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New Concentration Option Will Prepare Georgia Southern University Students for Global Sustainability Movement

JANUARY 25, 2011

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Georgia Southern University students can enhance their educational efforts by participating in a new academic concentration area with a global sustainability focus.

The Interdisciplinary Concentration in Environmental Sustainability opened for enrollment this January and Center for Sustainability Director Lissa Leege said she sees it as a positive addition to Georgia Southern's academic programs, which will continue to advance sustainability efforts on campus and in the region.

"We will be the first in the University System of Georgia to offer this concentration and the great value of this concentration is that it is interdisciplinary," Leege said. "We're living in a world with limited resources, and this program will provide students with the skills and knowledge that they need to help solve these problems from different perspectives across many disciplines."

Students enrolled in the concentration area will better understand how sustainability links to every part of their lives on a daily basis and learn about the necessary resources to promote sustainability practices on a global scale. Participants have already come from a variety of disciplines, including business, advertising, marketing and education, but the concentration area is open to students from any degree program.

"I am delighted with the leadership being shown by Dr. Leege and the faculty and students associated with the Center for Sustainability. This new concentration provides faculty and students the framework to deeply explore environmental sustainability in the classroom, and to directly address such issues through service-learning opportunities in the community," said Bret Danilowicz, dean for the Allen E. Paulson College of Science and Technology. "Graduates who participate in this concentration will understand the complex links among business operations and environmental issues; these critical thinking graduates will be well prepared for leadership positions in the work force."

Georgia Southern professors Anoop Desai and Phil Waldrop are using their backgrounds in technology and industry to teach multiple sections of TCGT 1530, the introductory course in the new environmental sustainability concentration which was created through funding from a Center for Sustainability grant. Additional support for this course and others in the concentration has been provided with new sustainability resources purchased by the Zach S. Henderson Library.

"This course is a gateway introduction to sustainability," said Waldrop. "Sustainability can involve any major on campus, and there are a lot of employment opportunities. It's a great field for entrepreneurs, and the future growth potential is enormous."

For example, Desai said some professions could delve into alternative energy, which involves wind and solar power, or even learning the technology of electric cars.

After completing the introductory course, students are required to take 12 credit hours worth of upper level classes followed by the final three-hour Practicum in Environmental Sustainability. During the capstone course, each student chooses a mentor from his or her home department and under the mentor's supervision, develops and implements a project to improve sustainability on campus or in the community.

"An education major could develop a sustainability curriculum for schoolchildren that integrates state performance standards, or a marketing major could work with a local organic farm to help them market their products. The possibilities are limitless," said Leege. "We want students to bring their interdisciplinary knowledge to the practicum, so they can develop well thought out and effective projects."

The new 18-credit hour concentration area marks an important step towards better preparing students for their careers. Although sustainability wasn't always at the forefront of most companies' agendas, Desai said many companies are now adopting best practices, which will ultimately have a big impact on their profitability as well.

Waldrop said that in the 1990s, only about 10 percent of corporations worldwide were involved in responsible sustainability practices, but the number has increased to around 70 percent. The new movement toward developing these best practices shows that attaining a concentration in global sustainability will better prepare students in any discipline.

"Sustainability is a topic that everyone should be interested in," said Waldrop, "and people should realize that sustainability is going to affect their lives in one way or another."

Leege said the unique structure and sophistication of the new academic concentration area is that students are actually getting hands-on experience by actively improving sustainability in the world. At the same time, with the interdisciplinary concentration involving all areas of study at Georgia Southern, she hopes that this practicum will enable students to actively think about how sustainability can affect other areas of our lives.

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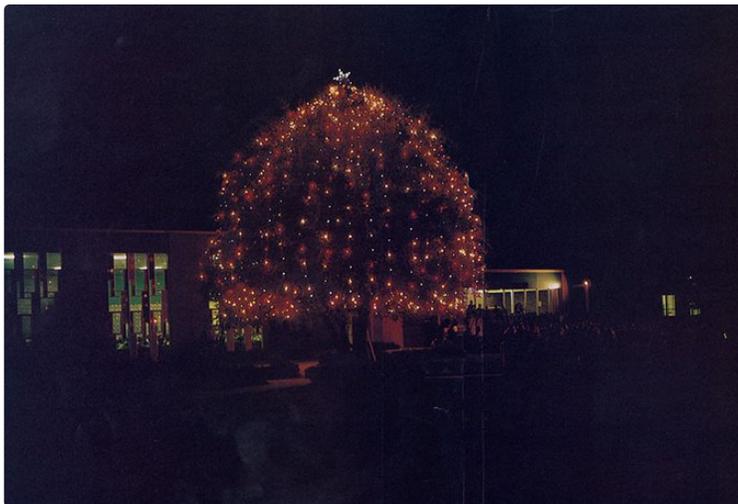
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"O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree..." 🎄🎵#TBT to circa 1964, when a tree in front of the Williams Center was decorated for the holidays.



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