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Georgia Southern's Garden of the Coastal Plain Named to Top 50 List

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The Heritage Pavilion at the Garden of the Coastal Plain

The [Garden of the Coastal Plain](#) at Georgia Southern University has been named to a list of the 50 most amazing university botanical gardens and arboretums in the U.S. by [BestOnlineColleges.org](#).

The Garden at Georgia Southern boasts over 11 acres of gardens on the early 20th century farmstead of Dan and Catherine Bland. Woodland trails, a landscape garden of coastal plain natives, an arboretum, a children's garden, 20th century farm buildings, the Rural Life Museum and a native azalea collection are just a few of the attractions the garden has to offer.

"It is an honor to be included with some of the world leaders in botanical research and conservation," said Carolyn Altman, director of the Garden. "Since its inception, the Garden has

developed unique and important collections featuring plants native to the coastal plain and engaged the University and beyond in discovering the fascinating life this area produces. We're about to be adding significantly to the Garden, and encourage visitors from all over to stop in often and explore the wonders of the coastal plain and its culture."

The list was created using a point system for various accolades including awards, variety of plant species, conservation and education, connected University degree programs and "wow factor."

Conservation efforts in cultivating over 20 of Georgia's protected plants and 17 endangered species and the offering of internships, service learning projects and research projects are just a few of the things that stood out about the Garden of the Coastal Plain when being considered for the list.

Other universities mentioned on the list include Louisiana State University, University of Delaware, University of Kentucky and the University of Michigan among others.

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers more than 125-degree programs serving more than 20,500 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

Georgia Southern study shows overweight and obese teens think they're 'just fine'

JULY 13, 2015



As national obesity rates have risen over the last 20 years, overweight and obese adolescents are now less likely to accurately perceive their body weight, according to a recent study at Georgia Southern.

The study, "More Overweight Adolescents Think They Are Just Fine," is being published in the upcoming issue of the American Journal of Preventative Medicine, and is part of a series of research initiatives led by Dr. Jian Zhang, associate professor of epidemiology in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health.

While previous papers have focused on the parents of preschoolers and school-aged children, Zhang says this study focuses on the

adolescents themselves, both because of their growing independence from parents and because of a diminishing likelihood they will outgrow their obesity as adults.

"It's estimated that about a third of obese preschoolers and half of obese school-aged children — including adolescents — will become obese adults," he said. "Adolescents with accurate self-perceptions of their body weight have greater readiness to make weight-related behavioral changes and are more effective in making the changes. By contrast, overweight adolescents who do not perceive their weight status properly are less likely to desire weight loss, and are more likely to have a poor diet."

Zhang and researchers from Georgia Southern and Fudan University in Shanghai, China, compared data from adolescents ages 12-16 who participated in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) in 1988-1994 and in 2007-2012. Respondents were asked if they thought they were overweight, underweight or just about the right weight.

The study revealed that overweight or obese adolescents from the most recent survey were 30 percent less likely to accurately perceive their body weight compared to adolescents from the earlier survey.

The researchers suggest that a combination of issues may be the reason for this change in perception. As the prevalence of obesity has more than doubled in adolescents over the last 20 years, Zhang believes our socially accepted standards for "normal weight" may be shifting accordingly.

In addition, researchers pointed to social comparison theory as a possible explanation. According to the theory, individuals compare themselves to others, rather than to some scientific standard such as the Body Mass Index (BMI).

"In the wake of an obesity pandemic, a teenager is more likely to compare his or her body size to peers or friends, or anyone she or he sees daily," said Andrew Hansen, Dr.P.H., assistant professor of community health behavior and education and spokesman for the research group. "Teenagers are less likely to use growth charts and biologic tools to measure their weight, but are more likely to socially compare or associate their weight to what they feel is normal."

Because of these factors, Zhang says exploring new strategies to correct these body weight misperceptions are more urgent than ever, and that parents are a key factor in every one.

"As parents, we need to proactively create a conducive family environment to engage kids with a healthy lifestyle — clearly let our teens know that we care," he said. "It is also crucial that we proactively discuss weight issues with doctors to make sure youths are on a healthy growth track."

Zhang says parents should also serve as role models, watching their own weight and focusing on healthy lifestyles instead of weight control to protect their teen's attitude about body image.

"This doesn't have to be an anti-obesity campaign," said Hansen. "This can be a pro-health campaign."