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# Georgia Southern Department of Communication Arts to host virtual performance with multiple mediums

November 11, 2020



*Professor of Theatre, Lisa Abbott*

Georgia Southern University theater students will explore the concept of touch and how physical interaction changed amid the COVID-19 pandemic through a multimedia performance streamed live via Zoom from Nov. 11 through 15.

“Touch,” which is directed by Professor of Theatre Lisa Abbott, was created entirely by the cast and production team of students and faculty and will include a collection of sketches, dances and songs that are a reflection of the cast’s first-hand experience as they have navigated life in the world of COVID-19. The performance will look at what touch means in a world devoid of it.

The show will focus on three aspects of touch: good, bad and healing, which will be showcased through topics such as ridiculous quarantine hobbies, playing Dungeons and Dragons on Zoom, vlogging and Zoom speed dating.

The show will also blend genres with both serious and humorous sketches.

“I was watching a news report on patients in the hospital who could not have family members visit and were literally not being touched other than through the gloves and plastic of PPE,” Abbott said. “I started thinking about the way this fundamental thing, touch, has been taken away. So we decided on that as the focal point and prompt for the show.”

This show will feature different short pieces of live and recorded content. While each performance contains elements that are made up of different mediums, the subject matter is shared.

“We like to say that we threw a bunch of things at the wall and looked at what stuck,” Abbott said. “In the early phase, we were doing various exercises to start playing with ideas, and we discovered that we had some

really strong dancers, strong movers and some of the cast were inspired to write songs. The different style of pieces grew completely out of the talents of the cast and where they wanted to take the piece.”

COVID-19 has affected the preparation for “Touch,” as well as Abbott’s classes, in a major way. She said virtual learning and rehearsing adds a level of difficulty and exhaustion to the normal routine.

“Students are having to do their work without an audience and without the normal means of storytelling,” Abbott said. “Being in the room together brings an energy to the work that Zoom just zaps from you. We made the choice to set up all the students in individualized Zoom rooms throughout the Center for Art and Theatre to allow us more control over connectivity, and our designers can adjust sound light and camera angles as we work.”

Although it has been harder to rehearse and perform since the pandemic, Abbott said it has brought out the resilience of her students.

“I think this performance will show the incredible creative talent of our students, as well as offer insights into the things they think are important about our world right now,” she said. “Combining Zoom technology with prerecorded sections shows the adaptability of the entire program and all our students, designers and technicians as well as actors.”

For more information on “Touch” and to access the virtual performance, visit [GeorgiaSouthern.edu/Theatre](https://GeorgiaSouthern.edu/Theatre).

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Tags: [College of Arts and Humanities](#), [COVID-19](#), [Department of Theatre](#)

# Georgia Southern alumna receives top honors in state for English Language teachers

November 11, 2020



Georgia Southern University Double Eagle Claudia Martinez ('13, '16) was recently named the 2020 Teacher of the Year by the Georgia Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). As a former English as a Second Language (ESOL) student, Martinez said the award is invaluable.

“This award means so much to me — as a first-generation college student, a woman of color, a previous migrant and an ESOL student,” said Martinez. “It made me reflect on all of the struggles and hardships that I faced and overcame. It encouraged me to keep working hard to make a difference in my community.”

Born in Tamaulipas, Mexico, Martinez was raised in Claxton, Georgia. She received legal residency at age eight but struggled at first to acclimate to an environment that had only a “handful of Spanish-speaking students.” She continued to work hard, and thanks to the motivation of teachers and family, she became the first in her family to graduate from college.

Martinez earned both a bachelor’s and master’s degree in elementary education at Georgia Southern while working at her hometown elementary school, giving back to the community that helped her. Since 2008, Martinez has worked with migrant students at Claxton Elementary, earning a full-time teaching position in 2014. Today she serves as the school’s ESOL teacher.

“I choose to work with ESOL students because I have experienced the English Language Learner (ELL) struggle,” Martinez said. “I know how it feels to come to a new country and having to learn a new language, culture and having to reconceptualize my identity. As an ESOL teacher, one of my goals is to help advocate for my students and help facilitate their academic success and to encourage post-secondary education.”

Martinez was nominated for the award by former teachers, colleagues and Georgia Southern faculty members, all of whom, she said, were instrumental in helping her achieve her goals.

“They helped ignite a passion for culture and linguistic teaching,” said Martinez. “These people believed in me when I did not believe in myself.”

Martinez’s passion for helping ELL students and her desire to grow in her practice led her to pursue an Ed.D. in curriculum studies at Georgia Southern. Recently, she defended and passed her final dissertation and will graduate in December.

While Martinez is not certain what exactly is in store for her next, she does know she plans to continue to serve ELL students.

“I declare that my journey is just beginning and that I will be victorious in everything that comes my way,” she said. “I hope that I can acquire a position in which I can continue to help Latinx students to be academically successful and help facilitate post-secondary education.”

