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Newsroom

Georgia Southern University

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On her first visit to Georgia Southern University, graduating senior Brianna Shirey felt like she was home. So she packed her bags and moved from Rentz, Georgia, to Statesboro to begin her college journey in fall of 2018.

“After my tour, I was 100% committed to becoming a Georgia Southern Eagle,” Shirey said. “I just knew from that tour that I could find my place on campus and I enjoyed how beautiful the campus was.”

Shirey found her place in the Parker College of Business, eventually choosing to study marketing after exploring other majors.

“When I came to Georgia Southern, I told myself I was going to pursue nursing,” Shirey said. “But that changed quickly when I realized I couldn’t handle the sight of blood. I turned my attention to a degree in business and when I was able to do hands-on research, I knew I made the right decision.”

The opportunities provided to Shirey through the Parker College of Business and the Honors College opened her mind to careers in the field of healthcare outside of nursing. This helped her find a new direction for her passion.

“I had the opportunity to shadow different individuals in health administration,” Shirey said. “Now I know that I want to pursue a career in risk management in the medical field.”

Through the Parker College, Shirey was able to put research into practice by joining a team representing Georgia Southern in the National Retail Federation (NRF) Foundation Student Challenge, a college-level business case competition. Kristen Ruhland, a marketing lecturer in the Parker College of Business, served as a coach for the team and as Shirey’s honors thesis faculty mentor. Ruhland is the individual who Shirey felt had the most significant influence on her college experience.
“She always pushed me to go above and beyond, and to keep going even when I didn’t think I could,” Shirey said. “If it wasn’t for her constant motivation, I wouldn’t have been successful in the Honors College. I am super thankful to have a role model like her.”

During her final two years as an Eagle, Shirey helped build upon the sense of community that brought her to Georgia Southern by getting involved in a variety of organizations. She spent time as a leader with Georgia Southern’s new student orientation team, SOAR, and joined Southern Ambassadors, Southern Leaders and Phi Eta Sigma. She also worked as a student assistant for the Office of the Vice President for Business and Finance.

“My involvement allowed me to make so many connections,” Shirey said. “I have friends and memories that I couldn’t have made without these organizations. My favorite memory is Camp SOAR. The weekend trip allowed all of the 2021 SOAR leaders to get to know each other before the summer began. I made so many friends on that trip and it truly started the summer off right.”

Shirey enjoyed engaging with new students as a SOAR leader and shared her number one piece of advice for incoming Eagles.

“Make the most of your time here at Georgia Southern,” Shirey said. “Your time will fly by, so make sure you get involved on campus and make plenty of memories!”

Shirey graduated in the Fall 2021 Commencement ceremonies with a bachelor’s in marketing. Now that her moment to lead in her field has arrived, she’s ready. She plans to continue her education by working toward a master’s degree in health administration on Georgia Southern’s Armstrong Campus in Savannah beginning in August 2022.

Posted in Press Releases

**Georgia Southern students save more than $748,000 with digital textbook program**

December 15, 2021

When students collectively save $748,925 in one semester and have easy access to textbooks on the first day of classes, coupled with Georgia Southern’s University Store’s ability to provide lower costs to students and avoid inventory delays, it’s a win-win for the campus community.

The University-hosted Day1 Access (D1A) program, a digital textbook model in collaboration with top publishers to reduce the
cost of required course materials, ensures that all D1A materials are delivered at the lowest possible cost to the student – even lower than buying the material directly from the publisher.

“The program itself grew out of the need to lower required materials cost and allow students to acquire that material on the first day of school,” said Derick Robertson, interim director for retail services at Georgia Southern. “Instructors no longer worry if the students have what they need and are ready to teach day one. We have allowed Day1Access to grow organically with instructors who see the benefits in the delivery method. Parents appreciate not having to search for their students’ material elsewhere for the cheapest option. The University Store appreciates the ease of delivery and not waiting on inventory to show up and running out of materials. In the end parents win, instructors win, students win and the University wins.”

Through a partnership with Willo Labs, a leading digital resource provider, the program allows students to purchase their course material and have all the resources they need to begin their studies without having to visit the store. Access for all students begins the first day of class, with the option to opt-out of purchasing through the drop/add period. Each course utilizing D1A materials has received approval to digitally deliver required course materials to students from the instructor of that course.

“The University Store is always looking to lower costs to students and provide the best service to the students of Georgia Southern University,” said Robertson. “Through Day1Access students have the required material they need at the cheapest price possible. As more departments adopt D1A the savings will continue to grow.”

For more information, visit GSUstore.com.

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.

