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Georgia Southern Establishes Asphalt Research Lab

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Georgia Southern University is continuing to expand its research activities with the recent addition of a new asphalt research lab within its Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Information Technology (CEIT). The new lab will provide research services to a variety of state and private companies, including the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

Initially, the lab will be used to conduct scientific research for the GDOT, but University officials say additional opportunities exist to support the U.S. Federal Highway Administration, National Science Foundation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The lab is also capable of providing services to regional industry and certification training for technicians. In keeping with Georgia Southern's focus on teaching and education, the lab will serve as a valuable training tool providing application-based learning and research opportunities for engineering students.

"We are excited to establish the state's first lab dedicated to asphalt research," said Mohammad Davoud, dean of CEIT. "There has been a great amount of interest by the public and private sector to establish such a lab at a state university in Georgia. We are fortunate to have researchers on staff with a tremendous amount of experience in asphalt and construction materials. This new lab will help us expand our research and collaborate with other researchers throughout the country."

What makes it unique? The new lab features "super pavement" asphalt mixture design equipment — Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP) asphalt binder grade equipment, an asphalt mixture performance tester and weathering equipment. "The lab's diverse capability to conduct research, provide educational opportunities and certification is just one part of the equation," said Junan Shen, Ph.D., associate professor of civil engineering and director of the new lab. "My students and I will now be able to conduct research on new, improved asphalt mixtures and pavement-related research."

"We are making a significant investment to conduct research and development that will ultimately save taxpayers money and benefit the environment," said Davoud. "This is just one example of how Georgia Southern is combining the expertise of its faculty to conduct research to support our state and a growing industry. We are looking forward to seeing the lab continue to grow. It's a great addition to our Civil Engineering degree program and will provide hands-on research opportunities for our students – something employers continue to tell us they need."

Most recently, Shen was selected by the GDOT to conduct the second phase of a project to investigate the performance of rubberized asphalt mix for use in road construction in Georgia. The nearly \$300,000 research project will examine how "green" material derived from scrap tires will make a viable alternative for use in road construction. "The majority of highways in Georgia and around the country are paved with asphalt materials," said Shen. "There is increasing interest in asphalt research so that the government can build a reliable, economical and sustainable infrastructure."

Georgia Southern University, a Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers more than 120 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 approach to education. Visit: www.georgiasouthern.edu.

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