

**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS TEACHING EXCELLENCE  
AWARDS FOR DEPARTMENT OR PROGRAM**

**2021**

**GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY**

**SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I.	Nomination Letter – Dean Joe Peters	1 – 2
II.	Special Education Narrative	3 – 5
III.	Special Education Fact Sheet	6
IV.	Special Education Collection of Evidence	7 – 20
A.	Unique Characteristics of Our Undergraduate Program	7 – 8
B.	Unique Characteristics of Our MAT Program	9 -10
C.	Unique Characteristics of Our M.Ed. Program	11
D.	Unique Characteristics of Our Ed.S. Program	12
E.	Tanzania Study Abroad	13
F.	Grants Received from Special Education Program Faculty	13-15
G.	Faculty Awards and Accomplishments	15
H.	Awards and Accomplishments of Program Completers	16
I.	Georgia PSC Ratings of Our Program	16-19
J.	State, National, and International Conference Presentations with Students	19-20
K.	Selected Student SRIS Comments	20
L.	Georgia College Student Council for Exceptional Children	20



February 5, 2021

Dr. Jim Berger  
Director, Center for Teaching and Learning  
Georgia College & State University  
231 W. Hancock Street  
Milledgeville, GA 31061

Dear Dr. Berger,

This letter is to nominate The Department of Special Education for the Outstanding Department Award. The Special Education Department continues to achieve amazing things. First, this Department has four very active degree options available, including a bachelor's program for undergraduates, a very active Master of Arts in Teaching program leading to certification, a Master of Education program for teachers that are already certified, and a Specialist program for educators that want to continue in their career progression. They recently added a Dyslexia undergraduate and graduate option and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports certificate. These programs are provided by three tenured faculty (Drs. Wills, DeClouette, & Sumowski), two tenure-track faculty (Drs. Grimes & Muschaweck), and two limited term faculty (Drs. Smith & Crook), and a host of part-time faculty.

One thing that sets the departmental faculty apart from others, is their participation in professional development and professional service for the college, university, and community. All faculty have participated in Dr. Cynthia Alby's Transformative Design course, are advocates of the Quality Matters program, and are involved in book circles and learning communities. They are also heavily involved in service as seen in the following examples.

- Dr. DeClouette's work as the Academic Policy Committee Chair, Presiding Officer and Executive Committee Chair of the University Senate, Secretary of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Committee, member of the Call Me MISTER Advisory Board, and member of the President's Commission on Diversity are just a few examples of her recent service. She also serves as the GCSU representative to the Best Buddies Program, the Creative Enrichment Center Advisory Board, and the Tim Tebow Night to Shine Prom for Adults with Developmental Disabilities. Dr. DeClouette also provides study abroad options to England and Tanzania. She is currently the COE Associate Dean.
- Dr. Sumowski serves as a leader on the Professional Standards Commission Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Board and collaborates with the Georgia Attorney General's Office on matters related to Special Education. He also serves on Teacher of the Year Committees and is the faculty advisor to Sigma Alpha Epsilon. Additionally, Dr. Sumowski and Dr. DeClouette are the project directors for the Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program at GCSU.
- Dr. Wills coordinates the Special Education programs, serves on the COE Assessment Committee, advises the dean with his service on the Purpose and



Direction Committee, reviews for the *Preventing School Failure Journal*, and is a team member for the Call Me MiSTER program.

- Dr. Muschaweck is in her first year at GCSU and is already leading a committee to review the Special Education Ed.S program and is a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Fellow.
- Dr. Grimes is the Chair of the COE Curriculum Committee and a member of the Constitution Week Committee. She also serves on many search committees, advises for Kappa Delta Pi, and is involved in the Night to Shine program.
- All faculty in the program are using iPad technology to show teacher candidates how to use technology effectively for instruction to PreK-12 students with special needs. Additionally, faculty support the local schools with professional development for teachers such as Dr. Sumowski's three years in helping Baldwin County Schools integrate PBIS and Dr. Grimes working with Hancock County Schools. They also are heavily involved in assessment and reporting at the national, state, and university levels. One departmental example of assessment is the incorporation of the Teacher Work Sample portfolio that is an example of planning and development that assesses if the candidate is actually ready for the classroom on day one.

The Departmental faculty are also involved in scholarly activity. Some faculty visited Finland and then presented their findings at professional conferences. All faculty are active in international and national presentations and scholarly research leading to publications.

As a Department, the Special Education Department boasts a rating as a top 20 program in the nation according to Teacher.org. They also have a 100% pass rate for the Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE) and the edTPA pedagogy assessment. Graduation rates are in the top percentage and all graduates that choose to join the workforce are hired, most before they even graduate. There are many graduates that have been selected as teacher of the year in their school and district. Individually, faculty have won many awards. Some examples include the Craig Turner Service Award (Dr. Wills), the Irene Rose Community Service Award (Dr. DeClouette), and Dr. Sumowski's selection to represent the university's for the Charles Dunn Award from COPLAC.

In closing, I enthusiastically support the Special Education's nomination as the Outstanding Department Award for 2021. Please feel free to contact me if there are any questions or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

*Joseph Peters*

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**Efforts to Improve Teaching and Student Learning.** The Special Education Mentor-led, Field-based Cohort Model (for the BS and MAT Programs) sets us apart from other special education programs in the state. First, the guidance and instruction provided by Faculty Mentor Leaders supports initial teacher candidates to develop the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions that will be required of them in the teaching profession. The field-based aspect of the cohort program provides teacher candidates with more than 1200 hours of classroom experience supported by Certified P-12 Partner Teachers. Second, as Special Education program faculty, we are students of our own teaching practice, for we understand the importance of critical reflection in making decisions about course and program revisions. For example, in 2019-20, five of our program faculty engaged in Dr. Cynthia Alby's *Design for Transformative Learning Course*. The 14-week course is informed by research from education, cognitive science, psychology, and neuroscience and requires that faculty members design or re-design a course they teach. The essence of the course is the idea that transformative learning experiences do not happen by accident but instead are carefully crafted by faculty. Third, the results of our teaching extend beyond GC teacher candidates to include:

- Dr. Sumowski's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) work in Baldwin County Schools has reduced the number of P-12 student disciplinary office referrals.
- Dr. Wills' Literacy Strategies Course at Lakeview Academy has mutually benefitted teacher candidates and elementary school students.
- The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) publishes the annual Preparation Program Effectiveness Measures (PPEMs) to assess the quality of educators they produce. The College of Education's initial teacher certification programs have earned a Level 4 (Exemplary) rating on the 2018, 2019, and 2020 measures.

