

Georgia Southern University

Digital Commons@Georgia Southern

Newsroom

University Communications and Marketing

7-6-2022

Newsroom

Georgia Southern University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/newsroom>

This news article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Communications and Marketing at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Newsroom by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.

Georgia Southern researchers work with Georgia Public Safety Training Center to revise training standards for state public safety officials

July 6, 2022



Bridget Melton, Ed.D., collaborates with leaders from the Georgia Public Safety Training Center.

Researchers in Georgia Southern University's Tactical Athlete Readiness and Preparedness Program (TARP) have teamed up with the Georgia Public Safety Training Center (GPSTC) to ensure the readiness and resilience of Georgia's public safety officials.

Members of the TARP in the Waters College of Health Professions have worked to revise the fitness training standards for Georgia's police cadets with a focus on functional fitness, mental resilience and injury prevention.

In addition, the program has formed a partnership with the GPSTC, Georgia's premier training facility for all state and local public safety related units to include police, fire and communication.

Bridget Melton, Ed.D., professor of exercise science and lead faculty member of TARP, said that due to high stress and health concerns, some police and public safety officials are at high risk for cardiovascular disease or other fatal illnesses.

“Our program provides state academies with fitness exercises that increase overall cadet fitness and focuses on injury prevention,” said Melton. “Our program focuses on occupational focused fitness to hopefully encourage a more positive view of exercise that will stick with cadets even after their academy training is done.”

Richard Cleveland, Ed.D., associate professor of leadership, technology and human development, heads resilience and mental health for the TARP team, and has created a Mindfulness-Based Tactical Instruction curriculum for the state of Georgia.

“Tactical athletes need training and support for resilience and mental health, but too often it’s only presented as a one-time workshop or seminar,” said Cleveland. “Our program dovetails into the state’s resilience curriculum for officers, but provides ‘bite-sized’ mindfulness practices within the fitness program. This gives cadets repeated practice at using mindfulness and embeds it within their context using police language, actions and behaviors.”

The partnership was made possible due to a subgrant GPSTC was awarded from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to fund TARP at their facilities due to the program’s comprehensive view of officer wellness, which is aimed at improving de-escalation skills among recruits through mental and physical training.

“We are pleased to form a partnership with the GPSTC and the Tactical Athlete Readiness and Preparedness Program,” stated Chris Wigginton, director of GPSTC. “This partnership will allow public safety professionals to be better prepared in their personal and professional lives. Some of the many benefits will be a reduction in injuries, being better prepared to use needed skills in rapidly evolving situations, and the resiliency and mental health component. As word has gotten out of the possibility of the GPSTC implementing this program we have already been contacted by several states regarding the initiative.”

Additionally, graduate students in the Department of Health Sciences and Kinesiology participate in the program and gain firsthand and practical experience by performing training and assessment for state instructors.

TARP is part of Georgia Southern’s Tactical Athlete Initiative, which aims to reduce the number of injuries and increase readiness and preparedness of tactical athletes. The interdisciplinary team consists of the following Georgia Southern faculty members:

- Bridget Melton, Ed.D., Professor
- Richard Cleveland, Ed.D., Associate Professor
- Greg Grosicki, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

- Haresh Rochani, DrPH, Associate Professor
- Mary Beth Yarbrough, Lecturer
- Sarah Davis, Lecturer

TARP is just one example of the work coming from Georgia Southern University's Tactical Athlete Initiative. The Tactical Athlete Initiative is a multi-discipline collaboration providing research, training and support for military, police, fire, and EMS workers. The Tactical Athlete Initiative has partnered with multiple agencies including the Statesboro Police Department, Statesboro Fire Department, Bulloch County Sheriff's Office, Forsyth County Sheriff's Office, Waycross Fire Department, Georgia Public Safety Training Centers, Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers and the United States Army.

Posted in [Press Releases](#)