Georgia College students with EPA for community-based learning opportunities

A new partnership between Georgia College and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will bring together academic and federal agencies to advance economic development in central Georgia’s rural and small communities.

Georgia College signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the EPA to participate in the EPA’s Community-Engaged Education Partnership (ENGAGE)计划, which seeks to run a cooperative working relationship in areas of mutual interest. The agreement focuses on the following areas: environmental justice, sustainability, energy, public health disparities, environmental monitoring and remediation, socioeconomic issues, sustainable food systems and community development.

Also in an agreement to support school and communities in the CIPP program, the EPA signed an agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Region 4 Office of Public Health and state directors from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

According to Georgia College President Hester Minter-Toney, "Partnerships with HHS and USDA strengthens those skills and talents, and allows us to expand support through the College/Undergraduate.

Senior Whitney Gray's time at Georgia College can best be described as a transformative experience. "Looking back at my entire week, I think I could write that," said the English major." It's been amazing how much my writing has changed from freshmen year to now, and it's because professors I've had along the way who have challenged me.

Whitney Gray was first place for her piece, "Sweet Something," in the Margaret Mary Wilson Writing Award competition, taking home $1,000 for her manuscript. Gray's poem is about a woman who is portraying herself in a character role, like she did in "Sweet Something." "I like to switch back and forth between writing personal pieces, and for this one I was thinking of my current relationship," said Gray. "I write that way." For Gray, sharing experiences through writing is what she's grown up doing. Her works include both poetry and fiction. "She also placed one time with them that has made the difference in my work."

Dr. Runee Sallad, principal GCEC, also takes part in the creation of Theatre as Social Change. "Theatre as Social Change is a GC2Y course that involves Georgia College Early College (GCEC) students. The purpose of the course is to provide GCEC students with the liberal arts mission and the engaged learning experiences that connect students with the local community and the students involved in the program. Community partners receive resources and expertise of university students, faculty and staff. Students who participate in the program gain professional experience working with city officials, community organizations, environmental professionals and other stakeholders to solve challenges faced by rural communities."

"This is by definition a great community-based engaged learning opportunity for our students," said Dr. Julie Metzker, director of ENGAGE, Georgia College's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Program. "By entering into this agreement, our students will now have specialized opportunities for community-based research projects especially in the areas of science and public policy."

Georgia College and the EPA will focus on the city of Eatonton initially through their partnership. Areas of interest include sewer issues and excessive water loss, storm water control, youth development and job creation.

"I am extremely excited about the possibilities that such a partnership presents," said Eatonton Mayor John Reid. "The potential benefits for all involved, especially the students, can reap benefits beyond our imaginations. I look forward to seeing it come to fruition."

Currently 13 schools in Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee and Florida participate in CIPP, as well as 22 underserved cities and communities. The EPA Region 4 has 55 active MOUs for this program.

Did You Know?

• Georgia College students teamed up with Communities in Schools to bring information sessions on computer safety and cyber bullying to 6th and 7th grade students at Red Eagle Elementary School last week. Students that participated in the week of sessions and workshops include Haynes Holmes, Anne Lister, Brian Elvert, Rachel Rowland, Benjamin Boursal, Kaelin Brown, Jessica Perez and Christine Smith. These students developed learning materials to present to their peers at school and the families of the dos and don’ts of online activities. They also hosted a coloring contest for the elementary students.

• The Watson-Brown Foundation Board of Trustees, Millidgeville Chapter has selected its board of directors to serve for the 2014-2015 academic years. They are Carolina Anderson, Morae, Terrence Banks, Millidgeville, Clarae Delak, Marian, Caroline Freeman, Walter, Marcella Honey bee, Millidgeville, Anahit Mehranian, Millidgeville, Sagarika Reddy, Millidgeville, Ronge Rustad, Millidgeville, Roy Wold, Millidgeville, and Cheyang Zhu, Eatonton.

Many people in middle school and high school are trying to find a place in this world, and there is a Georgia College course that helps them navigate that road. Theatre as Social Change is a GC2Y course that involves Georgia College theatre and pediatric nursing students working with Georgia College Early College (GCEC) students. The purpose of the course is to discuss different health issues that concern teens. The GC students create topics that will be explored in a performance.

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