**Methods and Use of Assessments.** The Special Education Program is current nationally recognized with conditions by the Specialty Professional Association (SPA) in Special Education. To be nationally recognized, faculty must collect and analyze assessment data to demonstrate that the program meets each of the program standards. Based on SPA feedback, the program revised four key program assessments: Teacher Work Sample, Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA), Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), and the Progress Monitoring Assessment. The program will demonstrate how the revised assessments increase student learning outcomes when it submits the response to conditions in September 2021. Our program also uses state required licensure assessments (GACE Content) and national certification assessments (edTPA) to measure teacher candidate's readiness to teach in P-12 classrooms. We also analyze dispositional assessment data to identify strength and areas for improvement in our teacher candidates. At the conclusion of our programs, all candidates submit an e-portfolio to demonstrate their growth and mastery of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of first year teachers.

**Active Support for Faculty.** There are several ways that faculty have been supported to use innovative forms of pedagogy:

- Dr. Wills teaches his Special Education Literacy Strategies Course at Lakeview Academy. On a weekly basis, Teacher Candidates work with small groups of students with disabilities,

implementing the literacy strategies recently taught. The students with disabilities benefit from small group literacy strategy instruction and the teacher candidates benefit from implementing what they learn in class with actual students with disabilities.

- Dr. Rob Sumowski served as the Baldwin County Schools Professor-in-Residence for three years supporting Superintendent, Dr. Price, to rebuild the county's behavior support process from the ground up. Dr. Sumowski collaborated to develop cutting-edge coursework in PBIS, a nationally-recognized framework for proactive behavior management utilizing a data-driven, three-tiered continuum. He collaborated with the Georgia Department of Education (DOE) in the visioning process, ultimately developing a series of courses first approved as a BOR-level certificate in 2018, and subsequently validated by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC), which granted the program Endorsement status in 2019, making Georgia College one of the first two universities in the United States to offer a state-issued teaching certificate endorsement in this field.
- The Dean's Office also supported two groups of faculty to participate in the SMART Education Exchange Program to Finland to learn about their superb education system. Dr. Grimes and Dr. DeClouette visited two universities and several schools. As a result of their learning, Drs. Grimes and DeClouette have collaborated to present on their experiences at the national CEC Conference, "*Will the U.S. Ever Get to the Finnish Line? Cross Cultural Lessons Learned,*" and they will present in Dubai at the DISES 2022 International Conference "*Getting the UAE and the USA to the Finnish Line: Lessons from Finland's Education System.*"
- President Dorman, Provost Spirou, and Dean Peters have approved of Drs. DeClouette, Sumowski, and Wills to create an Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program (IPSE) for adults with intellectual disabilities.

**Strong Links between Good Teaching and Awards.** Of the five tenure track faculty, three are tenured, and one is currently being considered for tenure. There are three Associate Professors (two are currently being considered for promotion to Full Professor). The Assistant Professor is also being considered for promotion to Associate Professor. Faculty have been awarded \$189,260 in grants to support a variety of initiatives including the creation of an IPSE Program, a Scholarship in Teaching and Learning Mini Grant, several Community-based Engaged Learning (C-bEL) Mini and Master Grants to support faculty-community partner collaborations to benefit students, and two grants to support community partners: Life Enrichment Center and Georgia DOE School Improvement Grant for Georgia Academy for the Blind.

**Department/Unit Policies Encourage Collaborative Faculty Efforts.** It is important that teacher candidates learn a variety of pedagogical approaches to instruction. Co-teaching is a component of collaborative pedagogy that is part of our programs. We value opportunities to model for our teacher candidates the skills that we hope they will use in their own teaching. Dr. Wills and Dr. Muschaweck co-teach the 6-credit *Research Thesis Course* for the EdS Program. Co-teaching is also a hallmark of our BS program when we have two cohorts. Additionally, two program faculty have collaborated with teacher candidates on several national and international

conference presentations. We also highly value our collaborations with community partners (e.g., Life Enrichment Center, Georgia Academy for the Blind, Baldwin County Schools, etc.)

**Ongoing Data-driven Process for Reviewing & Shaping Curricula.** The Special Education program engages in several continuous improvement processes. The BS, MAT, and MEd Programs have been nationally recognized by the Council for Exceptional Children's SPA process.

Recognition requires an analysis of three years of program data to demonstrate that the program is meeting the seven CEC Initial and Advanced Preparation Standards. We recently reviewed the EdS program to better align with the CEC Advanced Preparation Standards. This process identified areas of overlap in research and areas with reduced coverage in curriculum and assessment. A new course has been developed to provide greater curricular application for our teacher leaders with additional practice in areas of assessment, program evaluation, and mentoring.

**Exemplary Programs for Student Success.** Each of the seven program faculty serve as cohort mentor leaders and academic advisors across the four programs. Our program sponsors two study abroad programs, one to Tanzania and the other to London and Paris (for GC2Y and EDUC 2120 credit). Five of the seven faculty serve as faculty advisors for five registered student organizations: Georgia Association of Educators, Kappa Delta Phi (the international honor society in education), Best Buddies International, student chapter of Council for Exceptional Children (our professional organization), and Sigma Alpha Epsilon. Co-curricular work with students include: 1) serving on the Tim Tebow Night to Shine Planning Committee, 2) collaboration with the Baldwin County Life Enrichment Center with GC1Y students, 3) national and international conference presentations with teacher candidates; and 4) Community-based Engage Learning grants to benefit students.

**Success of Students.** Special Education cohort students have a 100% pass rate on the GACE Content Assessment. School district administrators seek out our program completers due to the quality of our programs. Most of our senior cohort students have job offers prior to graduation. All program completers who desire special education teaching positions are successful in finding jobs, usually in the district of their choice. Those completers who do not wish to teach typically continue with advanced degrees at GC and at other USG institutions. Many of our program completers serve as partner teachers for our current cohort teacher candidates. Qualitatively, a number of our program completers have been selected as School and District Teachers of the Year.

**Articulation of Quality.** Special Education Programs have been nationally ranked by two organizations. In 2016, Teacher.org ranked our undergraduate program 19<sup>th</sup> in the nation for Special Education. In 2019, OnlineU.org ranked our Master's Degrees in Special Education 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation and our Master's Degrees in Teaching 17<sup>th</sup> in the nation. In addition to these national rankings, the quality of our programs is evident in the quantitative data presented by the GaPSC Preparation Program Effectiveness Measures (PPEMs), GACE assessments results, edTPA assessment results, Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS) (results of program completers), and by Employer Surveys of our program completers.

