College of Education alumna, staff member selected as a Google Innovator

AUGUST 2, 2018

This summer, Georgia Southern University alumna and staff member Hollie Sisk ('01,'05) became one of only 1,700 individuals in the world and 14 in the state of Georgia who are Google for Education Certified Innovators.

Sisk, who joined the College of Education in June as the coordinator of the Instructional Resources Center on the Armstrong Campus in Savannah, attended the 2018 Google for Education Certified Innovator program in Venice, California on July 9-11.

The Certified Innovator program selects candidates based on their professional experience, passion for teaching and learning, innovative use of technology in school settings, potential to impact other educators, and their desire to tackle challenges in education. This year, Google will train five cohorts in countries including the United States, Netherlands, Spain, Denmark and Mexico.

“I was shocked that I got accepted the first time I applied,” Sisk said. “Most people don’t get in on their first try, so my expectations were to just go through the application process.”

Thirty-seven candidates were selected to participate in the U.S. cohort. Participants attended the Google for Education Innovation Academy for three days, where they visited the YouTube headquarters and worked in the Google's Venice, California office. During the academy, Sisk and fellow cohort members focused on collaborative and innovative problem-solving based on the design thinking process.

“The design thinking process begins by breaking down a challenge in education to the root cause. It considers the user or others, how the problem affects the user, and then how you can relate that to your challenge,” Sisk said. “A great deal of this process is learning to listen and empathize to create the most effective solution.”

As a part of the application process for the program, Sisk was required to design an Innovation Project that will be carried out over the next year with the assistance of a fellow Google Innovator and mentor. Sisk’s project, titled “Flame EDU: Ignite Change,” seeks to build a framework specifically for school administrators to educate, encourage and empower their school’s stakeholders on the use and integration of technology.

“So many school districts want to go one-to-one, which provides each student in the school with a device such as a Chromebook,” Sisk said. “However, the administrators and teachers do not always have the proper training to know...
Sisk explained that when technology is under-utilized, it becomes an “expensive pencil,” serving only as a tool for word processing, when it can be used for so much more. Part of her Innovation Project is to offer free training for administrators using Google for Education to build school culture for proper use of the technology. The project also assists the administrators in supporting teacher instruction and development with technology.

As a part of the College of Education staff serving both students and faculty, Sisk says that this training will also help her to better serve the Armstrong Campus population with their instructional technology needs and questions.

“I want to be that person that fans their flames,” Sisk said. “I hope to encourage, nourish and inspire people as so many have motivated me along my journey in education.”

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