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Portal High School student inspired by independence of Georgia Southern's Dual Enrollment program

NOVEMBER 21, 2018

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As a junior at Portal High School in Bulloch County, Heidi Sawyer was looking for an opportunity to experience independence before beginning her college career.

When she learned of the Dual Enrollment program at Georgia Southern University, an opportunity for high school students to challenge themselves through college coursework, it sounded like the perfect opportunity.

"What inspired me was a sense of independence," said Sawyer who is dual enrolled at the Statesboro Campus. "Being able to step out of high school and get a sense of what it would be like to go to college and have the responsibility for my own classes sounded intriguing."

Sawyer said just one semester of participating in dual enrollment has better prepared her for a full-time college career.

"It's prepared me by teaching me that it takes initiative and working hard," Sawyer said. "You know the professor is not going to just give you grades. You have to work for them. You have to know how to manage your time because high school is kind of planned out for you. It's helped me a lot that way."

Students can take a single course or enroll full-time. Some students graduate high school earning as much as two years' worth of college credit, often for free. More than 500 students from more than 25 high schools participate each semester across the three campuses of Georgia Southern.

Sawyer is taking English 1101 during her first semester of dual enrollment. The experience has been a welcomed challenge.

"It's really been challenging to me academically, which is good, but I've grown as a person, too," Sawyer said. "It's not like high school. Nobody here cares about judging anybody else. Everybody is focused on their school work and their own lives. So, I've learned how to be more mature and responsible."

Dual Enrollment is open to high school students in good academic standing. The deadline to apply for the program for spring semester is Dec. 1. For more information, visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu/dualenrollment.

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/Research institution founded in 1906, offers 141 degree programs serving nearly 26,500 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.

Academic opportunities inspire high school student to dual enroll at Georgia Southern

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Kaylee McCook is a 15-year-old sophomore in high school with a very mature sensibility. Her inspiration for dual enrolling at the Georgia Southern University Liberty Campus is surprising at first glance.

"I was looking for more of an academic challenge," said McCook. "So I was like, 'let me try and do dual enrollment,' and it has been fantastic."

Because 16 is the minimum age requirement, McCook had to jump through some hoops to get gain early admission to the program.

"I started my application process when I was 14 and a freshman in high school," said McCook. "I took the SAT, I got all my paperwork set up and then I had to go get an age appeal form completed. It required three recommendations from teachers and counselors, and it took a couple of weeks to get that back. Then the committee met, and they agreed that I could come in

as a dual enrollment student."

Dual enrollment allows motivated high school students to challenge themselves through college coursework, and in most cases, courses are free. Students can take a single course or enroll full time. Some students who participate in dual enrollment graduate high school earning as much as two years' worth of college credit. McCook plans to take dual enrollment courses until she graduates high school.

"I'm aiming to get my associate's degree by the time I graduate high school," she said. "I can either do that or graduate a year early. But it would be easier to just go ahead and get the degree through dual enrollment."

Currently, McCook plans to attend Georgia Southern for her bachelor's degree, but just in case she changes her mind, she is using dual enrollment to plan ahead.

"A degree will transfer to any college, whether or not I choose to stay at Georgia Southern," she said. "It's not that maybe this college accepts AP classes, and maybe this other one doesn't. I know my associate's degree will go with me wherever I go."

For more information about the opportunities in the Dual Enrollment program at Georgia Southern, visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu/dualenrollment.

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