## **Georgia College & State University Special Education Program Fact Sheet**

### **Enrolled Students**

Undergraduate Cohort Majors: 37  
Undergraduate Service Course Non-Majors: 78  
Master of Arts in Teaching Majors: 49  
Master of Education Majors: 13  
Educational Specialist Majors: 10  
Graduate Service Course Non-Majors: 88

Total Enrollment: 253 Students  
Total Special Education Majors: 111

### **Faculty/Staff**

Total Faculty: 7  
Total Staff: 0  
Tenure Track: 5  
Non-Tenure Track: 2  
Part time: 3  
Full Professors: 0  
Associate Professors: 3  
Assistant Professors: 2  
Faculty with Terminal Degrees: 6

### **Programs Offered/Delivery**

Bachelor of Science in Special Education – General Curriculum  
(Mentor Led Field Based Cohort)  
Master of Education in Special Education – General Curriculum (Partially Online)  
Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education – General Curriculum (Online)  
Education Specialist in Special Education – (Partially Online)  
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Certificate (Online)

**Grants Awarded: \$189,260**

### **National Rankings**

2019 – OnlineU.org.....12th – Master’s Degrees in Special Education  
17th – Master’s Degrees in Teaching

2016 – Teacher.org.....19th – Special Education

## Unique Characteristics of Each of our Four Programs

The Special Education Program is unique in the College of Education and across Georgia College Programs in that we have four programs. We offer an undergraduate (BS) program and a graduate (MAT) program for teacher candidates seeking initial teacher certification in special education. At the advanced level, we offer a M.Ed. program for students who are already certified to teach special education and an Ed.S. program for students who have an M.Ed. and want to advance their teacher certification to the educational specialist level. We take pride in the quality and viability of each of our programs and believe that each program has unique characteristics that separate us from other universities and better align us with the mission of Georgia College.

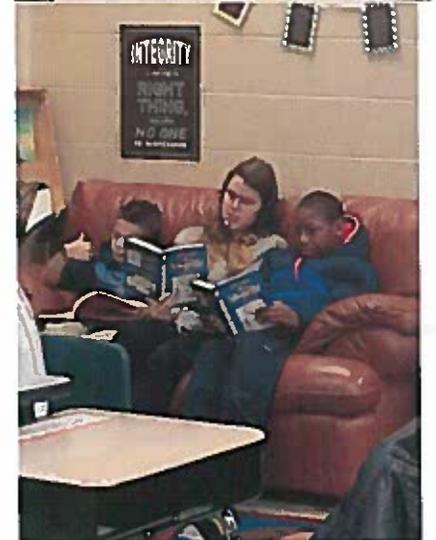
### Undergraduate Program in Special Education

#### Mentor-Led Cohort Model

On the undergraduate level, the foundation of the Georgia College initial certification programs is the mentor-led, field-based model of teacher preparation. Any mentor leader or student who has participated in our model of instruction will tell you that their cohort acts as their family on campus and the relationships formed last a lifetime. The faculty mentor leader strives to enhance collaborations and unity as we progress toward our common goal of becoming the best educators we can be. In this model, the mentor leader serves as a guide who knows the big picture of the progression toward becoming a teaching professional. We provide instruction and support the educational experiences for each individual student. The role of a mentor leader goes beyond classwork. We stay personally connected to our cohorts in aspects of life outside of education and beyond graduation. This spring, one of our mentor leaders will officiate the wedding of his former cohort student.

#### On-Site Literacy Strategy Class

One unique aspect of our undergraduate program is on-site Literacy Strategies course that is taught annually at Lakeview Academy. This course is taught in a way that is mutually beneficial to both the teacher candidates and the students with disabilities. The teacher candidates are provided with opportunities to work with actual students with disabilities implementing the specific literacy strategies taught in our class. The students with disabilities benefit from small group literacy strategy instruction and the teacher candidates benefit from implementing what they learn in class with actual students with disabilities. Everyone benefits from the relationships established between our teacher candidates and the students and both groups look forward to the interaction each week.



## Comprehensive System of Assessment

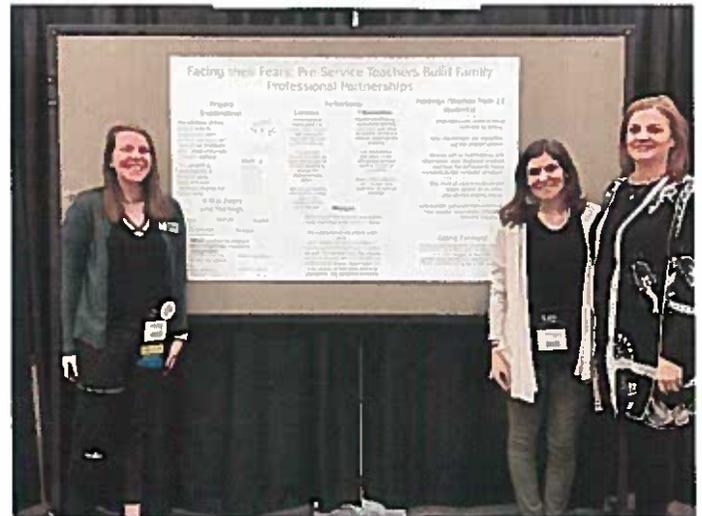
The Special Education program administers and collects data on eight program and unit assessments. The program faculty use the resulting data to (a) assess individual and collective student progress toward standards, and (b) use the data for program improvement. Vital to our field-based model is the integration of course content into field-based experiences. Of our eight assessments, six of them have field components that provide teacher candidates with opportunities to construct knowledge through the application and interpretation of course content in authentic settings. These applied opportunities, in conjunction with high quality mentoring, guide candidate development of targeted knowledge and skills needed for successful in-service practice.

### B.S. Special Education

Assessment	Course or Time Given
Foundations Notebook	EDEX 3110 Foundations in Special Education/ Fall Semester 1
FBA and BIP Projects	EDEX 4275 Individual and Classroom Management Semester 3 Fall
Teacher Work Sample	EDEX 4124 Instructional and Curriculum Planning for Mild Disabilities Semester 3 Fall
Progress Monitoring Project (formerly RTI Project)	EDEX 4276 Educational Assessment and Evaluation Semester 3 Fall
Family Collaboration Project	EDEX 3170 Culture Identity and Diversity in Teaching Semester 2 Spring
COE Ethics Module	EDEX 3002 Junior Field Placement II Semester 2 Spring
Field Experiences Assessment CAPS	Beginning Junior Fall Field Placement I      Medial Junior Spring Field Placement II      End Senior Spring Student teaching Internship
Professionalism Disposition Assessment PBDA	Beginning Junior Fall Field Placement I      Medial Junior Spring Field Placement II      End Senior Spring Student teaching Internship

## Sample Program Assessment

One program assessment that is particularly valuable and unique to our program is the Family and Professional Partnership Project. For this project, teacher candidates interview a parent of a child with disabilities from a different cultural background. Through this process, they discover some of the challenges faced by families affected by disability. They also learn strategies for translating this information into culturally relevant teaching practices. Additionally, this project challenges our candidates to consider their own biases and examine their own attitudes about working with parents and families of their students. Dr. DeClouette made a national presentation of this project along two teacher candidates.



