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[Home](#) > [Press Releases](#) > Professor Named Outstanding Engineering Educator

Professor Named Outstanding Engineering Educator

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Georgia Southern University electrical engineering professor Fernando Rios-Gutierrez was presented with a national award from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) during a regional conference held recently in Jacksonville, Fla.

Rios-Gutierrez was selected as the winner of the Joseph Biedenbach Outstanding Engineering Educator Award, recognizing his teaching excellence and contributions toward the development of the Electrical Engineering & Electrical Engineering Technology programs in the Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Information Technology.

Rios-Gutierrez is the first faculty member from Georgia Southern to receive the prestigious honor. He was selected from more than 30,000 educators in Region 3, which includes the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama and Mississippi.

Since arriving at Georgia Southern more than five years ago, Rios-Gutierrez and his wife, Dr. Rocio Alba-Flores, established a robotics lab offering a mobile robotics capstone design course. Students gain hands-on experience by designing their own robots in the lab in this successful pairing of academics and technology.

A further offshoot of the course is the popular Robotics Team. The student team members have designed a firefighting robot and a lawnmower robot, earning top honors in national and international competitions over the past two years under the advisement of Rios-Gutierrez and Alba-Flores.

“Our program is growing, and the field of robotics is becoming extremely popular. In fact, we are moving toward the design of service robots,” he said, describing the team’s current research area. “This includes more human/robot interactions, intelligence robots and the development of robots to assist people with disabilities. For example, some people may have limited use of one limb or leg, and robots can help improve their movements and even bring objects to a person,” said Rios-Gutierrez.

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

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