

# Newsroom

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Georgia Southern University

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# Georgia Southern honors student credits University with successes, heads to medical school

MAY 4, 2018

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Georgia Southern spring 2018 graduate Kristi St. Clair never imagined her summer job working at a marina would help determine her career path.

But a quick turn of events at a traditional holiday celebration at the marina near her hometown of Appling, Georgia, helped St. Clair realize she was meant for a medical career.

"The marina has a barbecue every Fourth of July where a whole pig is roasted. There were people chopping barbecue with big knives, and one man kind of clipped a piece of his thumb," she recalled. "I was the only one working in the [marina] store and had to give him first aid and help send him to the hospital."

She always had the idea that she wanted to be a doctor, but that day, she said, solidified her plans.

"That was the first emergency I'd ever experienced, and it was really exciting," she said. "I didn't feel out of control, I wasn't scared and it wasn't too intense. I think from there on I was like 'I can do this.'"

Since then, St. Clair has focused her time and efforts on obtaining her degree in chemistry to prepare for her next journey: medical school.

St. Clair found a home in Georgia Southern University's College of Science and Mathematics and the University Honors Program, which she credits with her success as an undergraduate student.

"The Honors Program let me take the best classes with the best professors, and I can attribute my personal growth to the professors at Georgia Southern," she said. "The Honors Program really helped me get the most out of my experience here. It helped push me, and made me work on my patience and persistence."

Patience and persistence have paid off for St. Clair. Her greatest accomplishment at Georgia Southern, she said, is graduating with a 4.0.

"I never expected to do that, it just kind of happened," she said. "I'm really proud of that."

In addition to her studies, undergraduate research and honors thesis project, St. Clair was also a teaching assistant for a general chemistry class since 2015, was president of the Chemistry Club at the University and was a member



*Kristi St. Clair*

of Phi Delta Epsilon, a pre-medical academic fraternity. She also made time to volunteer regularly at the Hearts and Hands Clinic of Statesboro, a free healthcare clinic for those who fall below the poverty line.

"The clinic is such a great place — everyone there is wonderful," she said. "I loved their mission, and the patients are so kind. I love that we can help them feel better in a time where it feels healthcare is up in the air."

St. Clair also volunteered twice for the Honors Program's alternative break trip to work with adult campers with developmental disabilities at Camp Blue Skies at Camp Twin Lakes in North Georgia. She served first as a cabin counselor and activity leader, and later as a staff assistant who helped campers with medical needs.

Her outstanding academic achievements and dedication to the campus community helped St. Clair score numerous awards during her time at Georgia Southern. She received the University System of Georgia Academic Recognition Award, which is the highest honor at the annual Honors Day Convocation. She also won the American Chemical Society Outstanding Senior Award.

As she prepares to attend the Medical College of Georgia in the fall, St. Clair is "definitely nervous, but mostly excited." And Georgia Southern, she said, will always be a special place she'll relate with happiness.

"I really feel I've always been at home here," she said. "The people here are just wonderful and I haven't found anywhere else that's quite like it."

*Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/Research institution founded in 1906, offers 141 degree programs serving more than 27,000 students through nine colleges on three campuses in Statesboro, Savannah, Hinesville and online instruction. A leader in higher education in southeast Georgia, the University provides a diverse student population with expert faculty, world-class scholarship and hands-on learning opportunities. Georgia Southern creates lifelong learners who serve as responsible scholars, leaders and stewards in their communities. Visit [GeorgiaSouthern.edu](http://GeorgiaSouthern.edu).*

# Georgia Southern graduate on a mission to help others live their healthiest life

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Statesboro native and soon-to-be Georgia Southern graduate Anesha Drummer said she had many reasons to give up on her academic career.

From being a single mother to battling depression to working multiple jobs and spending countless hours away from her now 5-year-old son Ryland, Drummer faced many obstacles throughout her time as an undergraduate student.

But despite the many challenges that came her way, Drummer said she only needed one reason to keep going: Ryland.

"He said he wanted to learn to spell so he could go to college like me," she said with a laugh. "He wanted to be like me, so I knew I had to give him something good to look up to."

She began her academic journey with hopes of becoming a physical therapist when her son was just a few months old. She struggled to balance school and caring for her son, all while in the midst of a divorce. Drummer sought advice from the professionals in the University's Counseling Center.

"During the time I was going to the therapist, I felt like I couldn't afford to care for my son financially or mentally," she said. "Going to the counseling center made me more confident and they helped me make a plan. I knew I had to do this for him."

Part of that plan included exercising to help manage stress. Drummer said she'd always loved working out, but hadn't really thought of it as a career.

"I took intro to exercise science with Dr. [Nicholas] Murray and saw there were so many options [for careers]," said Drummer. "There was so much I loved about it and all the ways you could work in a lot of different settings."

With a goal of achieving her certification to become a personal trainer and hopes of one day opening her own gym, Drummer became even more determined to succeed.

"I knew I wanted the best certification," she said. "I wanted to be an ACSM certified personal trainer." The ACSM, or American College of Sports Medicine, training certification is one of top personal training certifications available.