## MAT Program in Special Education

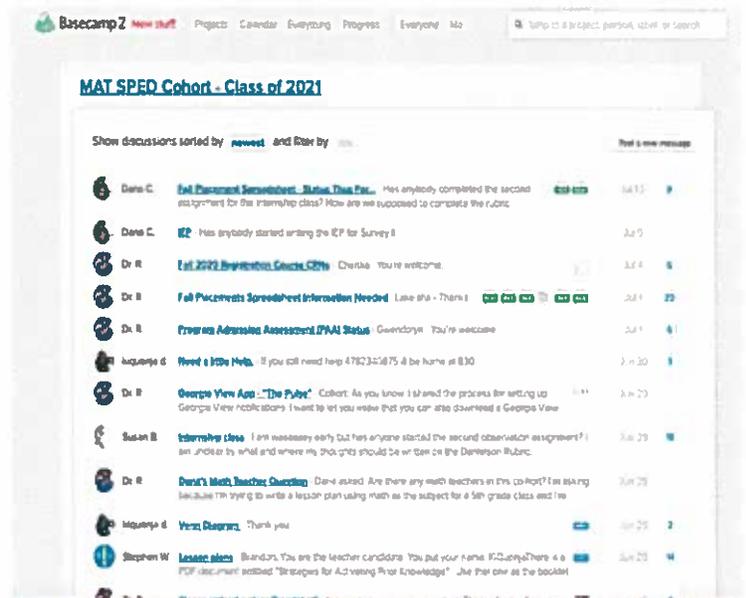
During the summer of 2019, the faculty at Georgia College completed the conversion of our MAT in Special Education program to a 100% online format. One of the aspects of our face-to-face program that made it successful was our cohort-based, mentor-led model of teacher preparation. The result was a successful close-knit learning community of students and faculty that supported each other not only academically but also in multiple aspects of life. As educators, we know that the creation of community increases the likelihood of student success whether it is in an online environment or a face-to-face environment. Our goal for our newly online MAT program was to maintain the student and faculty relationships of our face-to-face program while changing the format to online.

### Retained the Mentor-Led Cohort Model

We retained our mentor-led, cohort-based model in place for our fully online program. We currently have two cohorts of students. Each cohort takes all of their special education classes as a cohort. Each cohort is also assigned a mentor leader who will be with them throughout their journey in the program, teaching them at least one class per semester and serving as their “go to” person in times of need as well as times of celebration. Also, in retaining the cohort model, students are able to form relationships with each other and maintain contact in and out of class and make themselves available to each other and supportive of each other.

### Create an Outside Communication Platform

We created a space outside of our learning management system to maintain ongoing communication between students and faculty and among students themselves. In our MAT program, we use the *Basecamp* app for this purpose. In Basecamp, students and faculty can post messages to the group or select members of the group. The most impactful use of Basecamp is that if a student has a question about a class, they can post the question and either a professor or a fellow student can answer the question in a timely manner. Having students take ownership of each other’s questions is helpful for both students and professors. As professors, not having my email inbox flooded with the same question or news of the same non-functioning link, is certainly helpful to our productivity.

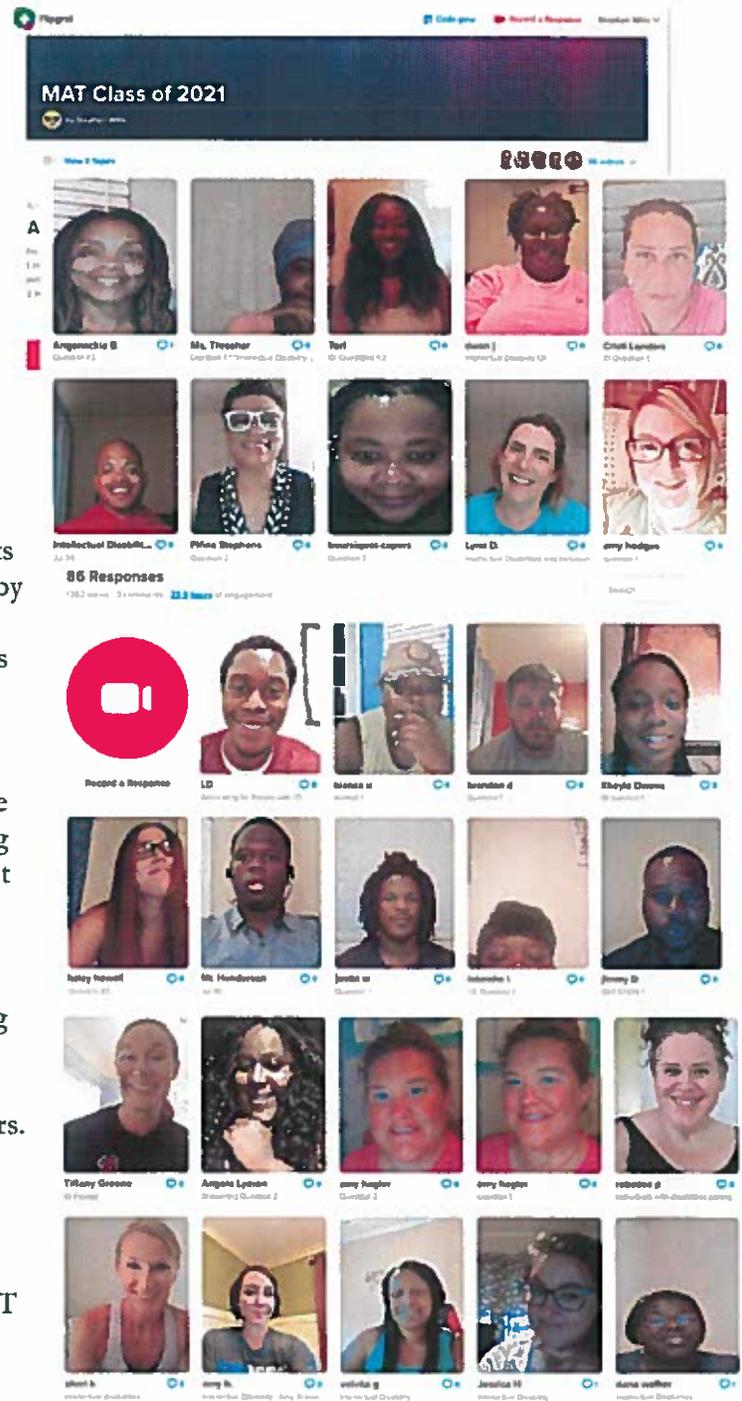


## Student Visibility

Students need to be visible to each other. Students being able to see and interact with fellow students usually helps them realize that they are not alone through this process and can be seen as members of the same team. In an attempt to make students visible to each other, we use the Flipgrid app to have video discussion boards. Many of our students were familiar with Flipgrid and were able to help each other. In addition, the Flipgrid app is user friendly on phones. When we compare the student engagement in traditional written discussion board versus video-based discussion boards, students are much more like to spend time viewing, rather than reading, the posts of others and responding to those posts. At the beginning of the program, many students are scripted and rehearsed in their video discussions; by the end of the first course, students are able to be themselves and feel comfortable sharing ideas in a less than perfect, more human, manner.

