

Newsroom

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Georgia Southern University

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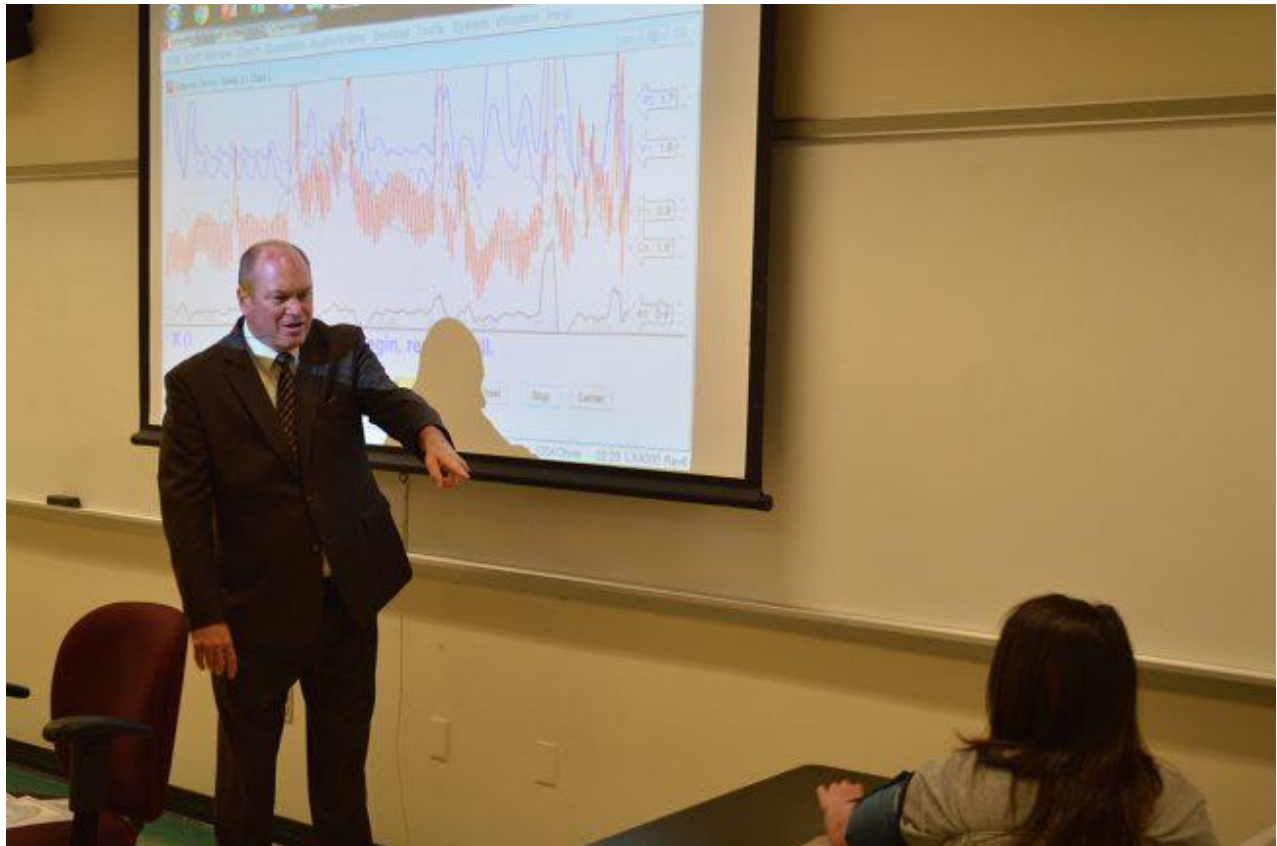
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College of Business programs prepare students for fraud examination and forensic accounting careers

JUNE 23, 2017



Don Berez, senior lecturer in the School of Accountancy and retired FBI agent, explains to students how a lie detector test works. These are some of the skills students gain with the Fraud Examination and Forensic Accounting certificate programs offered in the College of Business.

Students interested in pursuing careers in fraud examination or forensic accounting have the opportunity to hone their skills and be competitive in the workforce thanks to specialty tracks offered through the School of Accountancy in Georgia Southern University's College of Business.

The four-course Forensic Accounting Certificate and Fraud Examination Certificate programs are available to students pursuing a master's degrees. These certificate programs provide specific training in high-demand areas of accounting and investigation.

"The employment possibilities are endless with this knowledge," said Don Berez, senior lecturer in the School of Accountancy and retired FBI agent. "This training prepares students with skills for any

kind of employment. Fraud permeates all aspects of society. The [Association of Certified Fraud Examiners] estimates that all organizations lose 5-6 percent of their gross earnings to fraudulent activity due to fraud by employees, managers and executives.”

The Forensic Accounting Certificate program includes the courses Expert Witnessing, Cyber Forensics, Fraudulent Financial Reporting and Forensic Accounting Capstone. The Fraud Examination Certificate program includes the courses Fraud Schemes, Fraud Examination, White Collar Crime, and Forensic Interviews and Interrogation. Georgia Southern’s program was designed to prepare Forensic Accounting Masters students for careers in public accounting firms and law firms.