Posted in Press Releases

2,100 graduates ready to take next steps receive degrees during Georgia Southern’s 2021 Fall Commencement ceremonies

December 15, 2021
This week, approximately 2,100 undergraduate and graduate students from Georgia Southern University’s Statesboro, Armstrong and Liberty campuses received associate, baccalaureate, master’s, specialist and doctoral degrees in three Fall 2021 Commencement ceremonies.

Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero welcomed the graduates and their families to the University’s Fall Commencement ceremonies, held at the Savannah Convention Center in Savannah on Dec. 11, and the Allen E. Paulson Stadium in Statesboro on Dec. 13 and 14. He commended the graduates on their achievements and tenacity.

“Graduates, I don’t need to tell you about your unique college journey, which has been challenging for all of us,” said Marrero. “I am very proud of how, together, we have persevered allowing us to have a successful semester and today, our commencement ceremony. You, our graduates, deserve great recognition.”

During the Savannah ceremony, Georgia’s 2022 Teacher of the Year Cherie Dennis (Armstrong ’10), who teaches English to Speakers of Other Languages at Hesse K-8 School in Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools, addressed the packed house with a call for kindness.

“My hope for you is that you go out into the world with your eyes and your hearts wide open,” she said. “That you go out into the world and make something beautiful out of its cracks and imperfections. A world that is bound together by the irrefutable strength and integrity of kindness. Be the repairers of the world; the menders of the world; the bridge builders; the constructive, contributive citizens who nurture communities large and small. And that may sound daunting, but really it all starts with something so very simple, something so very possible and within your reach. Something you knew how to do even as a child. Just being kind.”

Sachin Shailendra, chair of the University System of Georgia Board of Regents and president of SG Contracting, Inc. in Atlanta, spoke at the first ceremony in Statesboro.

“Georgia Southern – which in a few minutes will be your alma mater – is one of the shining stars among our 26 institutions,” he said. “It ranks as one of Georgia’s best comprehensive universities, with a growing reputation for research that impacts not only vital industries but the environment and our communities. The degree you earned lets everyone know you learned from outstanding faculty, top staff and talented fellow students.

“The opportunities ahead of you are many. I know this because of my own experience. I was born in Georgia, but my father was not. I am only a generation away from the farmers my family were in India. Education has been a game changer for both me and my family, and I know it’s a
major accomplishment for many of you. I hope your degree will inspire you to take the next steps in building your future. So go out into the world and create a worthy future, not only for yourselves, but one that will represent Georgia Southern, our entire university system, and this state as well…Your education has already changed you. It also has the power to change your community, and move our state forward in exciting ways.”

Georgia Bureau of Investigation Director Vic Reynolds (‘79) addressed graduates at the final ceremony, sharing five things he wished someone told him on his graduation day.

“First of all, some of you graduates have no earthly idea what you’re going to do with the rest of your life. And let me tell you, that’s OK,” Reynolds opened. “This thing called life is a tremendous ride. I would encourage you to hold onto it and enjoy it. It’s OK if you don’t have a set life plan yet.”

He encouraged graduates to embrace chance and change, which will allow for growth as a human being, and to learn from failures they will undoubtedly encounter.

As the director of almost 1,000 state agents and scientists, drive can carry any professional far, he shared.

“Work hard,” said Reynolds. “Nothing will separate you quicker from the herd than working hard. It’s competitive out there.”

Finally, find, set and live by a moral compass, he implored.

“I would charge you today to go out and make your mark in the world,” Reynolds said. “Go Eagles!”

To see photos from Fall 2021 Commencement, visit here.

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.

Posted in Press Releases
Public Relations program recognized as education powerhouse, awarded prestigious certification

December 15, 2021

(L-R) Senior Lecturer of Public Relations Michelle Groover, Lecturer of Public Relations Lisa K. Muller, Former Department of Communication Arts Chair Pamela Bourland-Davis and Co-chair of the Public Relations Society of America’s (PRSA) Educational Affairs Committee Mickey Nall at the Atlanta Chapter PRSA meeting.

The public relations program within Communication Arts has now joined 52 schools recognized with Certification for Education in Public Relations (CEPR).

The Public Relations Society of America manages CEPR, and the review process follows standards established by the Commission on Public Relations Education. The review process involves practitioners and professors reviewing the program, conducting interviews, and visiting the campus. While one other school has received CEPR recognition within the state, Georgia Southern University is the first university sponsored by the Georgia Chapter of PRSA.

