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Board of Regents approves new Master of Science Program at Georgia Southern

MARCH 18, 2016

Georgia Southern University's College of Science and Mathematics (COSM) will soon offer a Master of Science degree program with a major in Applied Geography (MS-AG) after the program was unanimously approved at the March 9 meeting of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

The program will center on geospatial technology including: Geographic Information Science (GIS), Remote Sensing, Global Positioning Systems (GPS), Spatial Statistics, Spatial Modeling and Big Data. The primary objective of the program is to prepare students for professional opportunities in applied geography, specifically in the rapidly expanding field of geospatial technology applications, and in critical workforce need areas such as: national security, transportation and logistics, urban and regional planning, resource management and conservation science.

"The Master of Science Degree Program in Applied Geography will be one of the first of its kind in the Southeastern U.S.," said Jeffrey Underwood, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Geology and Geography. "The impact on Georgia Southern University should be profound. The University will quickly become the preferred destination for graduate students seeking to augment their disciplinary knowledge with advanced geospatial analysis skills. These students may arrive from disciplines as diverse as business administration, public health, biology and ecology, as well as from social sciences such as political science, economics and sociology. The program is also designed to introduce students to entrepreneurial concepts, thus producing graduates who will positively impact economic development in the region and across the state."

A broader objective of the MS-AG program is to positively impact workforce development in southeast Georgia and across the state. Graduates of the MS-AG program will meet the current and future demand for geospatial professionals at the state level and expand workforce opportunities in southeast Georgia by creating a core of geospatial professionals with auxiliary skills in biology, climatology, demographics, economics, hazard assessment, logistics, marketing, planning, resource management and other disciplines.

This core of technically competent and disciplinarily focused graduates will generate ideas, drive innovation and attract infrastructure to the region, creating a hub of geospatial expertise that will satisfy workforce demands from established businesses, agencies and municipalities in the region, and attract new businesses and entrepreneurs to the region to utilize this pool of geospatial professionals.

In addition, the new program is designed to meet qualifications for accreditation by the U.S. National Geospatial Intelligence Foundation (USGIF) so that Department of Defense personnel may receive certifications for advancement by completing coursework in the new degree program.

The Department of Geology and Geography will be recruiting students for the new program and getting approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in the 2016-2017 academic year with a target starting date of fall 2017.
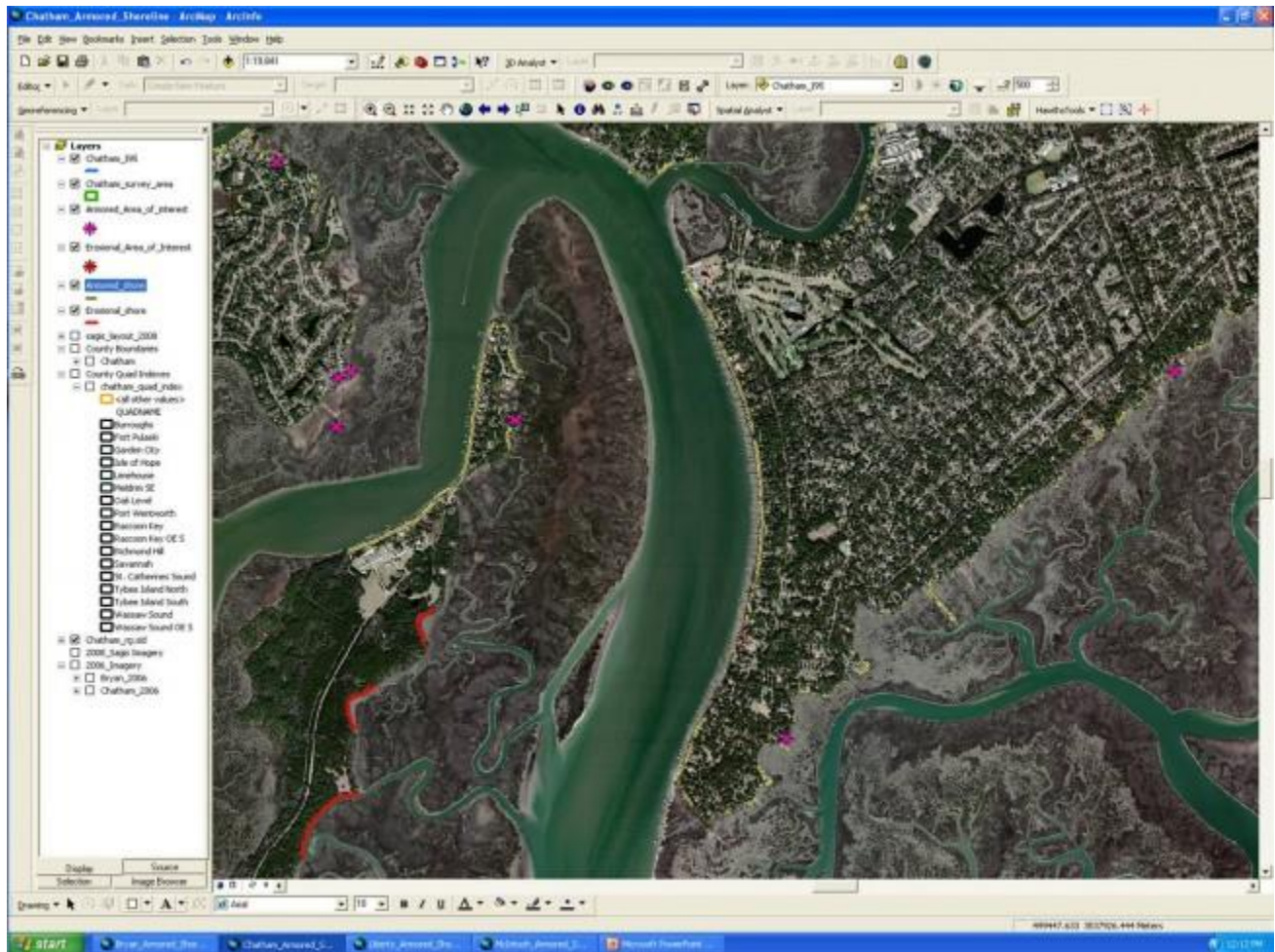
An example of a Geographic Information Science (GIS) Image. Geographic information systems are used for compiling and analyzing spatial data, which students can learn more about with the new MS-AG program.