Berecz added that students don’t necessarily have to go into public accounting or forensic accounting careers to be able to use the Fraud Examination certificate in their area of study.

“Based on the fraud detection and investigative skills learned in this program, students should be able to spot small frauds in their employment positions before they become larger frauds. When these frauds become large frauds they involve cash or stolen assets that usually cannot be recovered,” he said. “Students of any major will find employment opportunities in law enforcement, retail management, loss prevention, information security, corporate security, human resources, and hospitality and restaurant management.”

Since the inception of these tracks in 2007, Berecz said 111 students have successfully completed the Forensic Accounting program, with an average of a dozen Master’s of Accounting students enrolled each year. Some of the program’s alumni have gone on to work for companies like KPMG, SunTrust Bank, Dycem Industries Inc., as well as government agencies such as the FBI, the Internal Revenue Service and police departments, among others.

“Graduates of either certificate program will set themselves apart from other employment candidates,” Berecz said. “Our graduates attain specialized knowledge that makes them appealing to employers because of their ability to identify fraud and/or investigate it.”

The programs at Georgia Southern are also supported by the School of Accountancy’s [Forensic Accounting Advisory Board](#), which is made up of professionals from diverse employment backgrounds who provide guidance of programs, make speaker presentations, provide assistance with internships for students, and/or employment opportunities for graduates.

Recently, the School of Accountancy was featured on [ForesnicsColleges.com](#) for its growing opportunities in its forensic accounting program. Georgia Southern was identified as one of the top programs in the country to prepare students for a career in forensic accounting by the [National Association of State Boards of Accountancy](#).

For more information about the Fraud Examination and Forensic Accounting certificate programs, visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu/soa/fraud-forensic-accounting.

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers 118 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.

Invasion of the Trees: Professor's comic connects entertainment to plant sciences

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Imagine a character so powerful, so toxic, that it could take over the world- well, the world's forests at least. John T. Van Stan, Ph.D., assistant professor of geography, is bringing this character, and many others like it, to life, all the while educating the public on the impact invasive and native tree species have on water.

The idea for these characters and subsequent graphic novel, [*Plant Invasion Alters Canopy Ecohydrology*](#), came about when Van Stan was asked by Moein

Sadeghi, a doctoral student from the University of Tehran, in Iran, to look over some rainfall data from the city's urban forest. As they began to comb through the numbers with scientists from Germany (Jan Friesen, Ph.D., Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research) and Canada (Tom Pypker, Ph.D., Thompson Rivers University), they noticed a some pretty significant findings.

The data revealed much more than just a change in precipitation reaching the surface. They discovered that an invasive plant species, the China indigenous "Tree of Heaven," that had taken over parts of the city forest, was funneling significant amounts of rainfall to its stem, possibly pushing a poisonous flow of root toxins throughout the area. This release of chemicals can make other competitive native plants nearly obsolete.

Because the invasive trees grew so large and staggered, they eventually formed a large canopy over the city's forest, acting as an umbrella that deprived the soil of rain. Much of the water that did reach the soil flowed down the trunk of the trees and into its toxic root system, causing the native plants below the canopies to become dehydrated and poisoned.

Although Van Stan was fascinated by this invasive species' stemflow and its impact on water resources, he couldn't help but feel others were more underwhelmed at the same concept.

"I think everyone should be interested in how trees partition rain," he laughed. "But the reality is, more science majors are interested in polar bears, dolphins, animals. There is only a small interest in plant science."

He began to wonder why plant sciences weren't as popular as many other areas of study. As he mulled over his concerns with a friend of his, Bagus Seta, an artist at the Savannah College of Art and Design, he came to an exciting conclusion.

"I think part of this is that we don't have a lot of plant characters in the entertainment world that the public can relate to," he said. "Maybe if there were more relatable plant characters that represented what plants do in the world, how interesting they are, we could groove the interest in student population toward plant sciences."

They began developing tree characters, [creating sketches](#) and forming a storyline about Van Stan's recent study in Iran. Eventually they created a full comic.

Soon after Van Stan published the comic on ResearchGate, what he calls "Facebook for researchers," he noticed his read-count data skyrocket. The read throughs of this publication were nearly seven times what his typical rate was. In fact, many people who read through the comic went on to read his accompanying research paper at a much higher rate than usual.

"Clearly this graphic novella was being consumed at a greater amount, by more people, than a paper would have been," he said. "It funneled a lot of scientists who otherwise might not have read my paper to my work."



*Bagus Seta's European beech
(Fagus sylvatica) poisoning its
throughfall*

Since making this connection, Van Stan has been more committed to raising public interest in the plant sciences as a whole.

"I think science literacy is becoming cool," said Van Stan. "We spend so much time trying to impress our fellow scientists that we forget that part of the value of science, a small part albeit, is entertainment. People like to know things. People find that fun. Why not make them want to share plant knowledge?"

Van Stan plans to continue his collaborative work on developing graphic novellas involving these plant characters with the hopes of informing the public of the impact plants can have on a community. He is also interested in creating a video series, as inspired by [his work with MinuteEarth](#), to add to the entertainment value of plant-life education.

For more information on the Department of Geology and Geography, visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu/cosm.

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