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Georgia Southern psychology graduate looking to make difference in children's lives

December 10, 2019

Meagan Bailie didn't really like working with children when she started school in the Department of Psychology on the Georgia Southern Armstrong Campus. However, after starting her practicum at the Matthew Reardon Early Learning Academy in Savannah, and securing a job there after graduation, she can't wait to help students get ready for K-12 education.



Meagan Bailie

"Kids are now my favorite part of the job," Bailie said. "It's amazing to see the progress that these kids make in such a short amount of time and know that I helped with that."

At the preschool, Bailie works with 3-and-4 year-old children, some of whom have autism. Her practicum involved a lot of data collection for various behaviors of the students, such as wandering, climbing and aggression. Bailie also conducted mand training, which helps children with autism with limited verbal behaviors learn to ask for what they want.

Bailie really honed in on her love for psychology during her sophomore year when she took intro to behavior analysis with professor Jennifer Wertalik, Ph.D. She said the faculty on the Armstrong Campus have been a driving force for her career decisions.

"Intro to behavior analysis changed my thinking and my career path," Bailie said. "Behaviorism made so much more sense than any other field in psychology, and I knew that I wanted to pursue a job in that field. When I first started in behavior analysis, Dr. Wertalik sat with me and helped me figure out how I could make it my career."

After starting her practicum under the supervision of psychology professor Andrew Bulla, Ph.D., Bailie knew how she wanted to apply behaviorism in her career. Bulla said he saw skills in Bailie that made him want to invite her to join his research and oversee her practicum.

"Meagan displays many of the professional skills necessary to be successful inside and outside of the classroom," Bulla said. "She is punctual, kind, intellectually engaged and has a keen eye for detail. She is a problem-solver and definitely thinks through questions before answering them, resulting in a really well throughout solution."

Bailie said the personalized feel of her classes is one of her favorite things about the Armstrong Campus.

"I really like the size of the Armstrong Campus because the classes are small enough that professors actually know who you are," she said. "The psychology department is amazing, and the education and training I have gotten is excellent."

Bailie will receive the Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) credential upon completing her degree, finishing 1,000 supervised hours and taking the BCaBA certification exam, which will allow her to work under the Board Certified Behavior Analyst at the Matthew Reardon Center for Autism, who will give her responsibilities such as program design, assessment, and the training and supervision of staff.

“I was able to take the behavior plans that I wrote in class with Dr. Bulla and actually implement them in the classroom,” Bailie said. “I would love to be able to create more behavior plans and implement them and continue to use what I have learned in my classes to make real changes in people’s lives.”

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