

**Faculty Excellence Award Application Form**



GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

Name: **Nicole M. DeClouette**

Rank: **Associate Professor**

Department: **Teacher Education**

Award applying for:  
(Check one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Excellence in Teaching Award*
<input type="checkbox"/>	Excellence in Online Teaching Award*
<input type="checkbox"/>	Excellence in Scholarship & Creative Endeavors Award*
<input type="checkbox"/>	Excellence in University Service*
<input type="checkbox"/>	Excellence in Scholarship of Teaching & Learning Award*
<input type="checkbox"/>	Department/Program Excellence Award^
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Irene Rose Community Service Award^
<input type="checkbox"/>	Laurie Hendrickson McMillian Faculty Award^

\*college selection required before being forwarded to university

^university awards

College nominees' final applications received by Center for Teaching and Learning ([ctl@gcsu.edu](mailto:ctl@gcsu.edu)) by March 1, 2019.

Please insert the required documentation in the pages below for the award category you have noted above. Detailed information associated with each award is available online at the [Center for Teaching and Learning website](#).

### **Narrative Statement Describing Community Service:**

The impetus for my community service stems from my love for people with disabilities. I have been around individuals with disabilities for most of my life, from having family members with disabilities to teaching in an inclusive preschool classroom, to now teaching in the Special Education Program at Georgia College. The community service that I would like to highlight in this narrative is my work with the Life Enrichment Center (LEC), a private non-profit program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) living in Baldwin County. The purpose of the LEC is to promote the general welfare of individuals with IDD by providing opportunities for growth and development, support to families, and community awareness.

My collaboration with the LEC is multifaceted. As a member of the LEC Executive Board (since 2015), we meet monthly to: 1) determine the LEC's programs and services; 2) provide on-going support and guidance for the executive director; 3) ensure effective organizational planning; 4) manage resources effectively; and 5) enhance the LEC's public image. This work overlaps with my role as faculty advisor for the GC Best Buddies Chapter (since 2011).

Best Buddies is an international volunteer organization that works to promote one-to-one friendships and integrated employment opportunities for adults with IDD. After the buddy matches have been made for the year between GC college students and adults with disabilities from the LEC, the pairs maintain communication weekly and meet face-to-face monthly. In my role as faculty advisor, I update the LEC Board on upcoming Best Buddies events, and I meet monthly with the chapter president to plan upcoming events, secure necessary resources, and help facilitate communication between the Best Buddies chapter and the LEC.

To enhance the collaboration between the LEC and Georgia College, Barbara Coleman (Executive Director of the LEC), Dr. Chesley Mercado, and I co-wrote an awarded AWS Foundation Grant (\$100,000 over four years) to support the creation of the Creative Enrichment Center (CEC). The motivation behind the creation of the CEC is that many adults with disabilities have limited meaningful activities to do in the evenings and on weekends. The CEC seeks to address that limitation by providing two evening events and one Saturday event per month (approximately 35 events each year). I serve on the CEC Advisory Board that meets monthly to plan events and to ensure that resources are used effectively.

The CEC connects GC students and adults with IDD in leisurely activities, health/wellness learning opportunities, self-advocacy, self-awareness, and self-expression activities. The CEC has a broader impact than Best Buddies because the adults with disabilities who attend CEC events are not necessarily affiliated with the LEC during the day; in fact, two regular attendees are Baldwin County High School students with disabilities. The impact on GC students is also broader as students in my GC1Y class, Mass Communication students, students affiliated with Kappa Alpha Fraternity, and many others regularly attend CEC Events. Activities include a Mardi Gras Party, a trip to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center in Atlanta, St. Patrick's Day Party, Atlanta Zoo trip, Caribbean Music Night, and Family Feud Night, to name a few.

Part of the requirements for accepting the AWS Foundation Grant is that the LEC was expected to find matching funds for the final three years of the grant. In August 2017, Barbara Coleman and I co-wrote a funded ENGAGE Master Grant (\$30,000 over three years) to support the

engagement of GC students with adults with disabilities in social, leisure, and volunteer activities. For example, a portion of this grant, "*Be the Change You Wish to See in the World*," was used to support travel to Brunswick, GA for a GC Alternative Fall Break. Ten GC students attended this three-day event to engage in a FEMA Relief Clean-up Project. GC students were able to board with the adults with disabilities and learn *about* them *from* them, as opposed to learning from narratives that are constructed about them through the media.

In the Spring 2018 semester, we presented at the Gulf South Summit on Service Learning and Civic Engagement Through Higher Education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. The title of the presentation was "*Confronting the Legacy by Changing the Narrative: Adults with Disabilities Tell Their Own Stories through Art, Music, and Engagement with Georgia College Students.*" My co-presenters for this presentation were Barbara Coleman, Amy Mathis (an adult with Down syndrome), and GC1Y students, Natalia Jones and Ada Montgomery. Barbara Coleman and I were awarded the Gulf South Summit Outstanding Service-Learning Collaboration in Higher Education. A few months later, we received the GC College of Education's Powell-Whipple Award for collaborative community endeavors that go above and beyond expectations.

