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Georgia Southern University, "Newsroom" (2021). *Newsroom*. 2007.
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Get a peek into ‘The Digital Age’ through senior exhibition on Armstrong Campus

September 29, 2021

THE DIGITAL AGE
Art Exhibition
September 15 - October 8
Monday - Friday, 9:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.

Ferris Smith, Faith Manuel
Rori Brown, Shantel DeLosAngeles

FINE ARTS GALLERY
11955 Abercorn Street
Savannah, Georgia 31419
Gallery Hours: Monday-Friday - 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Phone: 912-354-3556
ArmstrongGallery@GeorgiaSouthern.edu


BETTY FOY SANDERS
DEPARTMENT OF ART
GeorgiaSouthern.edu/Art

 **GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Georgia Southern University will honor reasonable requests for accommodations. Gallery Programming is supported in part by Student Activity Fees.

“The Digital Age,” a senior exhibition presented by Georgia Southern’s Betty Foy Sanders Department of Art, will showcase works by graduating students Faith Manuel, Ferris Smith, Rori Brown and Shantel DeLosAngeles. The exhibition will run weekdays from Sept. 15 to Oct. 8 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Fine Arts Gallery on Georgia Southern University’s Armstrong Campus in Savannah. A reception will be held Oct. 8 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Admission to the exhibition is free and open to the public.

Audiences can expect to see creations that explore technology including computer graphics, digital cameras, color brushes and special effects.

While “The Digital Age” group is similar in their methods and mediums, each series showcases different topics such as family and friends, the creation of sci-fi fantasy worlds, emotion and inspired portraits.

“We are attached to our screens, so it makes sense that we combine art with our obsession,” said Manuel.

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An Eagle Educator is the 2022 Georgia Teacher of the Year

September 29, 2021



The 2022 Georgia Teacher of the Year is Georgia Southern University alumna Cherie Dennis ('10) who has lived and studied across the nation from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco, California, and settled in Savannah, where she began a career in teaching more than 12 years ago.

Dennis, a native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, went to Georgetown University to earn an undergraduate degree in Japanese with a concentration in language teaching. She continued her education at Stanford University and earned a master's in East Asian studies. Her goal was to teach Japanese, and everything was going to plan until just weeks before graduation when the grant fell through for a high school exchange program she was supposed to work for in Washington.

"I looked for jobs teaching Japanese in schools within California, but it was too close to the start of a new school year, and there are not as many positions available to teach Japanese as there are other languages," she said. "I had to start looking for some other type of employment."

Dennis searched for jobs that had ties to Japan and for the next several years worked for advertising agencies with clients like Toyota and Clorox, in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

"I don't regret my time in advertising," said Dennis. "It was fun and challenging."

After taking time off to be a stay-at-home mom close to family in Savannah, she saw an opportunity to return to her original dream of being a teacher. Dennis enrolled in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Early Childhood Education program at Georgia Southern's Armstrong Campus in Savannah to earn an initial teaching certification.

She started her career as a third grade teacher at White Bluff Elementary, and a year later moved to Hesse K-8 School where she taught third grade for another six years before transitioning to teach English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

"I love teaching," she said. "This career just makes my heart feel good."

Working with an average of 60 children per year, Dennis teaches ESOL students in grades K-5, focusing on their English reading, writing, listening and speaking proficiency skills. Virtual learning during the pandemic was an additional challenge for many of these students.

“It’s an extra hurdle for ESOL students,” she explained. “The need to provide family support was magnified more than ever before. It has always been at the heart of what ESOL teachers do, but when families do not have access to the internet or they don’t understand the technology or the assignments in English to be able to assist their children as much as they would like to, reaching and teaching our students who are already facing the difficulties of learning in a language that is not primary to them becomes increasingly complex.”

Thankfully, Dennis’ passion for foreign languages has assisted her in being able to communicate on a basic level with students and their families, as she knows fundamental Spanish in addition to Japanese.

“The needs of the students each year can be very different from the previous year,” she said. “It’s a challenge, and it involves having a pulse on who your kids are and differentiating and individualizing instruction to meet their needs.”