According to Lisa Muller, J.D., who coordinated the report and visit, “Much work went into preparing for the review, and we are thrilled to have had such a positive experience. This has been a work in progress, and after several departmental moves around campus, we decided that with our new home in Sanford Hall, it was time to apply.”
Interim Chair of Communication Arts Pam Sears, said, “I’ve had the opportunity to work with some of the public relations students in the past as well as with the public relations faculty, and I agree with the review team’s positive assessment of the program. This is a strong program, and CEPR recognizes the program quality.”

The review team interviewed administrators on campus, advisory board members, alumni, internship site supervisors, faculty members within the department, students, and other faculty across campus.

Chair of the Georgia Southern University Public Relations Professional Advisory Board, Don Rountree, said, “The CEPR designation validates what the Public Relations Professional Advisory Board has been focused on for our students, and that is cultivating and developing incredibly well-prepared graduates to enter the industry knowing they have a quality education in public relations that is truly best-in-class nationally and globally.”

Public relations was first offered as an emphasis program within Communication Arts in the mid-1970s, and became a major in 1996. Georgia Southern University’s public relations program is the current home to the Journal of Public Relations Education, with Pamela Bourland-Davis, Ph.D., as its editor. She also serves on the Commission for Public Relations Education. All public relations faculty are involved in professional and educational associations, and provide public relations support to a variety of community and global organizations.

Public relations is one of six degree programs offered within the department, including undergraduate majors in communication studies, multimedia film and production, multimedia journalism, theatre, and the graduate program in professional communication and leadership.

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Tags: College of Arts and Humanities, Department of Communication Arts

Quadruple Eagle hopes to offer ‘ripple effect of healing,’ destigmatize mental health issues among underserved communities

December 15, 2021
When Meisha Edwards (‘14, ‘16, ‘19, ‘21) was 11 years old, she had already made up her mind she wanted to attend Georgia Southern University.

“I attended a math and science camp at Georgia Southern when I was 11, and I recalled visiting the Wildlife Center and making ice cream from liquid nitrogen,” she said. “It was so much fun that I was sold on Southern as my future college destination.”

In fact, the now 29-year-old Augusta, Georgia, native’s True Blue pride runs so deep that she has studied at Georgia Southern for more than a decade on her journey to become a quadruple Eagle.

“Being a quadruple Eagle is honestly the best feeling in the world,” Edwards said. “I’ve received four degrees from one of the best college campuses in Georgia. This last decade at Southern was a huge part of my growth and development, personally and professionally. I don’t regret a single moment.”

Edwards earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology and two master’s degrees — one in experimental psychology and one in clinical psychology — from the University’s College of Behavioral and Social Sciences.
Though she celebrated her graduation this December, she completed her coursework in summer 2021 for a doctorate in clinical psychology. Since then, she has worked at the Atlanta Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center to gain hours for her professional license where she works primarily with female veterans.

“My personal motto is to serve the underserved, and veterans are often overlooked once their active service is complete,” Edwards said. “I also love that the VA offers unique experiences from general mental health to specialized clinics.”

Edwards’ areas of interest include understanding the impact of trauma on individuals’ daily lives, and she is passionate about researching factors that impact race relations and how people of color can heal from these experiences.

“As a person of color, I am an avid believer in research and healing starting within the home and in your own community,” she said. “I hope to be a pebble that leads to a ripple effect of healing within my community.”

Through her work, she hopes to inspire the Black community to engage in mental health care.

“My ultimate goal is to work in such a way that individuals from minority and disadvantaged communities come to believe that, one, therapy is a valid, perfectly acceptable form of healing,” she said. “And, two, that the mental health profession becomes a place where these communities feel seen because it is populated with people who look like them and can understand their experiences.”

This goal was reinforced for Edwards recently when she met with a new client.

“I was conducting a screening to see what level of care is needed for a veteran and she immediately began to cry when she saw me,” Edwards said. “When asked what moved her, she said she was grateful to have a doctor who looked like her. It warmed my heart and reminded me that Black minds matter. There are so few people of color in mental health and that is a significant barrier to people being willing to engage with mental health services.”

Edwards also recalled a personal experience as a student that impacted her.

“When I think of one experience that significantly impacted my life while at Southern, I instantly think of a time during my first year in the doctoral program,” Edwards recalled. “On this particular day, I was really struggling with the sociopolitical climate in the country and it showed. I was very emotional and tried to hide it behind sunglasses, but instantly my professors knew.

“I’ve never received so many hugs, texts, or even had space in class to just sit with my professor and classmates to be people, not students,” she continued. “We cried together and were very open that we were all struggling in that moment and it was OK.”
Looking forward, Edwards plans to continue her work professionally with veterans by joining the staff at a VA location in the southeast.

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