Students enrolled in my GC1Y course, *Representations of Ability and Disability*, have been involved with adults with disabilities since the Fall 2013 semester. All GC1Y courses require a "learning beyond the classroom" component. Student engagement with adults from the LEC provides an optimal experience beyond the classroom. This engagement also fits the requirements for the course to be designated as a Community-based Engaged Learning (C-bEL) experience. Each semester this collaboration looks a little different. When we first began, my students and the adults with disabilities practiced bocce ball and basketball in preparation for the Special Olympics. In subsequent semesters, they engaged in the Black & White Gallery (photography) at Lockerly Arboretum, Creative Expressions Music Therapy Sessions (e.g., hand bells, choir, drumming, etc.), and they attended the Creative Expression Concerts. The events provide a range of opportunities for GC1Y students to get to know these individuals on a personal basis. This is where students learn that many of the representations they see through various media do not fit what they learn about these adults in person. This complicates the ideas students previously held about people with disabilities...and that is the goal!

For two years, I served on the planning committee for the Tim Tebow Night to Shine Prom for adults with disabilities, sponsored by the Northridge Christian Church. Over 100 adults with disabilities were paired with (mostly) GC students for the proms. The guests enjoyed hair and make-up, shoe shining, red carpet with paparazzi, food, karaoke, and lots of dancing! The GC students served as buddies for the night. They remained with one adult for the night, accompanying them through the above-mentioned stations, having dinner with them, dancing, and finally crowning them kings and queens. Several of my GC1Y students remarked that they had more fun at the Night to Shine Prom than they had at their own high school proms. I was pleasantly surprised when many of my former GC1Y students emailed to ask if they could participate once again.

Partnerships between the LEC and GC span two decades. Ms. Barbara Coleman, Dr. Rob Sumowski, and I decided that it was time to formalize these partnerships by starting an Inclusive

Postsecondary Education (IPSE) Program for adults with intellectual disabilities at Georgia College. There are more than 270 IPSE programs across the US. To further this work in Georgia, Georgia State University's Center for Leadership in Disability received a \$5 million U.S. Department of Education grant, Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID). With the support of TPSID funds, there are now nine IPSE programs in Georgia (University of GA, GA Tech, Kennesaw State University, East GA State College, Columbus State University, Albany Technical College, GA Southern University, GA State University, University of West GA). Georgia College's Program would make the 10<sup>th</sup> program and the first of its kind in the Middle Georgia region.

With the 2018 IPSE Exploration Grant, Barbara Coleman, Rob Sumowski, and I toured five IPSE programs across the southeast and attended two conferences (one regional and one national). This grant also supports our travel to the quarterly GA Inclusive Postsecondary Education Consortium meetings in Atlanta, where we meet with leaders from the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) and Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. These agencies are critical partners for IPSE programs due to the financial support they provide to IPSE programs and to students with disabilities. With the 2019 IPSE Implementation Grant, we will be hiring a part-time program director to assist in getting the program started. The job description is currently pending approval by Human Resources.

The IPSE Program connects to the Georgia College plans below:

- **GC Strategic Plan:**
  - Goal 6: Strengthen community and regional ties through service, research, programs, and partnerships that enhance economic, educational, and cultural opportunities to improve the quality of life for citizens in Milledgeville/Baldwin County and the middle Georgia region.
- **GC Diversity Action Plan (DAP):**
  - States: "The value of diversity at Georgia College promotes a university that is inclusive, while strategically restricting traditions, processes and systems that perpetuate exclusion and marginalization to create equity within all aspects of the university experience."
  - The DAP also focuses on underrepresented students who have historically been marginalized within U.S. institutions of higher education. This includes students with intellectual disabilities.
  - **Goal I - Student Diversity in Access and Success.** Develop strategies that can increase access and success for underrepresented student groups, with particular focus on the Middle Georgia region and the expansion of retention and graduation rates of underrepresented student groups at Georgia College.
  - The IPSE program at GC will be more than a "feel good" program. It will be focused on providing students with the skills needed to be successfully employed after college.
  - **Goal III - Inclusive Campus Climate.** Develop processes that assist the institution in creating an environment of inclusion by developing policies, processes, programs and co-curricular activities that may advance and sustain an inclusive campus environment.

- **Liberal Arts Mission**

- IPSE programs provide the real-world experiences that liberal arts education seeks to attain. From the AAC&U website, “Liberal education is an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.”
- The development of an IPSE program will empower GC students to work with adults with disabilities and will develop a sense of social responsibility to create a world that is inclusive of people with disabilities.

**In Summary:**

I have been engaged in **sustained collaboration with the LEC for nine years** with an increased trajectory of service: from my GC1Y class participating with adults with disabilities from the LEC, to me serving as faculty advisor for the GC Best Buddies Chapter, to my active memberships on the LEC Board and CEC Advisory Board, to my national conference presentations (with LEC collaborators including adults with intellectual disabilities and their parents), to my co-writing grants, and finally to the creation of an IPSE program at GC.

