the eyes of the students and faculty. Kowalewski says the department plans to continue with the election coverage tradition in years to come.

“I feel the students really learned how to cover elections, saw how time-consuming and utterly unpredictable elections can be,” said Kowalewski. “They kept on task throughout the evening,

keeping everyone informed. They left the night having an appreciation for the field they have chosen, learning how difficult but rewarding this career can be.”

Georgia Southern announces Fall 2016 Commencement ceremony speaker

NOVEMBER 21, 2016



Mike Royal

Mike Royal has been selected as the speaker for Georgia Southern University’s 25th annual Fall Commencement ceremony on Friday, Dec. 9, at 1 p.m., at Allen E. Paulson Stadium, 207 Lanier Drive.

Royal, an outstanding Georgia Southern alumnus, is the chairman of the Georgia State Board of Education. He has served on this board since 2012, when he was first appointed by Governor Nathan Deal. The State Board of Education oversees a K-12 education budget of \$11 billion, and more than 1,000 Department of Education employees. The board, in conjunction with the state school superintendent, is also responsible for creating and improving opportunities for the nearly 1.8 million children in public education in Georgia.

Royal also serves on the Board of Advisors to the University’s College of Education.

Royal is an accomplished insurance and risk management professional. He is the founder of Partners Risk Services – a fast-growing risk management and insurance firm with offices in Georgia and Colorado. He is a certified insurance counselor, and has received recognition and awards for his leadership and service to his profession.

A lifelong resident of Gwinnett County, Georgia, he is active in his community. He is a member of and has held leadership positions for various professional and civic boards at the local, state and national levels. He also supports FoodFinderGA, an organization that helps connect hungry children with food resources for their families.

Royal has been married to his wife, Lori, for almost 25 years. They have three daughters, one of whom is a freshman at Georgia Southern.

During this year's Fall Commencement ceremony, members of the Double Eagle Society will be recognized. The incentive program and joint initiative between the University's College of Graduate Studies and the Alumni Association includes alumni who have earned two or more degrees, one undergraduate and one graduate degree or two graduate degrees, from Georgia Southern. For more information on the Double Eagle Society, visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu/doubleeagle.

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.