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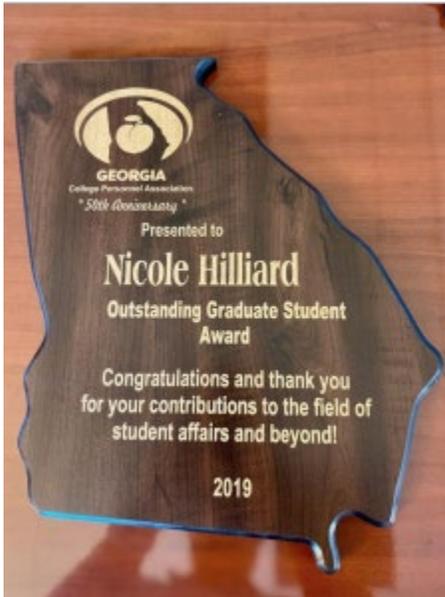
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# Georgia Southern student posthumously awarded state honor

November 22, 2019



Recently, the Georgia chapter of the American College Personnel Association posthumously awarded Nicole Hilliard, former College of Education (COE) graduate student in the higher education administration program, the 2019 Outstanding Student Award.

Presented to master's or doctoral level students preparing for a career in student affairs, recipients of the Georgia College Personnel Association's (GCPA) Outstanding Student Award have demonstrated outstanding scholastic achievement as well as research and scholarly activities in the field.

"Nicole was in the final year of the M.Ed. Higher Education Administration program at Georgia Southern," said Steven Tolman, Ed.D., COE assistant professor of higher education. "She was an exemplary student."

Active in conducting research, Hilliard was a co-author on a study with Tolman that was recently published and accepted for presentation at a national conference in March. Hilliard also served on the executive board of the higher education administration graduate student organization.

A native of New Jersey, Hilliard served as a graduate resident director on the Statesboro Campus of Georgia Southern. She died unexpectedly in September as a result of a medical condition.

"Nicole had a profound impact on the students she worked with in her residence hall," said Tolman. "Our profession was stronger with her, and Nicole will be missed dearly. As a faculty member, I can only hope that her passion for working with students and love for life will inspire her classmates and spread like wildfire."

Tolman and colleagues Elise Cain, Ph.D., and Dan Calhoun, Ph.D., along with former classmate Kaitlyn Van Dyk, traveled to the GCPA conference to accept the award on behalf of Hilliard.

GCPA enhances the higher education community through advocacy and support for the holistic development of students. The association leads the state in the advancement and dissemination of knowledge for transformative practices that address emerging issues in higher education.

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/R2 institution founded in 1906, offers 141 degree programs serving more than 26,000 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's RN to BSN helps graduates elevate their careers

November 22, 2019



*Georgia Southern University alumna Sharen Martin became a nurse leader at Memorial Health's children's hospital in Savannah after earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.*

With more than two decades of experience in nursing, Georgia Southern University alumna Sharen Martin thought she would work as a flight nurse for her entire career. However, her life took an unexpected turn when her position as a chief flight nurse was eliminated in 2004.

Martin easily transitioned to bedside care as a pediatric intensive care (PICU) nurse, yet she quickly realized that she wanted to elevate her career.

"In bedside nursing practice, if you have a two-year degree, there is no place for you to go except to stay at the bedside," she said. "But with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), I have the potential to advance my practice."

After learning about the RN to BSN degree program at Georgia Southern, Martin knew it was the perfect fit to achieve her goals and accommodate her lifestyle. The fully online program is designed for working registered nurses and can be completed in as few as two semesters, or one year, with only eight courses to complete the degree. Martin could complete studies at her own pace, and her employer benefits program covered almost the entire cost of the degree.

"I made a list of courses, and I promised myself that I was not going to get stressed or overwhelmed," she said. "I was going to take one class at a time to complete my degree."

Since completing her degree in 2013, Martin continues to work as a PICU bedside nurse, but her new credentials have opened new avenues for her career.

"With my BSN, I am a clinical nurse leader in my unit," Martin said. "But, if I choose to, I could also advance to be a clinical educator or manager or pursue an advanced practice degree. There are all kinds of opportunities I can explore with my BSN."

Students in the program work directly with expert faculty, have access to the program coursework 24 hours a day, seven days a week and receive individualized guidance. The program can be completed in as few as two semesters and features an accelerated fast track of eight courses.

"The RN to BSN program at Georgia Southern is the way to go," Martin said. "The professors are nice, professional and willing to help you in any way for you to obtain your goal."

Nurses who complete a BSN degree can advance their careers into leadership and specialty positions, and they have more advanced training to better care for their patients. Those with a BSN degree boast increased knowledge and expertise required by the ever-evolving healthcare environment, and they can earn more money.

Georgia Southern's RN to BSN degree has been named the most affordable online BSN by *College Choice*, and also named one of the top 10 most affordable online bachelor's degrees in nursing by *OnlineU*.

*BestValueSchools.com* ranked the program in the top 30 low-cost online programs, and it is fully accredited by the [Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education](#).

“I encourage anyone young or old, experienced or inexperienced, to go back and get their bachelor’s degree,” said Martin. “You’ll be so glad you did.”

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