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Georgia Southern University professor wins national Student Impact Award from Top Hat

March 2, 2022



Presentation of the 21022 Student Impact Award to Elizabeth Sargent, Ph.D., during the Top Hat annual conference.

Georgia Southern biology lecturer Elizabeth Sargent, Ph.D., won the 2022 Student Impact Award from Top Hat, a digital platform for teachers and professors to connect with students online, distribute assignments and give in-class quizzes and exams.

This national award is given annually to one educator in the United States who excels at connecting and collaborating with students to improve learner outcomes.

Sargent said she's always looking for ways to improve the connection between the students and the content.



“I do really deliberately design my courses and interact with my students in a genuine way to enhance their learning,” said Sargent. “It was really nice to be recognized for what I’m trying to do or having the effect that I’m trying to make them have.”

Sargent said her approach to her classroom has been evolving over time. Her teaching style started by

standing in front of her students for the entire class period, and described it as “survival mode.” Since then, she has turned her classroom around and now gives students more of an opportunity to set the pace.

Sargent said thanks to using platforms like the one giving her the award, she can give students access to materials quicker, and the data she sees can show her trends in what students are learning and how.

The path to this classroom format is the culmination of her own experiences when she was a student.

“I can definitely think of some of my favorite professors and things that they did that I really enjoyed,” Sargent said. “I can also think of professors that I really didn’t gel with and things they did that I did not enjoy. So, I take little pieces of what worked and what didn’t for me personally, and I try to build that in.”

Sargent was announced the winner of the award during a Top Hat virtual teaching conference on Feb. 25.

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Hammond for Hope Scholarships uplift graduate students, hearing loss community

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Earning Hammond for Hope Scholarships were life-changers for Communication Sciences and Disorders graduate students (l-r) Caroline Davis and Kayla Pope.

Receiving \$10,000 and \$5,000 Hammond for Hope Scholarships were life-changers for Kayla Pope and Caroline Davis, respectively, who are both second-year graduate students in the Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSDS) program at Georgia Southern University.

“Earning this scholarship has given me a feeling of financial security, and has taken away a great deal of anxiety centered around tuition and cost of living,” said Pope. “As a newlywed who fully supports myself through school, it is an understatement to say that I appreciate this scholarship. Throughout my graduate school career, I have kept a job as a

waitress as much as possible, but it has proven difficult with our rigorous program; the Hammond for Hope Scholarship has helped me to spend more time on my schoolwork and less time working. It is truly an incredible honor!”

The Hammond for Hope Foundation was founded by managing members of Great Dane more than 35 years ago to support education for children with hearing loss. Today, the company’s executive vice president of sales, Chris Hammond, and his executive administrative assistant, Debra Arnold, serve on the foundation’s board of directors.

The scholarships, established in 2017, are part of the company’s ongoing effort to assist those with hearing loss and communication disorders. Each year, two Hammond for Hope Scholarships are awarded to Georgia Southern students working toward graduate degrees in the CSDS program.

“The Hammond for Hope Scholarship was a huge blessing to help me pursue my education in the field of speech-language pathology,” said Davis. “The Hammond family and Great Dane are wonderful community partners and advocates for children and families with speech and hearing needs.”

Georgia Southern’s CSDS master’s program provides students with the knowledge and skills to prevent, assess, diagnose and treat speech, language, social communication, cognitive-communication and swallowing disorders in children and adults. Evidence-focused, team-

orientated, problem-based instruction prepares graduates to enter the workforce as clinical fellowship-ready, speech-language pathologists.

Davis, who will graduate this May, chose to study at Georgia Southern because she likes the community ties the program has with Savannah and surrounding areas in connection with the Rite Care Center.

Her pride in the University also runs deep.

“I also have always wanted to be a Double Eagle, so it’s a dream come true to be graduating in May with my second degree from Georgia Southern.”

Following graduation, Davis will work in an inpatient rehabilitation hospital in Rome, Georgia, where she will serve adults with various acquired communication disorders.

Pope’s dream of becoming a speech pathologist will come to fruition when she graduates in May. She has plans to work with adults in a skilled nursing facility.

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