## Diversity

Our MAT program also adds needed diversity to the Georgia College student body as well as the teaching force. Our program has always been one of the most diverse on campus. While key initiatives of the university is to increase minority enrollment, we in the College of Education additionally recognize and value the need for increased diversity in the teaching field. We recognize that students of all ethnicities need to see diverse teachers and that students of color need to see “people like them” as their teachers. Finally, our MAT program fills a state need for quality special educators. Because of a lack of fully certified special educators, school systems are being forced to employ provisionally certified teachers to fill vacant positions. With the expansion of our MAT program, we are doing our part to ameliorate that need.



## M.Ed. Program in Special Education

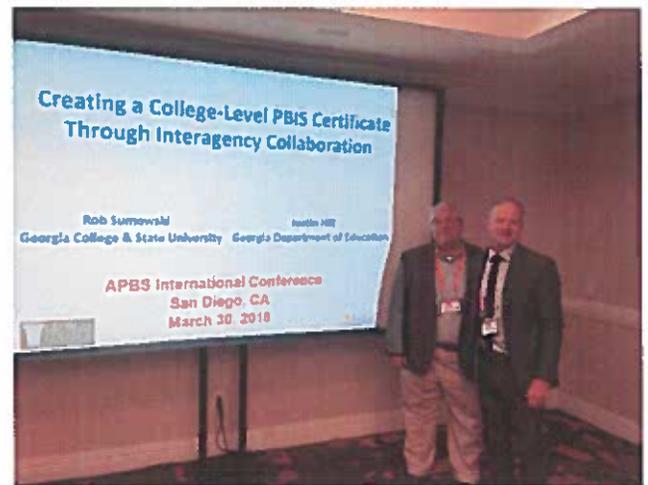
Our Master of Education (M.Ed) in Special Education program is practitioner focused, cross categorical, and covers instruction in grades P-12. The overall theme of the curriculum for this degree program is student behavior.

### Behavior Focus

Positive student achievement gains are regularly found when instruction is accompanied by effective classroom management and student behavior management. Conversely, the inability to manage student behavior is seen as a primary factor in teachers leaving the profession within five years at a rate close to 50%. During the M.Ed. Program, each student: a) completes an evaluation of school behavioral approaches for their schools, b) writes data driven functional behavioral analysis (FBA) for a student they teach, and c) use this data to develop a behavior intervention plan (BIP). The FBA and the BIP utilize positive supports and reinforce appropriate behaviors while avoiding punishment. A key goal in the development of this program is the positive approach to classroom and behavior management, avoiding the stereotypic loud voices and corporal punishment that is still associated with Georgia Schools in favor of de-escalation and reinforcement of positive behaviors.

### Embedded PBIS Endorsement

Georgia College's *Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Endorsement* is an innovative series of three online courses designed for teachers in real-world classrooms. *Project-based, rather than exam-based*, this program includes a substantial imbedded discussion component where teachers have an opportunity to network, share experiences and ideas, and learn from both faculty and fellow practitioners from around the state. This forum and the series as a whole, have been described as a breath of fresh air for sharing ideas and best practices that work in real-world classrooms. The PBIS Endorsement was written and is taught by Dr. Rob Sumowski who recently served on the Georgia Professional Standards Commission Task Force that led to the creation of Georgia's Endorsement in PBIS, the first of its kind in the country. In this role, he co-authored both the Georgia PSC's State PBIS Standards and Guidance Documents.

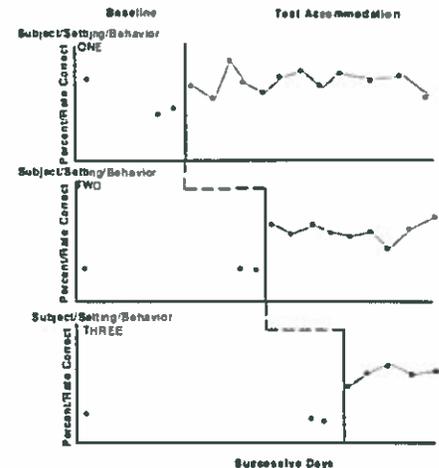


## Ed.S. Program in Special Education

The Ed.S program builds upon work completed at the master's level, targets the knowledge and skills for translating research into evidence-based practices with students with disabilities, and prepares advanced practitioners to be architects of change and leaders in the professional community.

### Single Subject Research

Much of the Ed.S. program is centered around the development of students' theses. As part of their thesis development, all students complete the IRB process, implement their studies, write their results and conclusions sections and disseminate their findings. One unique aspect of our Ed.S. program is that the design of nearly each of our theses is single-subject. In special education, a major part of the duty of a teacher is to provide interventions to a small number of students and monitor the ongoing progress of students before and after the implementation of an intervention. In our program, we teach Ed.S. students the process of resolving classroom issues using literature, and give them the knowledge, skills, and confidence to implement and collect data on the success of those interventions.



### Dissemination of Results

A second unique aspect of this program is that every student disseminates their thesis either through a conference presentation, journal submission, or through a school professional development session. The greatest impact of this program is that it works to address the research to practice gap in our schools, as a result of the thesis process and dissemination.

### Grant Writing to Implement Leadership Plans in Schools

At Georgia College, we recognize that teachers are the cornerstone of any initiative that improves teaching and learning. In the final semester of the program, Ed.S. candidates utilize the knowledge and skills that they have learned throughout the program and develop a leadership plan for themselves and complete a grant application to help implement their leadership plan. These grants allow teachers to develop and execute projects while also cultivating teachers' expertise to position them as leaders driving transformation in schools, districts, and states.

April Durel,

Congratulations! You have been awarded the CEC Mini-Grant!

