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Thousands of Georgia Southern graduates soar to new heights during Spring Commencement ceremonies

MAY 6, 2017

More than 3,300 of Georgia's best and brightest undergraduate and graduate students received degrees from Georgia Southern University during ceremonies on May 5 and 6 in Statesboro.

Georgia Southern President Jaimie Hebert, Ph.D., congratulated the students from each of the University's eight colleges as they received their degrees.

"Congratulations, Eagles. You truly are Georgia's best and brightest," said Hebert. "Enjoy your day celebrating your academic successes. You surely make Eagle Nation proud."

Some of the best and brightest include exemplary students like Double Eagle [Osibodu "Tito" Oluwatito](#) and 19-year-old [Arianna Archer](#) who received their degrees on Friday and Saturday, respectively.

Tito received her Master's in music during Friday's graduate commencement ceremony. She plans to become a music educator, giving future generations opportunities in music like she had during her childhood.

"When I was younger, I longed to teach at the camps, and I did eventually start teaching there on staff until about two years ago," said Tito. "I was a housekeeper and laundress at first and eventually moved up to an instructor, then camp counselor where I really fell in love with teaching and being involved with young people. I was given my first instrument, and it changed my life. I wanted to do the same for someone else."

Archer received her Bachelor of Science in public health on Saturday and plans to use her degree to help others as she works toward her goal of one day becoming a hospital CEO.

"Public health is a way to help people that isn't the ideal route for healthcare," she said. "But it helps people in ways that others may not understand. As a healthcare administrator, you have the ability to put in place policies that could help thousands rather than just one."

Alumnus Ronny Just, governmental relations manager for Georgia Power, and the Honorable Casey Cagle, Lt. Gov. of Georgia, served as this year's commencement speakers. Just addressed graduate students on Friday, reminding them that a small act of kindness could make all the difference in their lives.

"The most meaningful and maybe the most memorable things you will ever accomplish, your legacy, will be some small act of kindness that probably only a few will ever know," said Just. "That may not be the secret to worldly success. But there is invaluable gratification in secret success."

"May you soar to heights unimaginable, remembering those who helped you here," said Just. "Stop and help someone along the journey and share with others a kind word, encouragement and a little bit of the blessing you will take from this place."

Cagle spoke to undergraduate students on Saturday at Allen E. Paulson stadium, taking them through a memorable time in his life when he was recruited by the late Erk Russell to play football at Georgia Southern. He reminded them that life, like playing football, took a strong work ethic and perseverance.

"No career that you pursue will ever be assured, and while no one can predict the future, what will matter most is how you use your individual talents to persevere through any challenge you face and to make it the most of your potential," Cagle said. "At times you might doubt your path, but never doubt yourself. Never put limits on your future, and never hold back."

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers 119 degree programs serving 20,673 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.