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Georgia Southern University unveils new master and doctoral degrees in environmental science

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Georgia Southern University's College of Science and Mathematics (COSM) now offers a master's degree in environmental science and will begin recruiting for the inaugural class of doctoral students in environmental science for the fall 2023 entering class. The post-graduate degrees supplement the recently approved bachelor's degree in sustainability science. Housed in the James H. Oliver, Jr., Institute for Coastal Plain Science, every department in the college will play a role in this interdisciplinary trio of programs.

The first M.S. degrees are expected to be awarded in spring 2024, with the first Ph.D. degrees likely to be conferred in spring 2027.

Will Lynch, Ph.D., COSM interim dean, believes this will provide students with the opportunity to grow and discover academically and perform cutting-edge research that will have a major

impact on the environmental vitality of the southeast and the Georgia coast as well as many other areas of environmental significance.

“There are a number of opportunities for students to study water, land, ecosystem, and ocean dynamics, but also to contribute to the effective management and long-term resiliency of our coastal plain and environment,” he said. “These are the type of focal areas that the research will be tied around, but certainly other areas, such as green sciences, sustainability issues and improved recycling and reclamation methods, will also become part of the programs.”

Research opportunities are available for students in the bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral programs. The doctoral program also provides opportunities for teaching and research assistant positions, which are dependent on funding.

With a degree in this field, alumni would qualify for a variety of roles within different government agencies as well as the private sector. Lynch says there’s growing demand for skills such as problem-solving, creativity, innovation and critical thinking, each of which is embedded in the programs.

“Globally, there’s a renewed and urgent interest in solving environmental problems related to changing world,” Lynch said. “The metrics show science shifting from the traditional science disciplines toward interdisciplinary programs that provide students with the scientific knowledge from multiple disciplines as well as the opportunity to engage with a team that is tackling a global issue as part of a multifaceted team.”

Jobs in the green sector have been exploding over the past decade. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, professions in soil and plant sciences and green technologies are expected to be among the fastest growing sectors of the economy over the next 10 years.

Recruiting for these new programs has already begun, and there is flexibility for students to find their path to their degree.

“If your interest resides in the STEM disciplines and the environment, there’s a place for you as a member of these programs,” he said. “It’s built very flexible for the students’ interests to be addressed through the coursework and/or research. That’s the beauty of this program.”

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