The CEC treasurer will be sending your school a \$500 check with your name on it to go toward the supplies you need. We are sending it to the address on the application. The money should be there in a few weeks. We are also requesting that you send us pictures for our website when you get everything up and running with your new equipment.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Thank you for your service to children with disabilities,

Sincerely

The Georgia CEC Mini-grants Committee

### Study Abroad: Tanzania

In July 2019, Dr. DeClouette led her 3rd study abroad trip to Tanzania. The purpose of the Tanzania Study Abroad Program is threefold: 1) To expose students to East African geography, culture, and language (Swahili); 2) To observe and volunteer at local schools and community centers serving individuals with disabilities; and 3) To explore Maasai culture, in general, and their cultural understandings of disability in particular. By the end of the program, students articulate how Tanzanians construct understandings of disability and how those understandings translate into teaching practice and community inclusion/exclusion. Students also reflect upon what it means to be an American in an international context.

Students spend three days observing and participating in programs and classes at Sebastian Kolowa Memorial University, a university in Lushoto that is known for preparing and training special education teachers. In addition to volunteering at several schools serving students with intellectual disabilities, study abroad students also visit the following organizations:

- Shanga Shanga is a business that employs adults with disabilities in jewelry making, glass-blowing, painting, and weaving. Their products are sold throughout East Africa.
- The Plaster House is a place for children to rehabilitate after they come to the city for corrective surgeries (e.g., cleft lip, club foot, etc.). Since most Tanzanians live in rural villages, the Plaster House plays a vital role in children's recovery before they return home.
- Sibusiso is an organization that provides support for mothers and their babies born with physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy and spina bifida. The programming at Sibusiso teaches mothers how to provide physical therapy and fine-motor skills development once they return home.
- Selela Village is a rural Maasai village. Dr. DeClouette returns to the village each year to work with a grassroots parent organization on the goal of building a school for the Maasai children with disabilities, children who are otherwise excluded from attending school.



### Grants Received from Special Education Program Faculty (totaling \$189,260)

#### *2020 Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Fellowship and Mini Grant (\$500)*

Georgia College & State University - Center for Teaching and Learning.

Dr. Muschaweck wrote a funded research project related to teaching and learning.

***2019 Inclusive Postsecondary Education Implementation Grant (\$25,000)***

Georgia State University, Center for Leadership in Disability

Duration of Grant: October 2019 - September 2020

Drs. DeClouette and Sumowski co-wrote a funded grant to support the hire of a part-time program director to start the Inclusive Postsecondary Education program at Georgia College.

***2018 Inclusive Postsecondary Education Exploratory Grant (\$10,000)***

Georgia State University, Center for Leadership in Disability

Duration of Grant: January – September 2019

Drs. DeClouette and Sumowski co-wrote a funded grant to support travel for site visits to Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) programs in the southeast. It also supported travel to Georgia IPSE Consortium quarterly meetings and TPSID Project Director's Meeting in Boston.

***2018 Community-based Engaged Learning (C-bEL) Mini Grant: Best Buddies Gives Back (\$2,500)***

Georgia College & State University

Dr. DeClouette co-wrote (with GC Senior Director for Community Engagement, Kendall Stiles and Executive Director of the Life Enrichment Center, Barbara Coleman) a funded grant to support the RSO, Best Buddies. Grant funds supported Best Buddies participants (adults with intellectual disabilities and GC students) to perform various community service projects.

***2017 Community-based Engaged Learning (C-bEL) Master Grant: Be the Change You Wish to See in the World (\$30,000)***

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Dr. DeClouette co-wrote (with Executive Director of the Life Enrichment Center, Barbara Coleman) a funded grant to create meaningful inclusive opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities around Baldwin County and GC students. Students engaged in awareness training, created meaningful activities and service projects, and encouraged self-advocacy, self-awareness, and self-expression through planned activities.

***2017 Community-based Engaged Learning (C-bEL) Mini Grant: Building Bridges Between Georgia College and Tanzania (\$2,500)***

Georgia College & State University

Dr. DeClouette wrote a funded grant to support the development of an engaged learning experience in Tanzania for GC students studying abroad. The goals were: 1) to create well-developed reciprocal relationships with a university, a rural school, and a village that will be nurtured through the annual study abroad program; 2) to develop students who are informed global citizens through their active participation in community engagement in Tanzania; and 3) to develop students' critical reflection skills that they will continue to use throughout their lives.

***2017 Community-based Engaged Learning (C-bEL) Mini Grant: Establish and on-site Literacy Strategies course at GNETS of Oconee (\$2,500)***

Dr. Wills wrote a funded grant to purchase books, supplies and professional development needed to teach a GC Literacy Strategies class on-site at GNETS of Oconee, providing service learning opportunities that involved Special Education teacher candidates working with students with severe emotional behavioral disorders.

***2017 AWS Foundation Grant (\$100,000)***

Dr. DeClouette co-wrote (with Executive Director of the Life Enrichment Center, Barbara Coleman) a funded grant over four years to create the Creative Enrichment Center, where adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities engage with GC students in social/leisurely evening and weekend activities.

***2017 Faculty Research Grant: Cross-Cultural Diversity in Special Education (Tanzania) (\$1,260)***

Georgia College & State University

Dr. DeClouette wrote a funded grant to conduct semi-structured interviews in Tanzania with university students studying to become special education teachers, with caretakers of children with disabilities, and with adults with disabilities employed by Shanga.

***2016 International Development Grant (\$2,000)***

Dr. DeClouette wrote a funded grant awarded by the International Development Grant Committee to support a site visit to Tanzania to set up a yearly study abroad program.

***2015 Georgia Department of Education School Improvement Grant (\$13,000)***

Dr. Wills and Dr. Sumowski wrote a funded grant to establish and manage professional learning communities for professional development at the Georgia Academy for the Blind.

**Faculty Awards, Accomplishments, & Recognitions**

***2020 Georgia College's Academic Affairs Irene Rose Community Service Award.*** Dr. DeClouette was recognized for her community collaboration with the Life Enrichment Center.

***2020 Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Fellow.*** Dr. Muschaweck was chosen as a fellow, by the Center for Teaching and Learning, for her research project related to learning outcomes that involve expression of choice.

***2020 College of Education Powell-Whipple Award.*** Dr. Roddran Grimes was recognized by the College of Education at the COE Awards Ceremony for her community work with the Tim Tebow Night to Shine Planning Committee.

***2019 Georgia College's Academic Affairs Craig M. Turner Excellence in Service Award.*** Dr. Wills was recognized for his years of service to the COE, to the profession, and to GC.

***2018 Gulf South Summit Outstanding Service-Learning Collaboration in Higher Education Award.*** Dr. DeClouette was recognized with Life Enrichment Center Executive Director, Barbara Coleman, for their commitment to providing meaningful experiences for adults with intellectual disabilities and GC students through their numerous collaborations.

***2018 College of Education Powell-Whipple Award***

Dr. DeClouette and Life Enrichment Center Director, Barbara Coleman were recognized by the COE at the COE Awards Ceremony for their university-community partnership.

