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SGA President Azell Francis Receives Potts Leadership Award

FEBRUARY 20, 2015

Second Consecutive Honoree From Georgia Southern



Azell Francis ('14), the Georgia Southern University Student Government Association (SGA) president, has been awarded the 2015 Regent Willis J. Potts Student Advisory Council Leadership Award.

The Student Advisory Council (SAC) is composed of SGA presidents from the 31 University System of Georgia (USG) colleges and universities across the state, representing more than 309,000 students. Each year, the SAC membership anonymously selects a member who has shown strong interest and leadership in the organization; who demonstrates openness, honesty and respect; and who shows enthusiasm in the engagement of all SAC activities and conferences.

USG Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Joyce Jones, Ph.D., said the selection of Francis was an easy choice for her fellow presidents.

"It has been a pleasure to work with an outstanding campus leader like Azell Francis," said Jones. "She takes initiative, has volunteered to participate on USG System-wide committees and has made recommendations that will be implemented as 'best practices.' The Potts award is voted on by the student leaders and clearly Azell was the majority favorite. She has worked hard in her SGA leadership role and certainly deserves this leadership award."

Francis, a Georgia Southern graduate and current Master of Science in Applied Engineering student, is the first international student to serve as Georgia Southern SGA president and the first female president since 2009. Since her election, she has created the "Eagles for Eagles" program, which is a student-led initiative to raise funds for students suffering extreme financial hardships. In addition to her roles at SGA and SAC, Francis currently serves on the system-wide Title IX Committee, which will make recommendations to the USG chancellor in May, and is also helping draft the 2015 End-of-Year Report for the USG chancellor and Board chair.

With all of her outstanding University involvement and prior accolades, Francis said she was still surprised to receive such a prestigious award.

"I was pleasantly surprised, honored, grateful and ecstatic to have been voted in by my peers for this award," she said. "In a room filled with servant leaders, it is a very emotional experience to receive such recognition."

For Francis, the leadership roles and recognition are really just part of a greater desire to serve people. And, like the leader for whom the award is named, Francis says she wants to be a student advocate in everything she does.

"In my role as SGA president, and on the Student Advisory Council, I sought first to listen to students, and then to serve as their voice," said Francis. "The ultimate goal was, and is, to serve students... to enhance their collegiate experience and provide them with the best learning environment to discover and pursue their purpose. Receiving this leadership award, though an incredible honor, was never a part of my story as I envisioned it. My joy in serving as student body president comes from knowing that the work that we are doing is making a difference in the world, one Eagle at a time, and through SAC, one USG alum at a time."

Francis is the fifth recipient of the Potts Leadership Award, and the second consecutive recipient from Georgia Southern. Garrett Green, former University SGA president, received the same honor last year.

"Garrett, as my predecessor set a great example for me, and in his wake I am able to soar," said Francis. "As I aim for new heights, I look excitedly to the future, and am happy to play my small part in our tradition of excellence."

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.