Drummer took the certification exam, but didn't pass. Yet, she remained determined and persisted, eventually finding the skills she needed at Georgia Southern.

"I feel like my major classes prepared me," she said. "So I took a class that was meant to teach you and prepare you for the [ACSM] exam."

Second go-round, she aced the exam and is now certified and ready to help others live their best life.

"I feel like exercise really helped me find my purpose in life," Drummer said. "So I want to help others become healthy and happy, and to help them be their best self. I am thankful I chose this path because it is something I love, and something I know I'll enjoy when I'm done with college."

Drummer plans to open her own studio gym in Statesboro and apply for a graduate assistantship so she can earn a master's degree in nutrition or kinesiology.

"Statesboro and Georgia Southern are what shaped me, and I've been presented with a lot of opportunities, especially as a trainer and an African-American woman," she said. "I really thank Georgia Southern for having the counseling center and hope more students take advantage of that resource because it is free, and it really did change my state of mind."

The best opportunity for Drummer, though, has been the future she has built for herself and her son, who, like his mom, will graduate this year – only from Pre-K.



# Georgia Southern decorated Army ROTC grad heads to U.S. Army Aviation school, leaves unique legacy at alma mater

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Madison Nicole Stewart, a Georgia Southern University Army ROTC leader and aspiring linguist from Senoia, Georgia, will proudly walk the commencement stage in Statesboro this weekend to earn dual diplomas in international studies and Arabic, as well as a minor in military science.

Stewart, who initially chose to attend Georgia Southern for its award-winning ROTC program, is grateful to the University for support of her educational and professional paths from day one.

"I have always wanted to become an Army Officer and Georgia Southern offered the best option to achieve that goal," she said. "I was very fortunate to be awarded a three-and-a-half year scholarship from the school to attend."

In her first year as a military science cadet, Stewart was introduced to Army customs and characteristics of the profession. She was also allowed the opportunity to have a small leadership role within her squad and attended Basic Camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky, which provided further leadership training.

By her second year, Stewart was bumped to a squad leader and the Cadet Association's President, tasked with managing funds, fundraising and volunteer events for the Eagle Battalion. She and her team successfully organized the annual ROTC Blood Drive, conducted post-football game stadium clean-ups and hosted car wash fundraisers. She was also the only female competitor on a team of nine who participated in the grueling Brigade Ranger Challenge Competition, which pushes cadets through tough mental and physical challenges while encouraging the tenets of leadership and teamwork.

The following year, Stewart attended the Cultural Understanding and Language Program in Hungary, where she and a team of cadets taught English to the Hungarian Armed Forces with the mission to improve relations between the U.S. and Hungarian militaries.

"The ROTC Cultural Understanding and Language Program was an incredible opportunity for me not only as a future Army officer, but also as an international studies and language student," noted Stewart. "It was an awesome experience and opened my eyes to the greater international military community, who, more often than not, work together hand-in-hand to preserve and protect peace efforts."

She rounded out that year with a second-place Ranger Challenge win and completion of the ROTC Advanced Camp, a required month-long test on tactics, soldiering skills and leadership at Fort Knox.

Stewart's final year has been the most demanding — and rewarding — as she served as the Eagle Battalion's Command Sgt. Major, the most senior enlisted cadet who coordinates all training events, classes, labs and field training exercises, and sets and enforces standards. It was her distinct honor to work alongside the Battalion Commander, who attends Georgia Southern's Armstrong Campus in Savannah.

"The Battalion Command split between two campuses required careful coordination through our leadership," she said. "We were proud to bring the two campuses together through the ROTC program."

Stewart, who earned placement on the President's List with a 4.0. GPA each semester, three Platinum Eagle Awards for maintaining a perfect physical training score and garnered the Alumni Association Award in April, is most honored to leave her own special University legacy, as the Superior Cadet Decoration Award will be named in her honor from this year on.

On track to commission as a second lieutenant soon, Stewart is "beyond excited" to attend the U.S. Army Aviation Basic Officer Leader Course at Fort Rucker, Alabama, in June to complete flight school. It is her hope to fly UH-60 Black Hawks and attend the Defense Language Institute, which supports Army officers in learning a foreign language in the country of origin.

"Without the incredible support of my ROTC cadre and professors, and the amazing faculty of the international studies and Arabic departments, I would have never succeeded to the extent I have in ROTC, school and in life," said Stewart. "I owe everything to the people who supported my efforts here."

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# Georgia Southern Armstrong Campus grad turns a dream into reality

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Georgia Southern University Honors Program student Mary Carpenter, who will graduate summa cum laude with a rehabilitation sciences degree in Savannah this weekend, has dreamed of becoming a physical therapist since she was a teenager.

After spending time on the Armstrong Campus as a dual enrollment student in high school, the University's Waters College of Health Professions became her top pick to make that dream a reality.

