

# Newsroom

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Georgia Southern University

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# COE Edcamp draws record numbers

MAY 15, 2017



More than 160 educators from across southeast Georgia came together for Georgia Southern University College of Education's (COE) second annual Edcamp event on Saturday, April 22, for a day of educational training and learning experiences.

Edcamps, participant-driven, professional development for K-12 educators, are held worldwide, and COE hosts Edcamp annually at no cost for K-12 education professionals.

Some of this year's sessions included parent involvement, essay grading, using Flipgrid and video in the classroom, tips for new teachers, Skype in the classroom, robotics and classroom management ideas — all of which were chosen by educators at the event

The structure of Edcamp provides the context to empower and motivate educators to learn and share innovative and beneficial practices for the education field.

"At Edcamp this year, I feel educators gained a sense of professional pride and accomplishment as the event focuses on all teachers having expertise to share," said COE Assistant Professor Lacey Huffling, Ph.D. "This is often lost in today's world where teachers are seen in need of professional development, and Edcamp flips this by putting the spotlight on teachers and having them run their own professional development."

In addition to these interactive sessions, Edcamp attendees also had the opportunity to win numerous giveaways. Items donated for giveaway during the event totaled more than \$30,000. Some prizes included document cameras, wireless interactive whiteboard systems, tablet cases, free Science 4 Us subscriptions, complimentary copies of Reflector 2, one-year licenses to Glogster, a free year of EMAZE, a complimentary copy of Camtasia and \$200 in gift cards to Amazon.

Edcamp coordinators included Huffling, Associate Director of Annual Giving and Alumni Engagement John Ramfjord and COE Associate Professor Michelle Reidel, Ph.D.

"The second annual Edcamp was a huge success, and people are already registering for our third annual Edcamp which is a year away," said Huffling.

Reidel thanked participants for the success of the event.

"Our attendance was up over 60 people from last year's Edcamp, and we had more representation from across southeast Georgia school districts as well," said Reidel. "Our growth can be attributed to those who attended last year and shared with others their powerful experience and how much they enjoyed Edcamp."

Attendee Mary Alice posted via Twitter, "I don't say it lightly that teaching is a hard job. Thank you EdCamp at GS for re-fueling my fire for teaching."

The 2017 Edcamp ambassador team included: Bilinda Sikes, Effingham County Middle School; Christine Jackson and Paige Sutcliff, Statesboro High School; Hollie Sisk, Portal Middle/High School; Jessica Blanton and Jodie Wallis, Tattnall County High School; Lexi Tanner, South Columbia Elementary School; and Edward Bujak, Westside Pre-Engineering Magnet High School.

The date for the 2018 Edcamp has already be set for April 21. You can reserve your free ticket to the 2018 EdCamp at Georgia Southern by visiting <http://edcampgeorgiasouthern.weebly.com/>.

*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](http://GeorgiaSouthern.edu).*

# Georgia Southern University establishes first scientific field station on 1,400-acre gift from Southeastern Trust for Parks and Land

MAY 15, 2017



Georgia Southern University's expanding campus just got 1,400 acres larger.

While the University is working on the upcoming consolidation with Armstrong State University located in Savannah and Hinesville, and an enlarged student population of 27,000, the Statesboro-based University has acquired its first permanent scientific field station.

Known as the Effingham Wetlands, the parcel measures about 1,400 acres and was recently donated by the [Southeastern Trust for Parks and Land](#) (STPAL) to the Georgia Southern University Foundation with the express purpose of using the property as a vibrant living laboratory.

Georgia Southern President Jaimie L. Hebert, Ph.D., explains, "Because this large tract of undeveloped natural wetland is embedded in one of the most rapidly developing areas in Georgia, just 12 miles

northwest of downtown Savannah, we felt compelled to take advantage of the opportunities this property provides for the University. It will become a tremendous resource over time for our student and faculty scientists, especially those in the College of Science and Mathematics."