All K-12 teachers working with ESOL students in the state of Georgia for at least two years are eligible for the GATESOL Teacher of the Year Award. Awarded annually, GATESOL developed the award to recognize teachers dedicated to working with ELL students and their commitment to improving the practice of teaching students with diverse needs.

As the 2020 recipient, Martinez receives a complimentary one-year membership to GATESOL and will be recognized at the annual Georgia TESOL Conference in November.

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).

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## [Visiting Chinese scholar spends longer than expected at Georgia Southern, returns home with knowledge for students with disabilities](#)

November 11, 2020



In March 2019, Georgia Southern University's College of Education (COE) welcomed a visiting scholar from Southwest University in Chongqing, China. Xiaoying Jiang, Ph.D., an associate professor of special education, partnered with COE's Kymberly Harris, Ph.D., associate professor of special education, to examine educational methodology using children's literature and making those practices accessible to students with disabilities.

While at Georgia Southern, Jiang collaborated in education courses including classroom management, social studies education and reading education. She also visited COE

senior special education majors working within regional school placements while completing their internships as teacher candidates. Collaborations were hosted by Harris, special education instructor Courtney Toledo and reading faculty members Sally Brown, Ph.D., and Elizabeth Prosser, Ph.D.

Jiang's intentions were to study at Georgia Southern for a year and return home to begin using new found practices and research collaborations. However, as the COVID-19 outbreak accelerated by March, Jiang realized she nor her son Leo, who had traveled with her, were going to get to go home as planned.

"I was supposed to return to China at the end of March, but the Chinese government issued a flight restriction policy, and for a long time, I couldn't get a flight back to China," she said.

Over the next six months, Jiang purchased several tickets to fly home, only to receive cancellations every time. Chinese officials announced in September that Jiang could travel home.

After reuniting with her family, Jiang is again focused on her students and plans to continue collaborations with her colleagues at Georgia Southern.

"I have already shared teaching strategies for reading in special education classes in the U.S. with teachers from Beijing," said Jiang. "There are so many things we can learn from reading education at Georgia Southern. I will also work hard with teachers to make a difference for children with special needs."

Harris said that she and Jiang also plan to work on publishing research together.

"This partnership continues to support our longstanding relationship with various universities in China," said Harris. "An invitation to return to China has been extended to me again for Summer 2021, when Jiang's university is sponsoring a conference and teaching opportunity for students with disabilities."

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## **Astounding freshman class growth, retention, increases Georgia Southern's fall enrollment by more than 3 percent**

November 11, 2020

Official fall enrollment at Georgia Southern University rose by approximately 3.45% over 2019, thanks to a record-breaking class of first-year students. Also contributing is a post-consolidation record-high 79% retention rate from freshman to sophomore year.

Newly released figures from the University System of Georgia show Georgia Southern's official fall enrollment for 2020 was 26,949, an increase from the previous year's official total of 26,054. The data show the increase is attributable to a freshman class of 5,247 students, which is a 42% increase over the 2019 freshman class of

3,675 and the largest freshman class ever recorded at Georgia Southern, buoyed by the largest freshman class recorded at the Armstrong campus in Savannah since at least 2012.

Other record highs were recorded when evaluating how many students returned for their sophomore year after their freshman year. That rate of 79% last year was up from 78% the year before. Additionally, the university's six-year graduation rate rose to 53.6%, a record high rate going as far back as 2010.

"These important measurements, and the growth in our freshman class is nothing short of remarkable," said Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero. "We are very pleased with the final figures for fall 2020. This not only shows the result of the work we are doing to attract new students, but it also affirms the expanding reputation of the university, and the ability of our faculty and staff to prepare students for the next chapter in their lives."

Georgia Southern's next highest record freshman class enrollment was 3,900 in fall of 2018.

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**Georgia Southern's freshman classes: Georgia Southern's total enrollment:**

Fall 2020: 5,247	Fall 2020: 26,949
Fall 2019: 3,675	Fall 2019: 25,054
Fall 2018: 3,900	Fall 2018: 26,408

This chart outlines Georgia Southern University's freshman class and total enrollment for Fall 2018, Fall 2019 and Fall 2020.

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A deeper dive into the numbers reveals encouraging growth trends across various measures. Online enrollment continues to climb while enrollment at the Statesboro and Armstrong campuses showed tremendous improvement after declines last year.

First-year student enrollment on the Armstrong campus in Savannah this year was 895, the largest freshman class on that campus in at least six years. Previous freshmen class sizes at the Armstrong campus were: 2015: 846, 2016: 829, 2017: 778, 2018: 476, 2019: 538, 2020: 895.

Enrollment for the Statesboro campus increased by approximately 3% in fall 2020 after a 1.3% decrease last year from 2018. Enrollment at the Armstrong campus in Savannah decreased by less than 1% in fall 2020 after a 6% decline last year from 2018.