**My performance of service goes beyond volunteering.** As a LEC board member, I serve on the Bylaws Revision Subcommittee and on the Executive Director Job Description Revision Subcommittee. I have just begun working with LEC executive director and activities director to create a curriculum for adults with ID during their down-times at the LEC, times when they are not actively engaged in the community. Additionally, I teach adults from the LEC how to present at national conferences and advocate for themselves.

**Development of a grant that benefits the Central Georgia community:** I have co-written five funded grants (totally \$167,500). These grants have supported Baldwin County adults with disabilities in their personal and social growth, promoted disability awareness in the community, and supported GC students in learning how to engage adults with disabilities in the community.

**Service to support the university-wide mission:** In addition to the connections to the Liberal Arts Mission, the Diversity Action Plan, and the Strategic Goals mentioned above, the IPSE program will provide for new partnerships within the community as students with IDD will be recruited from high schools in the surrounding counties. This program will also necessitate a network of support from across the university. The program will significantly increase the exposure of GC students and Milledgeville residents to people with disabilities as they engage in courses across campus and in internships beyond campus.

The IPSE program has the potential to transform the GC campus to be more diverse and inclusive. I welcome this challenge as the next logical step in this longstanding partnership.



# MORE ALIKE THAN DIFFERENT:

Students collaborate with local Center serving adults with disabilities

**W**ith a bright green feather boa wrapped around her shoulders, first-year marketing major Bailey Kreinbrink grabs her masquerade mask she made moments ago.

She joins a photo booth group made up of other students, Baldwin Life Enrichment Center (LEC) staff and more than 20 community members with disabilities. Tonight, they're crowning a king and queen that will lead them in a parade through the LEC, decorated in the royal tones of Mardi Gras.

"In high school I took a couple classes that allowed me to work with people who had disabilities, so this isn't entirely new to me," Kreinbrink said.

Kreinbrink is one of a group of GC1Y students who volunteer at the Baldwin Life Enrichment Center, a nonprofit that provides diverse programming for adults with intellectual disabilities in the local area. With the help of GC faculty, the LEC recently secured a grant that funds activities like the Feb. 28 Mardi Gras party.

Students volunteer by being engaged with the adults with disabilities. Many times students will lead arts and crafts lessons, pick up a sport with LEC members or join in on a music therapy session.

"One of my favorite parts about this GC1Y class is being able to interact with local community members one-on-one like this," said Kreinbrink. "What I enjoy is that individuals with disabilities always seem to be more loving, open and caring—those are lessons that everyone needs to learn."

Dr. Nicole DeClouette, associate professor of special education, created the GC1Y course Representations of Ability and Disability five years ago. She saw first-year students in disciplines that would eventually need the skill of working with people with disabilities—but weren't getting the experience. For many, this class will be their only exposure to this group before they begin their careers, says DeClouette.

"It's different from other classes that they're used to," said DeClouette. "What they're learning in this course is a life skill that they can use in their careers, but also for the rest of their lives."

First-year athletic training major Sophia LaMarca says using skills learned in DeClouette's class and putting them into action at the LEC has changed the way she sees education.

"It's one thing to be able to sit down and be told you have to do something," she said, "but this experience benefits not only others, but myself. I see it as so much more than community service—it's enriching and powerful."

Barbara Coleman, executive director of the LEC, has seen the partnership between her organization and Georgia College grow in the past 17 years. She says without faculty and students, the LEC wouldn't be able to provide the level of programming it currently does.

"The students need experience and opportunities and what they find here is that and more," Coleman said. "I ask them what they want to get from here—so it's not like they're free labor—it's reciprocal. I want them to dream big, try new things and use all the skills at the LEC that they're learning in the classroom. And use those skills without fear of failure."

LaMarca says the opportunity to meet more community members and to familiarize herself with a whole new group of people, has been the highlight of her time in the GC1Y course.

"I feel the takeaway for me is knowing there are different parts of your community that you're not always aware of," she said. "But that doesn't mean you ignore them. You have to find ways to involve them no matter if it's something you're comfortable with or not. It's important."

While GC1Y students do volunteer at the LEC, the collaboration doesn't stop there. Other disciplines along with the student organization Best Buddies, which creates opportunities for one-on-one friendships between students and community members with intellectual disabilities, also volunteer at the Center.

"Students have a new respect for individuals at the Center," said Coleman. "They get to see that they're photographers, dancers, singers, athletes—they're everything that anyone else can be. They just do it a little differently." ■



# GC1Y engages with people with disabilities

**Taylor Kiel**  
Staff Writer

Nicole DeClouette, associate professor of special education created a GC1Y class called "Representations of Ability and Disability" several years ago to give exposure to first-year students who require the skill of working with people with physical and intellectual disabilities.

The class focuses on stories about disability, with film as a major component, and teaches students to look at, critique and analyze the different representations. Students focus on whether the particular media analyzed is putting positive or negative messages out to the community.

"If the media examined portrays negative messages, we want [students] to

resist those and reposition them in a way that is more positive," DeClouette said. "If they are positive then we want to highlight them and support them."

Beyond the classroom, students get real-life experience working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) at The Creative Enrichment Center (CEC). The CEC was created with a grant that gives students the opportunity to engage with individuals with I/DD, educating students on abilities of disability.