***2018 - Present: GC Active Learning Fellow.*** Dr. Wills is a current Active Fellow.

## **Awards and Accomplishments of Program Completers**

### **School District Teachers of the Year:**

- 2020-21 - Sandy Palmer, Oconee County Schools, GA
- 2018-19 - Modupeola Adebayo, Putnam County Schools, Eatonton, GA
- 2017-18 - Chance Scott, Jones County Schools, Gray, GA

### **School Teachers of the Year:**

- 2020-21 - LaShasta Raines Johnson, Mary Persons High School, Monroe County Schools, GA
- 2020-21 - Matthew Pelli, Berkmar Middle School, Gwinnett County Schools, GA
- 2020-21 - Abigail Norman, Winder Elementary School, Barrow County, GA
- 2020-21 - Rachel Van Dyke, Lambert High School, Gwinnett County Schools, GA
- 2020-21 - Sadie Staples Appling, Duluth Middle School, Forsyth County Schools, GA
- 2020-21 - Whitney Pape, Mableton Elementary School, Cobb County, GA
- 2019-20 - Jessica Johnson, Baggett Elementary School, Gwinnett County Schools, GA
- 2019-20 - Casey Barrow, Midland Park Primary School, Charleston Co. School District, SC
- 2018-19 - Laura Mobley, Winn Holt Elementary School, Gwinnett County Schools, GA
- 2017-18 - Brittney Faircloth, West Laurens High School, Laurens County, GA
- 2017-18 - Jamy Meeks, Jones County Pre-K, Jones County, GA
- 2017-18 - Autumn Chapman, Ninth Grade Academy, Jones County, GA
- 2015-16 - Alicia Jackson, Georgia Academy for the Blind, Bibb County, GA
- 2015-16 - Crystal Cumming, Skyview Elementary School,
- 2013-14 - Jessica Brown, Bibb County Schools, Bibb County, GA
- 2007-08 - Leah Bodnarchuk, Jones County High School, Jones County, GA

### **Other Accomplishments:**

2020 – April Durel: CEC Mini-grant (\$500) for Math Fluency software for Pharr Elementary School in the Gwinnett County School System.

2020 – Carrigan Flotlin: CEC Mini-grant (\$500) for computer headsets for Monroe County Middle School in the Monroe County School System

2019 – Erin Rose: CEC Mini-grant (\$500) school to work transition supplies for the Forsyth County Schools Project LIFE

2015 - Sarah Kukshel, Inaugural Georgia College Scholar of Distinction awarded to mentee and cohort graduate

2015 - Annie Haynes, Bright Ideas Grant from Flint Energies Corporation (\$998) to expand community-based instruction in Monroe County Schools, GA

## **Georgia PSC Ratings of the Georgia College Special Education Program**

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) collects data from our teacher candidates while in the program, as well as from our recent graduates who are special educators across Georgia. Using this data, the PSC annually publishes Preparation Program Effectiveness Measures (PPEMs) to hold Educator Preparation Programs accountable for the quality of educators they produce. The PPEM measures include teacher candidate scores on the GACE licensure content assessment, and

the edTPA, a national assessment of teaching, planning and assessment. PPEM measures also include employer surveys, graduate surveys, and teacher effectiveness TAPS scores of new teachers already in the field. PPEM scores range from 1-4. The College of Education (and the Special Education Program) earned a Level 4 (Exemplary) on 2018, 2019, and 2020 PPEM measures. This level is above the expected level of performance for effectively preparing future teachers and is the highest rating awarded. According to Penny McRoy, the educator preparation division director at GaPSC, “A Level 4 is reserved for those program providers whose performance was exemplary, and we will ask these providers to share their best practices with other Georgia program providers.”

**A) GACE Assessment Results**

GACE 081/082 are criterion-referenced Georgia licensure assessments and designed to measure teacher candidates’ knowledge and skills relative to special education professionals teaching students the general curriculum. The 2018, 2019 and 2020 results show that the mean score for our teacher candidates are higher than the scores for similar EPPS and our candidates are significantly more likely to pass at the professional level than other programs around the state.

GACE	2020		2019		2018	
	GC SPED	Similar EPPs	GC SPED	Similar EPPs	GC SPED	Similar EPPs
Average Score	264	263	264	262	264	262
Passed Professional	75%	71%	75.6%	70.3%	77.2%	71.9%
Passed Induction	25%	29%	24.4%	29.7%	22.8%	27.4%
Not passed	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2.7%

The green box indicates that GC Special Education Program meet or exceeded the ratings for Similar EPPs.

**B) edTPA Assessment Results**

Teacher candidates take the edTPA performance assessment during their student teaching internship. edTPA is a subject-specific standardized assessment of teaching currently used in approximately 40 states. This assessment is based on the cyclical relationship between planning, instruction, and assessment. The results from three years show that the mean score and pass rate for GC special education teacher candidates has been higher than similar programs around the state.

	2020	2019	2018
Pass Score	38	38	38
GC Pass Rate	100%	100%	100%
GC Average Score	46.05	45.75	45.60
Similar EPP Mean	45.45	45.30	43.65

**C) Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS) Results of Program Graduates**

Teachers in Georgia public schools are observed annually and their performance is assessed against an evidence-based rubric. The summative score captures their performance on 10 performance standards throughout the year. Ratings range from 1-4, with 4 being the highest rating and level 3 demonstrating proficiency. Results from three years show that the TAPS scores were higher for GC graduates than graduates of similar programs.

TAPS Scores	2020		2019		2018	
	GC SPED Program	Similar EPPs	GC SPED Program	Similar EPPs	GC SPED Program	Similar EPPs
Level 1	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Level 2	3.8%	4.0%	1.9%	2.7%	1.7%	2.8%
Level 3	94.3%	94.2%	96.3%	95.3%	96.6%	95.5%
Level 4	1.9%	1.8%	1.9%	2.1%	1.7%	1.7%

#### D) Principal Surveys of the Effectiveness of our Graduates

The GaPSC conducts employer surveys during the inductee's first year of employment in a Georgia public school. The 31-item survey is administered to employers about inductee teachers' capability and preparedness and is based on InTASC Standards. The survey utilizes a Likert scale: 4-Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree. The results show that the mean ratings of GC completers for each of the reported years was above a 3.00, demonstrating proficiency in all 31 survey items as well as across all 10 InTASC standards. Inductee survey scores were proficient across all programs and showed no significant areas of weakness. The results also show that for all three years, the mean survey scores for GC graduates is higher than graduates of similar programs.