For the next year, Dennis will continue to collaborate with her ESOL team at Hesse, but as the Georgia Teacher of the Year, she will focus on the responsibilities that come with the title such as serving as an ex officio member on the State Board of Education and traveling as an ambassador for teaching in Georgia.

“I get to be an advocate and voice for teachers, students and families in Georgia,” she explained. “I will also be responsible for going around the state and speaking at various events such as conferences, workshops, new teacher orientations or professional development sessions to share my experiences.”

As the state’s teacher of the year, Dennis will be in the running for the 2022 National Teacher of the Year (NTOY) facilitated by the Council of Chief State School Officers. The NTOY is announced each spring.

“I am really humbled and flattered by this award,” she said. “I don’t do what I do alone, and what I do is only a piece of the puzzle of what educators do as a whole,” said Dennis. “I can think of so many teachers who go above and beyond every single day, especially since COVID. Teachers have poured their hearts and souls into giving their students what they need to the best of their ability in the most trying of circumstances. It’s wonderful to have affirmation for the work that I have done, but I feel the need to share it with everybody who has been with me along the way and who I continue to work with every day.”

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Georgia Southern's Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Center opens, bridges connections between past and present

September 29, 2021



The works of a Gullah blacksmith in Savannah.

The collective cultural memory of the Gullah Geechee people, descendants of enslaved West Africans who inhabited the barrier islands of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and northern Florida, has survived through oral histories and distinctive arts, music, dance, foodways and language.

However, few within the Gullah Geechee community today, which is estimated to be a population of 1 million, can speak the African Creole language or tell the stories of their ancestors who are credited with influencing

southern and American culture.

In response, Georgia Southern University has established the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Center to aid in the preservation of this fluctuating culture, honor the myriad contributions made by Gullah Geechee people and provide educational resources for faculty, students and the surrounding community.

“The purpose is twofold,” said Maxine Bryant, Ph.D, director of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Center. “We want to increase awareness about the Gullah Geechee culture and to celebrate it. We want to allow a space for the Gullah Geechee community to come together and problem-solve.”

Approached by the Office of the Provost about opening the Center on the University’s campus in Savannah, Bryant jumped at the chance.

“I’m delighted to have Dr. Bryant serve as the founding director of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Center,” said Carl L. Reiber, Ph.D., Georgia Southern’s Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. “Her expertise, enthusiasm, and strong community connections will be tremendous assets as she establishes the Center and Georgia Southern University as leaders in the preservation, education and promotion of Gullah Geechee culture and heritage.”

Bryant’s interest in Gullah Geechee culture piqued after going on several local tours with Georgia Southern professor and cultural historian Amir Jamal Touré, J.D., who is also the resident scholar for Geechee Kunda Cultural Center and Museum in Riceboro, Georgia.

Bryant asked Touré to join forces and together they helm the Center with assistance from a nine-person advisory council that includes master storyteller and Gullah Geechee advocate Pat Gunn, as well as various University members.

As a community anchor that connects the past and present through interaction and outreach across generations, education is key.

Beginning this fall, the Center will host monthly community meetings to allow the Gullah Geechee community to discuss pertinent topics, such as land inheritance and preservation of public space that is at risk as sacred ground.

Bryant is also excited about a collaboration with history professor Michelle Haberland, Ph.D., and her students, who are collecting local Gullah Geechee oral histories this semester.

“We have identified about 14 elders in the Gullah Geechee community who have agreed to be interviewed,” said Bryant. “The students will edit and archive all of their interviews. It’s a way of preserving the stories, educating and increasing awareness.”

One interview already conducted features 96-year-old Sgt. John White, the last living member of the original nine Black police officers sworn in the Savannah Police Department in 1947.

“He knew George Washington Carver,” Bryant shared. “He used to take him and his siblings around Alabama and was a good friend of the family. So we capture so many stories like that. It’s been awesome.”

The Center also has a presence on the Statesboro Campus within the Department of Africana Studies. Bryant and her team are also designing a curriculum with the College of Education that is centered in Gullah Geechee culture for teacher training. There will be opportunities for professional development for public school teachers, employers and other entities with similar curriculum.

The Center is designated as part of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, which stretches across 27 counties in Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Florida and was established by the U.S. Congress to recognize the unique culture of the Gullah Geechee people.

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](https://www.GeorgiaSouthern.edu).

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