DeClouette's GC1Y students participate in a minimum of eight hours working with adults with disabilities. They can do this through CEC events such as railgating and music therapy.

DeClouette said that some of her students are

hesitant if they have never worked with an individual with I/DD before and are afraid of possibly saying something incorrect. However, this worry is typically alleviated after uniting the student and individuals.

"Once they [GC1Y students] meet them, talk to and engage with them, all of that falls away, and students realize that they have very similar interests and experiences and are able to have fun together," DeClouette said.

Barbara Coleman, executive director of the CEC plays a huge role in advocating for the relationship between GC students and the CEC.

"We want to educate students [that] we and individuals with I/DD are more alike than different, changing your mindset one student at a time, hope-

fully to make a generation of change," Coleman said.

Coleman and DeClouette agreed that while the stigma of treatment of individuals with I/DD is lessening, it still exists. They notice some people stand away when they are fearful of miscommunication.

"I think the biggest exclusion for people with disabilities is ignorance," Coleman said. "We fear what we do not know, so we stand away from it."

DeClouette instructs her students that rather than looking away from these individuals, it is ideal to introduce yourself, and say hello, and explore the possibility of the individual with I/DD opening up about themselves.

"We teach our little kids to look away, and then they grow up continuing to look away," DeClouette said.

Coleman said that she has a high retention rate of students who continue to volunteer for the LEC/CEC after taking DeClouette's GC1Y class.

Coleman shared a personal story about an individual she ran into while hauling items into the GIVE Center who stopped her and shared the impact the GC1Y class had on him. Even as senior, he asked about the individuals he worked with in the "Representations of Ability and Disability" class.

Amy Mathis, an individual with Down syndrome, said she enjoys the semesterly field day of fun and lit up when asked about her favorite events.

"I like playing games outside, and Bocce Ball is my favorite, as well as the pie in the face, and I got to put a pie in Kevin's face."

Amy was recently proposed to at church by her now fiancé Kevin, who also has Down syndrome, a cherished moment that DeClouette's students and the community will never forget.

"[The students] had tears coming down their faces when witnessing the proposal," DeClouette said.

Students in the GC1Y class and volunteers all over the community get to share some of the most special moments with the individuals with I/DD.

"You guys [students] bring us that youth and important ideas, and it is a snowball effect," Coleman said. "We are like one big village, and I could not be more appreciative. We are all a family. We laugh together, we pray together and we cry together. Anyone is welcome in this family."





# Best Buddies Gives Back

Skylar Mortensen & Jennifer Norris



## LEC Day Hab Program

The Day Habilitation Program (Day Hab) is designed to assist the persons served in acquiring, retaining or improving self-help, socialization, and adaptive skills required for active community participation and independent functioning outside the individual's home.

## Our Vision

Our vision was to employ sensory stimulation activities throughout their room to facilitate employment-oriented activities through personal choice.

## Our Process

Our process evolved over the semester as a direct result of input from Day Hab program participants and staff, Life Enrichment Center Leadership, More Than Just Students and Interns and learning programs with similar services. Financial and in-kind support from the BS Engage Grant, local business and a lot of church helped to enable us to make our vision a reality. However, we could not have done it without the support of parents and friends who donated countless hours to work alongside our Best Buddies Team. The rooms are hard to convert sensory stimulation walls, a music center, a horticultural center, an Art center and a media center. All our hard work paid off on the main day of the reveal when it was stated, "I like this, this looks good, I think this is going to work." To have our hard work validated by a young lady who will be taking this room over practices.



## Alternative Spring Break



## Engage Purpose

The purpose of this program is to expand the Georgia College Best Buddies Registered Student Organization (RSO) from a traditional set of factors to a service focus. Best Buddies is an international organization focused on providing one-to-one friendships between individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and those without disabilities. Typically, GC students have viewed Best Buddies as a way to volunteer their time and resources but have not really considered how much the individual with IDD have to give back. Responsibility is something we should all strive for and be willing to work to meet the needs of our communities. People with IDD need to give back and need to be valued members of society. Together we CAN ALL make a difference in our communities while showing the world we are "More Able than Different."

