

SGA President Azell Francis Receives Potts Leadership Award

FEBRUARY 20, 2015

Second Consecutive Honoree From Georgia Southern

Azell Francis ('14), the Georgia Southern University Student Government Association (SGA) president, has been awarded the 2015 Regent Willis J. Potts Student Advisory Council Leadership Award.

The Student Advisory Council (SAC) is composed of SGA presidents from the 31 University System of Georgia (USG) colleges and universities across the state, representing more than 309,000 students. Each year, the SAC membership anonymously selects a member who has shown strong interest and leadership in the organization; who demonstrates openness, honesty and respect; and who shows enthusiasm in the engagement of all SAC activities and conferences.



USG Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Joyce Jones, Ph.D., said the selection of Francis was an easy choice for her fellow presidents.

"It has been a pleasure to work with an outstanding campus leader like Azell Francis," said Jones. "She takes initiative, has volunteered to participate on USG System-wide committees and has made recommendations that will be implemented as 'best practices.' The Potts award is voted on by the student leaders and clearly Azell was the majority favorite. She has worked hard in her SGA leadership role and certainly deserves this leadership award."

Francis, a Georgia Southern graduate and current Master of Science in Applied Engineering student, is the first international student to serve as Georgia Southern SGA president and the first female president since 2009. Since her election, she has created the "Eagles for Eagles" program, which is a student-led initiative to raise funds for students suffering extreme financial hardships. In addition to her roles at SGA and SAC, Francis currently serves on the system-wide Title IX Committee, which will make recommendations to the USG chancellor in May, and is also helping draft the 2015 End-of-Year Report for the USG chancellor and Board chair.

With all of her outstanding University involvement and prior accolades, Francis said she was still surprised to receive such a prestigious award.

"I was pleasantly surprised, honored, grateful and ecstatic to have been voted in by my peers for this award," she said. "In a room filled with servant leaders, it is a very emotional experience to receive such recognition."

For Francis, the leadership roles and recognition are really just part of a greater desire to serve people. And, like the leader for whom the award is named, Francis says she wants to be a student advocate in everything she does.

"In my role as SGA president, and on the Student Advisory Council, I sought first to listen to students, and then to serve as their voice," said Francis. "The ultimate goal was, and is, to serve students... to enhance their collegiate experience and provide them with the best learning environment to discover and pursue their purpose. Receiving this leadership award, though an incredible honor, was never a part of my story as I envisioned it. My joy in serving as student body president comes from knowing that the work that we are doing is making a difference in the world, one Eagle at a time, and through SAC, one USG alum at a time."

Francis is the fifth recipient of the Potts Leadership Award, and the second consecutive recipient from Georgia Southern. Garrett Green, former University SGA president, received the same honor last year.

"Garrett, as my predecessor set a great example for me, and in his wake I am able to soar," said Francis. "As I aim for new heights, I look excitedly to the future, and am happy to play my small part in our tradition of excellence."

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers more than 125-degree programs serving more than 20,500 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. Georgia Southern is recognized for its student-centered and hands-on approach to education.

Megan Johnson Becomes Georgia Southern's Sweetheart

FEBRUARY 23, 2015

Miss Georgia Southern 2015

Eighteen young women competed for the title of "Miss Georgia Southern" on Saturday and contestant No. 1 Megan Johnson took the crown followed by first runner-up Amanda Merry and second runner-up Layne Livingston.

"I've done a few [pageants]," Johnson said, "But this is probably the biggest one I've ever done! I've won in the past, but all those wins were just leading up to this one."

Johnson is a proud member of the Alpha Delta Pi sorority on campus as well as a hardworking, sophomore nursing major. The Savannah native brought home a \$2,000 scholarship as well as gifts from sponsors

The students competed in several categories including an interview portion, talent, swimsuit, evening wear and a question and answer session. "Miss Congeniality" and "Fan Favorite" winners were selected as well.

The University Programming Board (UPB) worked hard to make this pageant go smoothly. Tyler Flaim, the special events chair, teamed up with other members to plan the event.

"Things seemed to run pretty seamlessly," Flaim said. "And the girls looked like they were having a great time on stage. I know they were all really excited about the pageant, and the audience was significantly entertained."

The Miss Georgia Southern University pageant became an official local preliminary pageant to the Miss Georgia and Miss America Pageants in 1948. This year marks the 67th year for the pageant at Georgia Southern.

"This was by far the largest pageant that I've ever had a hand in working on," said Memory Littles, assistant director of Georgia Southern UPB. "We were a little concerned in the beginning with the amount of contestants that we had with the length and quality of the show, but the girls all had a great time, and we had a great time planning it. Overall it went really well!"



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ICPS receives grant from Coral Reef Conservation Program

FEBRUARY 18, 2015

Danny Gleason, Director, ICPS, uses a pneumatic drill connected to a scuba tank to create a small hole in the reef. A dry wall anchor and stainless steel bolt will be installed in this hole.

James H. Oliver, Jr. Institute for Coastal Plain Science Director, Dr. Daniel Gleason has received 3 years of funding at \$315,381 from the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program for the project entitled: "Investigating how coral recruitment and juvenile survivorship varies along the Florida Reef Tract."

This is a collaboration between Rob Ruzicka (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission), Nicole Fogarty (NOVA Southeastern University) and Daniel Gleason (Georgia Southern University). Rob Ruzicka is also a Georgia Southern University Alum, receiving his M.S. in Biology in 2005.

The principal objective of this project is to determine how coral recruitment varies across years, regions, and habitat types in Florida. Establishing a geographic index of recruitment across the Florida Reef Tract will enhance understanding of a process that has long been considered a bottleneck to coral reef recovery. Having access to such information will allow management actions to be targeted to species and regions more precisely. For example, regions or reef types in the Florida Keys exhibiting poor coral recruitment are least likely to be sustained or recover naturally after disturbances and thus may be candidates for coral reef restoration programs. On the other hand, areas identified as "recruitment hotspots" may be considered for more specialized conservation or protection strategies because of their ultimate potential as larval sources. Along similar lines, species specific patterns of recruitment will aid managers in understanding which coral species can recover naturally as opposed to those requiring active propagation. Other biological and physical parameters will be evaluated at the proposed research sites (e.g., condition of adult populations, water temperatures, etc.). These parameters influence recruitment success and juvenile survivorship and will provide biological inference for current marine spatial planning and reef restoration efforts in Florida.





Lauren Stefaniak, Postdoctoral Associate, ICPS, installs a stainless steel bolt in the reef that will secure a terra cotta tile used as settlement substrate.

In addition to the scientific information gained through this research, the funding provided will support the masters theses of at least two Georgia Southern graduate students.

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