

Newsroom

March 9, 2010

Georgia Southern University

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Newsroom

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Grant Helping Georgia Southern University Reach Out to Rural Communities

MARCH 9, 2010

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Statistics show that rural Georgians suffer higher rates of chronic disease than their urban counterparts and have fewer resources available to manage their disease. Georgia Southern University is lending a hand through a federal grant to help two Southeast Georgia counties prioritize their health problems and take steps to address them.

The \$94,050 federal planning grant is funded entirely from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and has been designed to help Bulloch and Effingham Counties develop strategic plans to improve public health. The grant was written by professors Stuart Tedders and Russell Toal in Georgia Southern University's Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health.

"The goal of this project is to empower rural communities and underserved populations to improve public health and eliminate health disparities," Tedders said. "Rural Georgians are less likely to be healthy than their urban counterparts and are more likely to be under-insured or uninsured. Additionally, rural Georgians are more likely to suffer from any number of chronic diseases including heart disease, obesity, and cancer. Many residents of rural areas are at a significant disadvantage both socially and culturally."

The project is currently in its first phase, of developing two advisory councils (one for each county) made up of community leaders. The council will involve the public by planning community forums and soliciting participation in focus groups.

With the input from the forums and focus groups, each county's advisory council will assess the community's public health needs. The council will then prioritize those identified health issues, develop goals and strategies, provide the information to the community, and share the results of the project with public health practitioners and policymakers around the state.

The goal is that the program will continue after the grant period expires on August 31, 2010. "The intent is that this model will loop around and be a continual process," Tedders said.

Georgia Southern University, a Carnegie Doctoral/Research University, offers 115 degree programs serving 19,000 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor, master and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. The University, one of Georgia's largest, is a top choice of Georgia's HOPE scholars and is recognized for its student-centered approach to education. Visit: www.georgiasouthern.edu.

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