## Be Incredible Experience

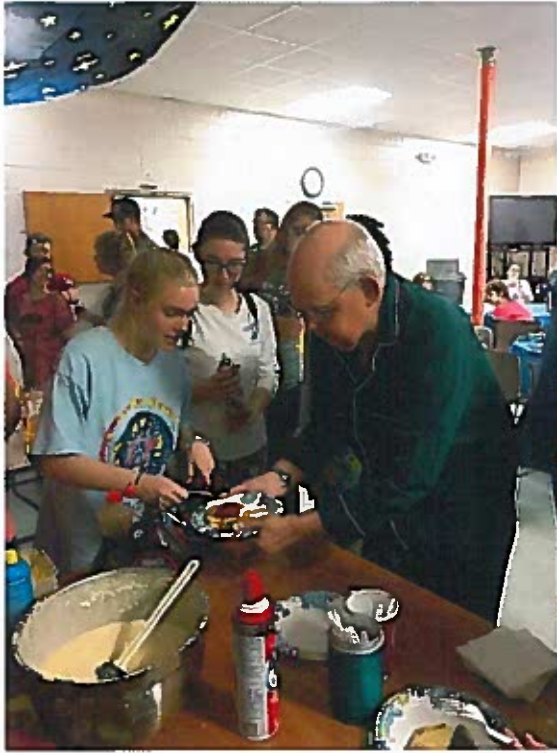
For the Alternative Spring Break, we were able to take six buddies to North Carolina where we stayed on Wrightsville Beach and served in the city of Wilmington. We stayed in the Matthew House which offers accommodations for groups coming to the Cape Fear region for volunteer work. The way the project worked consisted of each individual participating up for the week to work on the projects together, plan meals and social activities. Through the course of the five days we volunteered at a Wilmington Disaster Diner, provided hurricane disaster relief clean up for a local family, stacked shelves for Vintage Values Domestic Violence Safe House Restroom and fed the homeless at the First Baptist Church Soup Kitchen. Having the opportunity to be part of the experience left us humbled and ready to come back again.

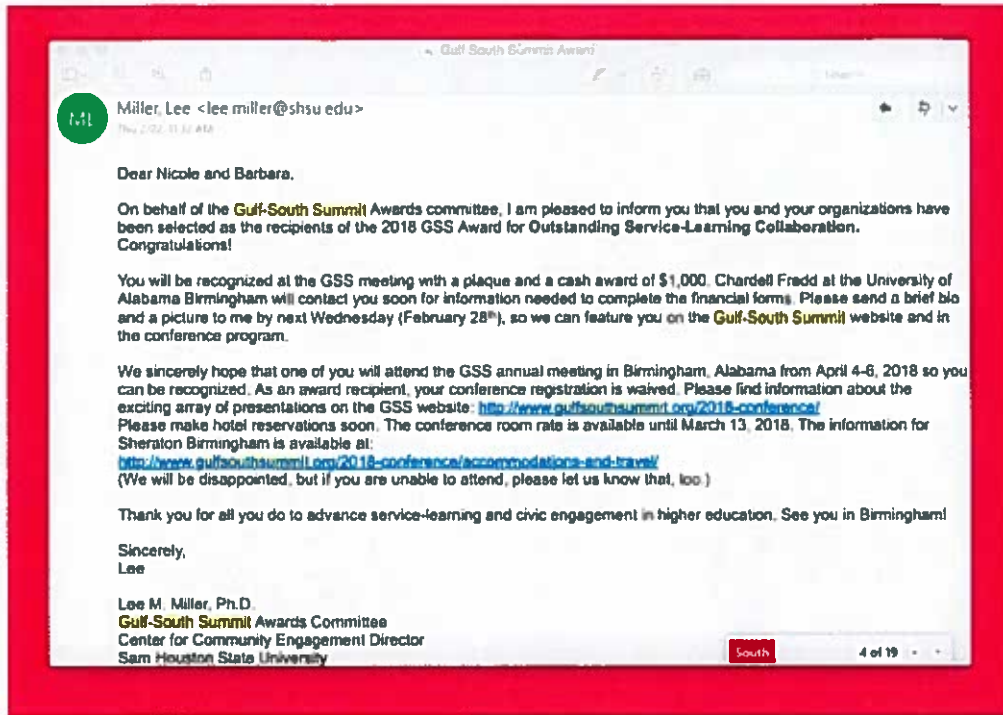
## Additional Opportunities

Our journey at the L&C over the course of the 2013 Spring Semester was not all work and no play, we had the pleasure of having an impact, but we also had the pleasure of being impacted. With the help of Georgia College to fund of Health Sciences and The Life Enrichment Center, we have been able to use our knowledge to positively impact the lives of individuals with IDD through sensory and social work being. This has been an experience that will stay with us forever and the memories will always be as joy.









Congratulations! Your Exploration Grant has been a

Susanna Miller-Raines <smiller55@gsu.edu>  
Thu 1/31/2019 5:05 PM  
Nicole DeClouette, Robert Sumowski, Charlene Ann Gettin <cgettin@gsu.edu>, Daniel Crummins <dcrummins@gsu.edu>

SubcontractRequest - Copy.pdf 1.1 MB  
Subrecipient Commitment F 142 KB  
Att 3B-1.pdf 680 KB

Show all 5 attachments (1 MB) Download all Save all to OneDrive - Georgia College

January 31, 2019

Attn: Nicole DeClouette, PhD & Rob Sumowski, EdD

**RE: Notice of Grant Award**

Dear Drs. DeClouette & Sumowski,

It is my pleasure to inform you that the Center for Leadership in Disability (CLD), through our TPSID grant, has approved a grant of \$10,000 for the exploration of creating an inclusive postsecondary education program at Georgia College. This work is to be carried out under the direction of the Co-PIs stated in your application.

The funds are to be used over the period of January 1, 2019 through September 30, 2019, in accordance with the budget submitted with your proposal. The appropriate college personnel will need to fill out the *Subcontract Request form*, *Subrecipient Commitment Form*, *Att 3B-1*, and *Att 3B-2*. All forms are attached to the email you are receiving. Please return by February 15, 2019, in order to process your contract with Georgia State University.