Fall 2020 enrollment at the Liberty Campus in Hinesville is up approximately 3% after remaining flat last year from 2018. Also this fall, enrollment in fully online programs (not including classes that were moved to partially online to account for social distancing and public health protocols) increased by 16.8% in fall 2020 after a 12% increase last year from 2018.

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**Total Enrollment by Campus/Online**

**Fall 2020 Fall 2019 Fall 2018**

Statesboro	18,834	18,256	18,499
Armstrong (Savannah)	5,249	5,278	5,610
Liberty (Hinesville)	517	502	501
Online	2,356	2,018	1,798

This chart outlines total Georgia Southern University enrollment classified by campus/online for Fall 2018, Fall 2019 and Fall 2020.

**Georgia Southern's  
New Freshman  
Class Enrollment  
by Campus**

	Fall 2020	Fall 2019	Fall 2018	Fall 2017	Fall 2016
Statesboro	4,215	3,031	3,295	2,915	3,056
Armstrong (Savannah)	895	538	476	778	829
Liberty (Hinesville)	104	93	120	115	83
Online	33	13	9	7	3

This chart outlines Georgia Southern University's new freshman class enrollment by campus for Fall 2016, Fall 2017, Fall 2018, Fall 2019 and Fall 2020.

"While the freshman class growth is noteworthy on its own, I am particularly pleased with how our numbers are trending across a variety of measures," said Scot Lingrell, vice president of enrollment management. "We saw increases in dual enrollment, graduate and out-of-state students. Even in the face of a pandemic, Georgia Southern has shown it's ready to serve a new generation of students."

**Enrollment by Classification**

	Fall 2020	Fall 2019	Fall 2018
Total undergraduate	23,424	22,715	23,130
Graduate	3,480	3,339	3,278
Out of state	2,443	2,050	1,952
Out of country	462	565	503



Dual enrolled                      953              721              583

This chart outlines Georgia Southern University's enrollment by classification for Fall 2018, Fall 2019 and Fall 2020.

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"Our enrollment success this fall is the result of hard work and extensive collaboration amongst many teams across the institution as well as community and education partners," Marrero said. "The strength of our academic programs and regional academic plan, combined with our new strategic enrollment and marketing plans, have come together to effectively articulate the value of receiving a degree from Georgia Southern and the impact that our students can have on the communities we serve."

The full enrollment report is available [here](#).

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## [Georgia Southern hosts annual faculty, student pottery holiday sale](#)

November 11, 2020

Art produced by Georgia Southern University faculty and students will be up for sale this fall as the Betty Foy Sanders Department of Art hosts its annual Holiday Pottery Sale Nov. 19 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on the Armstrong Campus in the Annex II building.

The sale features unique, artistic and functional ceramics and pottery pieces that incorporate many styles and techniques.

"We are really excited to continue the tradition of retired Professor John Jensen by offering a holiday ceramics sale on the Armstrong Campus," sale coordinator, Kim Riner said. "This is an incredible opportunity for our students to have experience with the business side of art making. Students create artworks, price the work and interact with customers at this sale. This enhances their education, and it also gives them immediate response to their artwork."

The event is free to attend, and cash and checks will be accepted. Social distancing and room capacity will be enforced.

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Tags: [Betty Foy Sanders Department of Art](#), [College of Arts and Humanities](#), [COVID-19](#)

# Georgia Southern expands Master of Science in Electrical Engineering program to three new locations

November 11, 2020



*Associate Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering Rami Haddad, Ph.D.*

The Georgia Southern University Master of Science in Electrical Engineering (MSEE) program will now be available on the Armstrong and Liberty Campuses, as well as at the Georgia Veterans Education Career Transition Resource (VECTR) Center in Warner Robins, Georgia.

“By offering the MSEE program in multiple locations, we can increase the Georgia Southern footprint in providing workforce professional development to the local industries across the southeast and central Georgia regions, ultimately reflecting positively on the local economy within these regions,” said Associate Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering Rami Haddad, Ph.D. “From a Georgia Southern perspective, we are also growing our graduate programs, which is a win-win situation.”

The MSEE program features thesis and non-thesis options and is offered in a hybrid format that includes virtual, face-to-face and online courses. Three or more courses are offered each semester, with core courses offered on a one-year rotation, enabling students to complete the program in two years or less. The degree program is open to the public and is now admitting applicants for both spring and fall 2021 semesters.

The Warner Robins program will be more accessible to people at Fort Stewart and Robins Air Force Base.

“This program is particularly beneficial to Warner Robins and Fort Stewart since we have the flexibility to tailor the programs to cater to their needs, such as introducing electronic warfare courses and other specialized courses,” Haddad said. “This program gives the engineers at these locations the opportunity to engage in state-of-the-art research with highly qualified faculty at Georgia Southern.”

For more information and to apply for admission to the program, visit [cogs.georgiasouthern.edu/admission/master-of-science-in-electrical-engineering/](https://cogs.georgiasouthern.edu/admission/master-of-science-in-electrical-engineering/).

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