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Faculty-student collaborations showcase professional growth, creativity at Spring 2021 Honors Research Symposium April 26-30

April 26, 2021



Honors students Chelsea Riley, Susan Ihejirika and Jacey Thomas are among more than 100 students participating in the 2021 Spring Honors Research Symposium, which showcases faculty-student partnerships through a broad range of scholarly and creative rese

Ambitious student research collaborations with faculty members often lead to much more than good grades. The mentorships encourage professional growth, confidence and creativity, even in the midst of a pandemic.

Georgia Southern University's Spring 2021 Honors Research Symposium, which is being held virtually April 26 through April 30, will showcase faculty-student partnerships through a broad range of scholarly and creative research projects produced by more than 100 honors students across multiple disciplines on the Statesboro and Armstrong campuses.

Chelsea Riley, a triple major in international studies, political science and Spanish, worked with political science and international studies professor Srobana Bhattacharya, Ph.D., on her thesis, "The Culture Gap: The Role of Culture in Successful Refugee Settlement."

"Research is about mentorship, about growth, becoming a better writer and communicator, and presenting that research allows you to showcase that growth as well as your hard work and time," Riley said. "Having opportunities to present your

research also allows you to get feedback and to meet other people working on exciting and creative projects in your field and to build relationships that strengthen your network and can inspire your future work. For me, my research and experience presenting it has become a very key part of how I market myself to employers and to graduate schools, demonstrating my knowledge, high-level research and writing skills, and ability to summarize and present information."

History and English major Jacey Thomas, mentored by associate professor of history Alan Downs, Ph.D., will present, "Irish Rock Music amid a Time of Troubles: Thin Lizzy and U2 as a Bridge During a Time of Division."

"Having the opportunity to participate in faculty-mentored research has been one of the most rewarding opportunities I have had as a student of the Honors College," said Thomas. "Being able to conduct and present my own research, with the assistance of my mentor, Dr. Alan C. Downs, has challenged me academically, personally and professionally, as well as prepared me for graduate school as I pursue a master's degree in history. I am truly thankful to have had the support of publishing research that I am passionate about from the Honors College and the faculty at Georgia Southern."

Biology major Susan Ihejirika's presentation, "A Forward Genetic Screen to Identify Human Genes of Interest and Their Roles in Ovarian Cancer," was guided by biology assistant professor Dongyu Jia, Ph.D.

"For me, the best thing about faculty-mentored research was that I was given the space to develop as an independent researcher," said Ihejirika. "My chosen mentor gave me the space to pursue research I was

interested in, and to learn to think quickly on my feet in order to address problems as they arose. I will soon be presenting my research to a wider audience, who will get to see the product of months of hard work, and hopefully give me feedback that will help me in my journey to becoming a professional scientist.”

The Honors College, as the university-wide center for excellence in undergraduate education, plays a crucial role with undergraduate research at Georgia Southern. Since the beginning of the College, students have been required to complete honors theses or capstone projects. The faculty-mentored projects have spanned traditional research models, applied research and creative activities in all academic colleges and majors.

“Through faculty-mentored research and scholarly activities, honors students create new knowledge and the Honors Research Symposium is the venue where we share it with the broader scholarly community,” said Honors College Dean Steven Engel, Ph.D. “ I am proud of the fact that they have been able to complete these projects despite the challenges of the past year.”

Presentations will be posted on [YouTube](#) and the comments section will be open for audience engagement with presenters. While many of the presentations will still be accessible after May 1, the comments will be turned off.

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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Georgia Southern Clay Target Team wins ACUI National Championship

April 26, 2021



Georgia Southern Clay Target Team poses for a team photo at the ACUI National Championships in San Antonio, Texas.

Twelve Georgia Southern students who make up the University's competitive Clay Target Team won the first national championship contest they have ever competed in as a team during the 2021 Association of College Unions International (ACUI) Collegiate Clay Targets Championships in March. Nearly 50 college teams and more than 550 student athletes made the trip to the National Shooting Complex in San Antonio, Texas to compete across all divisions.

The Georgia Southern team won the Division 4 championship after shooting the highest score overall out of 14 teams competing. Additionally, the team outperformed teams from around the nation to win the Super Sporting and Sporting Clays categories. The team also placed second in the American Trap category and third in the American Skeet category in Division 4.

The Eagles were led by freshman Andrew Weiche who shot his way to a Top 10 overall finish out of the four divisions at the event. Gracie Whitley, the only female shooter on the team, shot 96/100 in American Trap, helping to secure the team's second place finish in that category. The team finished the competition with titles and irreplaceable memories.

"Being in San Antonio was an eye-opening experience," said Bailey Harrell, treasurer of the clay target team. "It was the first time I have really traveled to shoot competitively, and it is a memory I'll cherish forever. It was

great to be able to represent Georgia Southern as a team and coming back home with a national championship makes it that much more special.”

While Georgia Southern had a clay target shooting club, there wasn't a team that competed nationally. This led a group of University supporters to garner the support of alumnus Marty Fischer, a professional shooter with 39 years of coaching experience, to form the team in the summer of 2020. Fischer was impressed with the team's first year of competition.

“I couldn't be more proud of this team,” said Fischer. “They have worked tirelessly to prepare for this National Championship. Every one of them knows how to compete as they have won state, regional and national titles while in high school. But college is different. They are now young adults and the expectation needle rises significantly at the collegiate level.”

Despite missing a team member during the competition and existing for just more than a year, the Georgia Southern Clay Target Team has placed itself among the elite college shooting teams in America, Fischer added.

The ACUI (Association of College Unions International) is the national collegiate sanctioning body for Shotgun/Clay Target Shooting and has been hosting this event for 51 years. More than 150 college and universities field either varsity/scholarship or club sports clay target teams.

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