Thank you again for your commitment to this very important work.

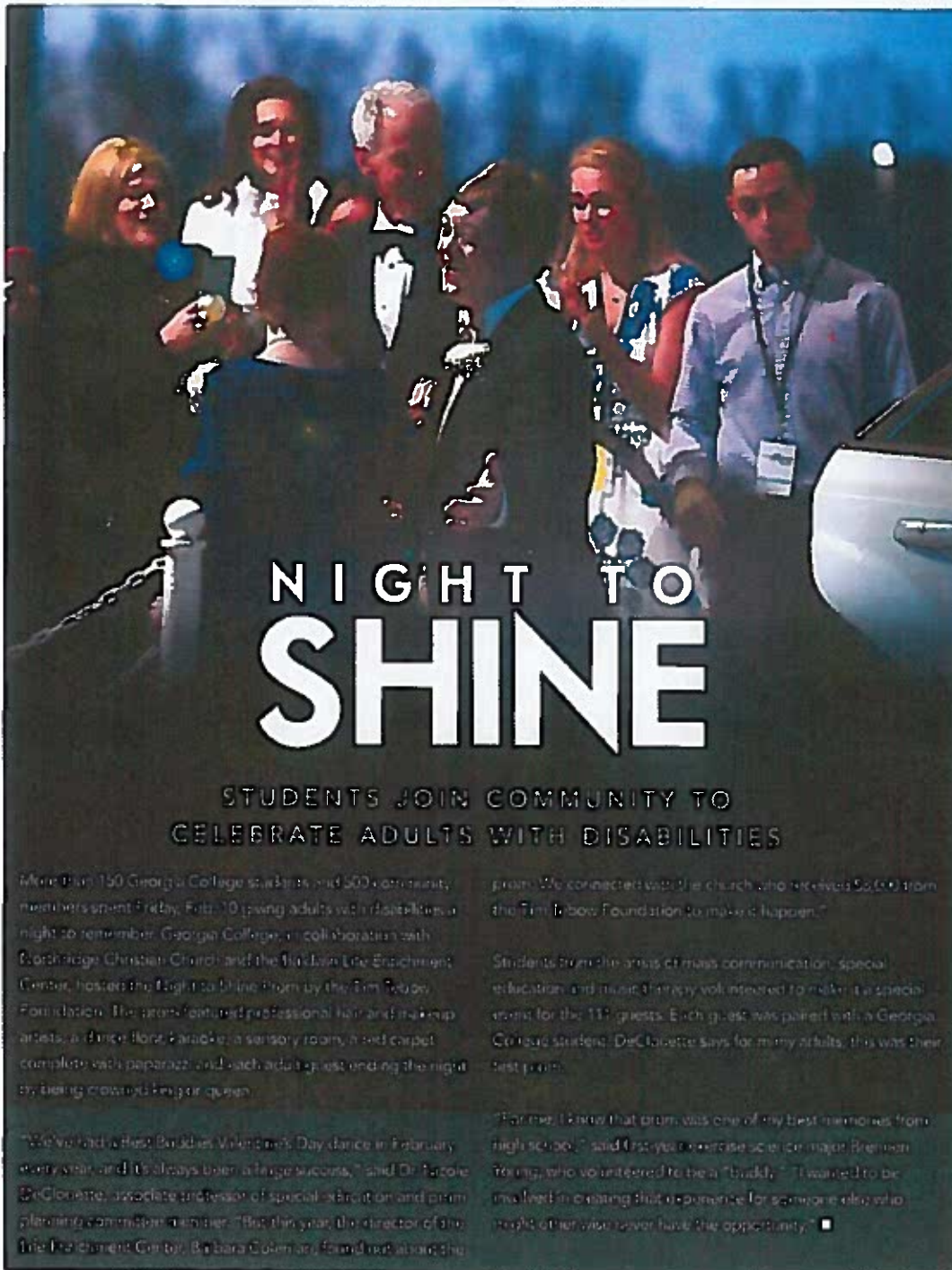
Sincerely,

**Susanna Miller-Raines, MSW**  
UCEED Operations Coordinator  
GAIPSEC Statewide Coordinator  
ADMH Social Worker  
Southeast PSE Alliance Chair  
Georgia LEND 2018-17



Mail - Nicole DeClouette - C





# NIGHT TO SHINE

## STUDENTS JOIN COMMUNITY TO CELEBRATE ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

More than 150 Georgia College students and 500 community members spent Friday, Feb. 10, giving adults with disabilities a night to remember. Georgia College, in collaboration with Northridge Christian Church and the Buckeye Life Enrichment Center, hosted the Night to Shine from by the Tim Tabor Foundation. The event featured professional hair and makeup artists, a dance floor, karaoke, a sensory room, a red carpet complete with paparazzi, and each adult guest ending the night by being crowned King or Queen.

