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Georgia Southern College of Education, Chatham County public school system partnership earns state honor

March 12, 2021



A strategic partnership between Georgia Southern University's College of Education and the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS) has earned a top state accolade.

The Georgia Association of School Personnel Administrators (GASPA) annually recognizes successes in state school districts with the Best in Class recognition program. SCCPSS received the 2020 Platinum Award of Excellence in the area of strategic partnerships, documenting its collaboration with the University on the paid residency program and the urban education training initiative.

The Urban Education Endorsement program allows SCCPSS teachers to earn Professional

Learning Units (PLUs) instead of graduate course credit.

"Since SCCPSS hires many teachers each year who may not have experience living, working or teaching in urban contexts, this partnership provides an opportunity to develop education strategies and understandings relevant to urban schools," said Alisa Leckie, Ph.D., assistant dean for partnerships and outreach in Georgia Southern's COE.

Consisting of three online courses, the Urban Education Endorsement provides exposure to foundational and emergent scholarship in culturally relevant and culturally sustaining pedagogies; field experiences engaging with youth and families within urban community contexts; and experiences in designing curriculum for culturally and linguistically diverse learners in urban settings.

The paid residency program began in fall 2020 and provides the opportunity for highly qualified teacher candidates in the final year of their teacher preparation program to be hired by SCCPSS as full-time teachers or teacher residents. The goals of the program are to develop a pipeline of exceptional teachers for the district and enhance teacher retention. The teacher residents earn a salary of \$19,000 and receive benefits and retirement credit while also fulfilling their course requirements at Georgia Southern.

Two teacher residents are working at Pulaski Elementary School and two are working at Hubert Middle School during this pilot year of the program. They each fill a vacant teaching position. A classroom teacher who has demonstrated exemplary performance in teaching and mentoring other teachers has

moved out of the classroom at each school and serves as a full-time mentor teacher to the two teacher residents.

“We are proud to be recognized by GASPA for the innovative strategies we have implemented and the partnerships we have strengthened to have the best teachers for our students in SCCPSS,” said Heather Bilton, Ed.D., director of employment for SCCPSS.

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/R2 institution founded in 1906, offers approximately 140 different degree programs serving almost 27,000 students through 10 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.

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[Free outdoor screening of ‘Lillian Smith: Breaking the Silence’ on Armstrong Campus on April 1](#)

March 12, 2021



On April 1, producer and director Hal Jacobs will present an outdoor screening of his film, “Lillian Smith: Breaking the Silence,” on Georgia Southern University’s Armstrong Campus in Savannah. The screening, which will take place on the Residential Plaza, will begin at 7:30 p.m., followed by a Q&A session with Jacobs. The event is free and open to the public.

The film documents the largely forgotten story of prominent Southern writer and social activist Lillian Smith.

“Lillian Smith was a Southern writer who was a force to be reckoned with from the 1940s through the early 1960s,” said Jacobs. “She was the first prominent Southern author to speak out against segregation.”

“Breaking the Silence” explores Smith’s novels and her active stance on racial and gender equality before and during the civil

rights movement.

“She was a trusted friend and correspondent of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who in his impassioned *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, included her as ‘one of a small group of those who have written about our struggle in eloquent and prophetic terms,’” said Jacobs. “In fact, in 1960, when King was pulled over in DeKalb County for an alleged traffic violation, Smith was riding in his car. King was driving her to Emory Hospital for the treatment of cancer that plagued her for over 10 years and would eventually take her life.”

Jacobs and his son Henry, a photographer and musician, directed and produced the documentary together, “in hopes that Smith’s life and words will inspire more dialogue, more fearlessness and more people breaking the silence well into the future.”

The film screening is hosted by the College of Education’s (COE) Department of Curriculum, Foundations and Reading, and is a supported event of the COE’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and the Campus Life Enrichment Committee.

Masks will be required and guests will be expected to practice social distancing. Guests are encouraged to bring chairs, blankets and snacks for the movie.

For more information, about the film, visit <https://lilliansmithdoc.com/>.

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