"It was very important to me for the college that I was going to have an undergraduate degree dedicated to preparing undergraduate students for graduate school in a rehabilitation field," said Carpenter. "I knew from speaking with students who are already in Armstrong's physical therapy program, and also majored in rehabilitation sciences, that their undergrad classes were specifically designed to help them succeed as students in a doctor of physical therapy program."

Once on campus, Carpenter quickly took on leadership roles with various student groups, including Rho Tau, a pre-physical therapy organization that provides volunteer opportunities for its members and invites community rehabilitation professionals to speak at their meetings.

"Rho Tau really helped me to solidify that I had indeed chosen the correct major," she noted.

Also pivotal to her career path, she said, were her inductions to honors societies Phi Kappa Phi and Phi Eta Sigma and the University Honors Program, which requires students to conduct undergraduate research in order to earn a degree with high marks.

"Conducting my own research taught me a lot about myself both as an academic, and also about how to grow as a person," said Carpenter. "I learned about conducting literature reviews, accurate record keeping, communicating and collaborating with other members in the lab, and how to present your own research at a discipline-specific conference. I know that all of these qualities will serve me well in both graduate school and, later on, as a practicing physical therapist."

Carpenter completed her research in a neuroscience undergraduate lab and presented at honors conferences in Orlando, Florida, and Washington, D.C. She also proudly served as an Honors Program ambassador who guided incoming honors students through their first year of college.

Rounding out her undergraduate experience, Carpenter was the recipient of this year's Gold "A" Award, a rare feat accomplished only by a student who earns a Silver "A" Award for both outstanding academic achievement and



service. She also garnered the Bhatia Foundation Award for her dedication to the betterment of humankind and the promotion of friendship and goodwill for all cultures.

"I have really enjoyed my experience over the past four years," reflected Carpenter.

Later this month, Carpenter will begin the Armstrong Campus Class of 2021 doctor of physical therapy program. Upon completion, she looks forward to specializing in pediatrics or inpatient neurorehabilitation.

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# Georgia Southern to deploy drone to monitor traffic on commencement at Paulson Stadium

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On Saturday, May 5, thousands of graduates and their family and friends will flock to Allen E. Paulson Stadium for Georgia Southern's Statesboro Campus undergraduate commencement ceremony. This year, with the help of a high-flying Phantom-3 Professional drone, graduates and their guests will get the state-of-the-art traffic assistance they need from a bird's-eye view.

Joey Reeves, director of executive technology and athletic IT for Georgia Southern, will be the pilot of the drone. Reeves has an FAA Remote Pilot Certificate with a Small Unmanned Aircraft System rating to operate the drone. Beginning at 7 a.m., Reeves will deploy the drone near Paulson Stadium, capturing photos and video footage from a height of 400 feet. His main focus will be traffic near the stadium and the 301 Bypass.

"Our goal is to help people navigate the heavier traffic that day," said Reeves. "When we know areas are backed up, we can share that information with the public."

In between each 15-minute drone flight, Reeves will relay what he has discovered to a nearby spotter, who will then pass the necessary information along to the Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing. From there, the traffic update will be provided to media contacts as well as help the Office of Public Safety to ensure traffic is routed appropriately.

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# Georgia Southern University students receive four Emmy® nominations

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The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences has recognized Georgia Southern University's Multimedia Development Center (MDC) with four Student Emmy® Award nominations. The MDC student production teams received two nominations for Sports – Live Events, Fairfield vs. Georgia Southern in Men's Baseball and Georgia State vs. Georgia Southern in Women's Basketball. Also, student Holden Galatas received a nomination in the Talent category for his anchor work of these events.

"I'm so excited to have received this honor, I never really thought this would be occurring in this stage of my career. This has been a team effort since we started. If I win this, it is a trophy for the team not just for me," said Galatas.

Students Shelby Head, Bradon Holder, Jayden Moss, Sterling Mattison and Robert Ross received a nomination for Arts and Entertainment/Cultural Affairs for the production of the "Strings at Southern Chamber Music Festival."

"The experience working at the MDC has provided me with an unsurpassed professional experience in the broadcast and video production field. I have been presented with numerous opportunities to grow and really augment my major of Electrical Engineering with this educational experience. I can't thank Georgia Southern enough for this opportunity," said Holder.

Moss also received a nomination in the Arts and Entertainment/Cultural Affairs category and has been hired to produce videos for Disney Theme Parks upon graduating from Georgia Southern.

"Thank you Georgia Southern, it's because of the experience at the MDC that I was able to be hired in my job at Disney and then be nominated for this award," said Moss.

The student Emmy® winners will be announced in Atlanta on June 9.

The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, NATAS, is a professional organization for individuals in the television and broadcasting industry. NATAS is the standard-bearer for excellence in the television broadcasting industry and the gatekeepers of the prestigious regional EMMY® Awards. The Southeast Chapter represents the most experienced and talented television professionals from all disciplines of the industry and from each of our television markets (Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina and Asheville, N.C.).

The MDC, a division of University Advancement and External Affairs, provides students with training and hands-on experience that they can then translate into real-world opportunities. Students run cameras, direct, produce and manage more than one-hundred live events each year including ESPN3 and nationally televised broadcasts.

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