"We've had a Best Buddies Valentine's Day dance in February every year, and it's always been a huge success," said Dr. Jacole DeCicco, associate professor of special education and event planning committee member. "But this year, the director of the Life Enrichment Center, Barbara Coleman, found out about the

event. We connected with the church, who received \$5,000 from the Tim Tabor Foundation to make it happen."

Students from the areas of mass communication, special education, and music therapy volunteered to make it a special event for the 117 guests. Each guest was paired with a Georgia College student. DeCicco says for many adults, this was their best event.

"For me, I know that prom was one of my best memories from high school," said first-year exercise science major Brenner Young, who volunteered to be a "buddy." "I wanted to be involved in creating that experience for someone else who might otherwise never have the opportunity." ■



**Department of Teacher Education**

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November 25, 2019

Dear College of Education Faculty Awards Committee Members,

It is an honor to nominate Dr. Nicole DeClouette, Associate Professor of Special Education at Georgia College, for the Irene Rose Community Service Award for her collaboration with the Baldwin County Creative Enrichment Center.

The Creative Enrichment Center is a new collaboration between The Baldwin County Life Enrichment Center, and Georgia College that was created after Nicole and other collaborators secured a \$100,000 AWS Foundation Grant (over a four year period) to: 1) provide meaningful community leisure activities for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in their natural homes; and 2) increase community awareness by partnering with college students to provide leisure and social opportunities. Nicole ensures the active participation of Georgia College students at Creative Enrichment Center events through her role as the faculty advisor for the Georgia College Chapter of Best Buddies and through her GC1Y course, *Representations of Ability and Disability*.

Best Buddies is an international organization that provides for one-on-one friendships with people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Through Nicole's leadership, the Georgia College Chapter of Best Buddies matches college students with adults with disabilities served by the Life Enrichment Center. The students and their matched adult with disabilities participate in regular activities on campus and at the Life Enrichment Center. This collaboration has spanned more than 10 years.

Additionally, Nicole's GC1Y class, *Representations of Ability and Disability*, is responsible for planning one Creative Enrichment Center event per semester. This semester the students planned a pajama and pancake party where participants made dream catchers. They also set up a photo booth, karaoke machine, and a pancake-topping bar. This course may be the only time they hear the perspectives of people with disabilities firsthand. Former students have commented that this course has changed their lives because of the experiences they had working with the adults from the Life Enrichment Center.

Nicole and Barbara Coleman from the Creative Enrichment Center have been actively disseminating information about their partnerships and collaborations. They presented "*Collaborate to Change Lives: One Semester at a Time*" at the 2016 Gulf South Summit with Amy Mathis, an adult with Down syndrome, and Jessica Vickers, a former GC1Y student and Best Buddies member. Nicole and Barbara have been accepted to present at the 2018 Gulf South Summit entitled, "*Confronting the*  
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Established in 1889

Georgia's designated public liberal arts university since 1996



*Legacy by Changing the Narrative: Adults with Disabilities Tell Their Own Stories Through Art, Music, and Engagement with Georgia College Students.*” The session will be presented by Nicole, Barbara, Amy, and two new GC1Y students, Alisa Smith and Julia Estes. The Gulf-South Summit Awards committee also recently announced Nicole DeClouette and Barbara Coleman as the recipients of their 2018 award for *Outstanding Service-Learning Collaboration*.

Because we are located in Milledgeville, Georgia, the Nicole and the Life Enrichment Center are working diligently to overcome the stigma associated with being the home to the nation’s largest institution, Central State Hospital. Once Central State was closed, adults with disabilities were returned to the community, often with minimal support. The many partnerships the Life Enrichment Center has with Georgia College has been instrumental in teaching college students that we are indeed more alike than we are different. Through Best Buddies and the Creative Enrichment Center, seeds are planted in Georgia College students that will carry over into their future communities and work environments.

Respectfully,



Stephen Wills  
Associate Professor of Special Education  
Georgia College

March 2, 2020

Dear Selection Committee for the Irene Rose Community Service Award:

This letter is written with enthusiastic support for Dr. Nicole DeClouette in her application for the Irene Rose Community Service Award. Dr. DeClouette has served as a faculty member in the Special Education program for over nine years and during that time she has committed to continued teaching, scholarship, and service to Georgia College, the education profession, and the local, regional, national and international communities. Her commitment and passion are obvious in all that she does. I would like to highlight a few of the areas of community service that I believe are most notable and demonstrate the scope of the service work in which she engages. I would also like to situate her service work in that she teaches a 4-4 course load and serves as a Mentor Leader in the Mentor-Led, Field-Based, Cohort Program in the College of Education.

Dr. DeClouette serves the central Georgia community through her service in many ways. First, since 2011 she has served as the faculty advisor to the Best Buddies Program at Georgia College. Best Buddies pairs Georgia College students with community adults with disabilities and as the advisor she plans activities for mentorship and inclusive experiences within the community for both the students and the participants. Also in this role, and as a member of the Life Enrichment Center (LEC) board since 2015, Dr. DeClouette meets regularly with the president and the other executive board members of the local LEC, a day program for adults with disabilities, to plan events that support the programming and sustainability of the LEC. She has also recruited and trained over 100 Georgia College students to volunteer at the Tim Tebow Night to Shine Prom, a prom held annually at a local church for Baldwin County adults with disabilities. Additionally, she involves the students who are enrolled in her GC1Y course, a designated Community-based Learning (C-bEL) experience, with the Life Enrichment Center participants to broaden the GC students' horizons about ability and disability in our local community and society. The depth and breadth of these experiences allow Georgia College students to learn beyond the classroom and to develop empathy and compassion for others.