INTASC Standard	2020		2019		2018	
	GC SPED	Similar EPPs	GC SPED	Similar EPPs	GC SPED	Similar EPPs
Standard 1: Learning Development	3.23	3.30	3.34	3.25	3.34	3.17
Standard 2: Learning Differences	3.34	3.15	3.42	3.37	3.49	3.30
Standard 3: Learning Environments	3.25	3.22	3.29	3.23	3.35	3.17
Standard 4: Content Knowledge	3.18	3.31	3.22	3.15	3.21	3.13
Standard 5: Application of Content	3.26	3.19	3.30	3.22	3.32	3.18
Standard 6: Assessment	3.30	3.20	3.31	3.21	3.34	3.14
Standard 7: Planning for Instruction	3.27	3.18	3.32	3.24	3.31	3.15
Standard 8: Instructional Strategies	3.28	3.26	3.27	3.23	3.29	3.19
Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice	3.35	3.33	3.42	3.34	3.44	3.33
Standard 10: Leadership and Collaboration	3.35	3.32	3.36	3.31	3.42	3.24

#### E) Surveys of our Graduates on the Effectiveness of the GC Special Education Program

The GaPSC administers a statewide completer survey that is similar to the employer survey. The goal of the survey is to assess program graduates on the essential knowledge, skills and dispositions they need to be effective teachers. The program completers are asked to complete the survey after the program completer's first year of teaching. The inductee survey scores were proficient across all programs and showed no significant areas of weakness. The results also show that for all three years, the mean survey scores are significantly higher for GC graduates than graduates of similar programs.

INTASC Standard	2020		2019		2018	
	GC SPED	Similar EPPs	CG SPED	Similar EPPs	GC SPED	Similar EPPs
Standard 1: Learning Development	3.48	3.34	3.53	3.27	3.44	3.18
Standard 2: Learning Differences	3.31	3.21	3.31	3.17	2.83	3.02
Standard 3: Learning Environments	3.69	3.39	3.61	3.29	3.33	3.17
Standard 4: Content Knowledge	3.63	3.42	3.42	3.24	3.00	3.06
Standard 5: Application of Content	3.65	3.37	3.55	3.25	3.25	3.16
Standard 6: Assessment	3.68	3.41	3.61	3.29	3.27	3.14
Standard 7: Planning for Instruction	3.90	3.56	3.73	3.41	3.33	3.25
Standard 8: Instructional Strategies	3.74	3.46	3.67	3.34	3.33	3.18
Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice	3.81	3.48	3.78	3.42	3.56	3.37
Standard 10: Leadership and Collaboration	3.80	3.48	3.81	3.44	3.67	3.30

#### State, National and International Conference Presentations with Students

**DeClouette, N. M. & Colquitt, E.** (2020, June). *Crossing the Paradoxical Intersection: Education and Poverty in a Maasai Village (Tanzania)* [Conference Session] Council for Exceptional Children Division of International Special Education and Services (DISES), Dubai, United Arab Emirates (Conference cancelled).

**DeClouette, N. M., Corley, C. & Brown, M.** (2020, February). *Facing Their Fears: Pre-Service Teachers Build Family Professional Partnerships* [Poster presentation]. Council for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo, Portland, OR.

**Wills, S., & Rubin, D.,** (2019). *Vocabulary strategies that work!*, Georgia Dept of Education IDEAS Conference, Georgia Department of Education, St. Simons Georgia.

**DeClouette, N. M., Coleman, B., Nunn, C., Jones, N. & Flotlin, C.** (2019, February). *Creative Enrichment Center: A Georgia College and Life Enrichment Center Collaboration* [Conference Session]. Council for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo, Indianapolis, IN.

**Wills, S., Daughtry, M. & Marrick, S.** (2018). *An onsite literacy strategies course: A win-win approach for teacher candidates and students with EBD.* 2018 Council for Exceptional Children Conference and Expo, Council for Exceptional Children, Tampa, Florida.

**DeClouette, N. M., Coleman, B., Walker, S., Mathis, A., Davis, T., Walker, S., Mathis, C.** (2018, August). *Creative Enrichment Center: A Georgia College and Life Enrichment Center Collaboration Educating College Students to Positively Impact the Future of Services for Adults with Disabilities* [Conference Session]. National Association of Qualified Developmental Disability Professionals (QDDPs) 23rd Annual Conference, Milwaukee, WI.

DeClouette, N. M., Colquitt, E. & Alonso, F. (2018, July). *Planting the Seeds: The Formation of a Grassroots Parent Organization in Selela Village (Tanzania)* [Conference Session]. Council for Exceptional Children Division of International Special Education and Services, Cape Town, South Africa.

DeClouette, N. M., Coleman, B., Mathis, A., Jones, N., & Montgomery, A. (2018, April). *Confronting the Legacy by Changing the Narrative: Adults with Disabilities Tell Their Own Stories through Art, Music, and Engagement with Georgia College Students* [Conference Session]. Gulf South Summit: Service Learning and Civic Engagement Through Higher Education, Birmingham, AL.

### Selected Student Comments

*"Dr. Wills is an excellent professor. His communication of our assignments were very clear and organized which made it easy to follow and complete. He answered all questions quickly. Dr. Wills' videos were informative and to the point. I appreciate how he has his lessons set up on Georgia View under Content...you always knew exactly what was due and what his expectations were. Dr. Wills has a strong work ethic and sets high expectations of us. He is friendly and easy to communicate with. Dr. Wills is definitely the best professor I have had in any of my college classes."*

*"Dr. Muschaweck is super knowledgeable about this content and provided an interesting perspective due to her time as a principal and her background in school psychology. Most of the projects/ assignments in this course were very helpful for me in learning to apply my knowledge and skills. She was also very flexible with us and provided us with extra support in areas we felt less confident in. She truly worked to make the course as beneficial for us as possible, and I feel I have very much grown in my skill set related to the course."*

*"Dr. Grimes has proven to be a supportive and knowledgeable professor. She has been professional throughout the entire course. I have enjoyed being under her guidance and instruction. If I had the opportunity, I would sign up for her class again without any hesitation. Overall, I had a great experience with this instructor and will definitely utilize what I have learned this semester."*

*"Nicole is by far the best professor I've had a GC. I love getting to be in her cohort. She takes sincere interest in her students and truly cares about us as individuals and as future educators. I know that I will be a better special educator because of Nicole's influence!"*

*"I felt that this class was one of the most beneficial that I have taken. Mrs. Crook truly cares for each one of her students and wants them to succeed. She gives a tremendous amount of help for students who need it. Her experience in the classroom has made her a great teacher for the cohort and one that you can learn a lot from."*

### Georgia College Council for Exceptional Children

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the recognized world leader in advocacy for children and youth with disabilities. The Georgia College CEC chapter is an active GC service organization and the largest student CEC chapter in the state with 35 members. Our students are involved in service projects in Baldwin County and surrounding communities. For example, we have donated wheelchair accessible playground equipment for a community park and we participate annually in the Tim Tebow Night to Shine Prom for community members with disabilities