According to STPAL's field studies, the property located in Effingham and Chatham counties, is approximately 841 acres of cutover and regenerating pine; 231 acres of riparian wetlands; 68 acres of hardwoods; 40 acres of mature pine; 15 acres of open grasslands and about 7 acres of small ponds. The major water feature is St. Augustine Creek, a tributary of the Savannah River.

The site will soon become a rich resource for ongoing scientific research where long-term field experiments will monitor the property's varied ecology. Examples of natural features to be studied include its native plants, surface and sub-surface water flow, soil biota, insects, reptiles, amphibians,

mammals, fungi, bird migration and potentially many other learning opportunities. The site is even ideal for studying the region's tick and mosquito populations.

While the property is largely a wetland habitat, it's also a marvelous mix of forest and other Coastal Plain habitats lending itself to meaningful research that could yield answers for real-world issues. As Georgia Southern faculty and students collect valuable data in a protected setting, their findings could result in better policy decisions on how natural resources are managed for economic benefits while preserving cleaner water and healthier soils. Georgia Southern scientists will have the ability to take control of the site without fear of theft or disturbance of their scientific equipment.



"This wetland extends and enhances the learning environment beyond the classroom giving faculty, graduate students and undergrads advanced training in the scientific method by doing actual hands-on research in their chosen field of study," says Martha Abell, Ph.D., dean of the University's College of Science and Mathematics.

Stephen P. Vives, Ph.D., department chair and professor of biology, says, "Restoring previously logged areas is a growing field with an emphasis on returning habitat to its previous condition and increasing species diversity. Research performed here can be a valuable contribution to the larger body of knowledge on this important subject."

Another hot topic among forest experts is the symbiotic relationship between soils, fungi and trees related to forest health – "one more fruitful line of research now available to Georgia Southern student scientists," Vives adds.

Kelly Pope, senior director of development for the University's College of Science and Mathematics, represented Georgia Southern University Foundation throughout the process.

Charles McMillan, coastal director of the Georgia Conservancy and a member of STPAL's advisory board, commends STPAL and Georgia Southern for taking the lead in crafting such an innovative partnership. "The Georgia Conservancy would like to see similar arrangements between land trusts and universities in Georgia," adding, "This is certainly a step in the right direction."

McMillan reminds us that ecology is a relatively young science with most discoveries taking place in the last 50 years. "It's possible that Georgia Southern student scientists can make significant, new contributions to existing knowledge on how wetlands function." He explains, just like "the liver and



lungs of the body,” wetlands remove toxins and provide oxygen. He believes “the more we know, the better informed we will be to set public policy to manage water resources more effectively.”

### **About Southeastern Trust for Parks and Land**

STPAL has acquired 35 properties in Georgia, Tennessee and North Carolina totaling about 15,000 acres. The Georgia Southern Effingham Wetlands site was donated to STPAL by a generous individual. STPAL then placed deed restrictions on the parcel to ensure it would be conserved perpetually and never developed.

All STPAL properties are protected with various forms of conservation statuses; many are slated to become public parks.



Bill Jones, STPAL’s executive director, remarks, “We are thrilled to be part of this creative partnership which maximizes the benefits of such a large tract. Now Georgia Southern scientists will elevate its value as conservation land to an even higher level by conducting meaningful scientific research here with long-term implications.”

In fact, university-held properties, field stations and marine labs are playing valuable roles around the world to study climate change, biodiversity loss, pollinator decline and invasive species biology.

Over time, Georgia Southern scientists plan to restore the property to natural habitat types and divide it into management zones with restoration targets.

Eventually, the property will also be shared with local K-12 students as an educational resource, and guided field trips will be encouraged for targeted groups like the Ogeechee Audubon Society whose members can assist with annual bird counts.

According to an advisory board with extensive land management experience who analyzed the site on behalf of Georgia Southern, their report concluded, “This property is large and diverse and would have value for field trips in at least 10 upper level courses. The Effingham Wetlands property will strengthen the potential for meaningful field-based research experiments by students and faculty. ”

Only time will tell what they might discover.

### **About Georgia Southern University**

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