Beyond connecting students to the local community for specific events, she has made her impact felt within the Life Enrichment Center in Milledgeville and the middle Georgia area by seeking funding to sustain and deepen these opportunities. Dr. DeClouette co-wrote and was awarded a \$100,000 grant over four years, to support the creation of the Creative Enrichment Center (CEC). The CEC was founded to support the creation of evening and weekend events for adults with disabilities in the area, a need that Dr. DeClouette recognized in her work with the LEC. In addition to the initial grant, Dr. DeClouette and Barbara Coleman, the LEC Director, secured another ENGAGE Master Grant of \$30,000 over three years to continue to support the engagement of GC students, faculty, and local adults with disabilities through the CEC.

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In 2018, Dr. DeClouette began exploring the opportunity for adults with disabilities in our community to enroll a students into Georgia College. Dr. DeClouette, Barbara Coleman, and Dr. Rob Sumowski applied for and received both the Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) Exploration Grant (\$10,000) and Implementation Grant (\$25,000) to begin a program here at Georgia College . The Inclusive Postsecondary Education program will improve access to higher education for students with intellectual disabilities in our area. This program benefits university students and faculty as well as the adults within the local community who have traditionally been denied access to a higher education experience.

Dr. DeClouette has also been actively involved in international education for many years. She has directed several study and teach abroad opportunities in London and in 2016 began planning to implement another faculty led study abroad to Tanzania. In Tanzania, Africa, Dr. DeClouette leads students in exploring the evolving understanding of disability in the Maasai culture, in becoming informed global citizens, and in developing their ability to think critically. Her passion for the field of special education transcends the walls of her teacher education classroom and her local community.

As is evident in her worked summarized in this letter as well as in her award portfolio and vita it is obvious that Dr. Nicole DeClouette has a consistent record of service beyond the normal expectations of a faculty member. Her service work has had a significant impact on GC students, local community members who are adults with disabilities and their families, and far beyond. Her service clearly supports the mission of the university and she has sought to make the work sustainable through multiple sources of funding. She is an exemplary faculty member in every way, but her passion is service within and beyond the university. Based on the attributes and the contributions I have described, I highly recommend Dr. Nicole DeClouette for the Irene Rose Community Service Award.

Sincerely,

Holley M. Roberts. Ed.D.  
Interim Associate Dean  
John H. Lounsbury College of Education

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To the Irene Rose Service Award Selection Committee:

Please accept this letter as my enthusiastic endorsement of Dr. Nicole DeClouette for the Irene Rose Service Award. For the past nine years I have had the pleasure of working closely with Dr. DeClouette. She is one of the most selfless and dedicated professors I know, she is a passionate advocate for students and adults with disabilities, and she lives to serve others. Examples of Dr. DeClouette's outstanding service include outreach to GC students, the University as a whole, and our greater community at large.

First, Dr. DeClouette was one of the founding local coordinators of the Night to Shine prom, which since has expanded to several Middle Georgia counties. This event offers adults with disabilities life-changing and transformative experiences whereby they are celebrated for who they are as individuals with meaning and value, often for the first time in their lives.

For nine years, Dr. DeClouette has been a leader of the Best Buddies Program, which pairs GC students with local citizens with disabilities. I have seen the real impact this has had on countless GC students and their buddies, changing many students' entire perspectives on life and nurturing within them a passion for serving others. She has played multiple roles, doing everything from serving as a board member to raising money to participating in activities with the group's "buddies."

All of the ideas in the world to support those in need are meaningless without the ability to make them come to life through funding. To this end, Dr. DeClouette's grant work has helped to bring many programs from theoretical, paper-based ideas to real world programs that affect lives within our community and, through grants affiliated with her outreach in Tanzania, even across the world.

One massive contribution included her participation in securing a \$100,000 AWS Foundation Grant to fund the Creative Enrichment Center, which has had a remarkable impact on the lives of local adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This worked in concert with another grant she helped to obtain, the \$30,000 Community-based Engaged Learning Master Grant, which helps clients engage with the community and teaches them to advocate for themselves.

Finally, she has been the recipient of two different Inclusive Postsecondary Education Federal TPSID Grants (\$10,000 and \$25,000, respectively) through the Center for Leadership in Disability, which are designed to explore and hopefully create Middle Georgia's first Inclusive Post-Secondary Education program, which would allow local adults with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to attend Georgia College.

In summary, Dr. DeClouette is a competent and dedicated professor with the heart of a servant leader who gives tirelessly to her students, the University, and our community as a whole. She lives for others. As a result, I cannot think of a more worthy recipient of the Irene Rose Service Award.

Sincerely,



Rob Sumowski, Ed. D.  
Assistant Professor