GSU education programs foster wave of success in area schools

Students at Cottage Grove Middle School in Ford Heights, like these two, above, are working extremely hard in the classroom and have substantially raised their Illinois Goals Assessment Program test scores. They, along with students at Orville Bright Elementary in Chicago have benefited from the assistance of staff, faculty and students at Governors State.

Two schools in the south metropolitan region have reason to rejoice following release of the Illinois Goals Assessment Program test scores. District 169’s Cottage Grove Middle School in Ford Heights and Orville Bright Elementary School on Chicago’s south side, two schools where the percentage of low income students surpasses 94 percent, saw substantial jumps in their students’ IGAP scores.

Governors State University, focusing on its primary mission of education, is deeply involved with both of the school programs by implementing and operating educational assistance at both sites.

In District 169, students’ reading scores went up 15 points for sixth graders and 28 points for eighth graders, while their math scores went up eight points for sixth grade and 17 points for eighth grade students.

GSU has been committed to helping the students at Cottage Grove through a unique pro-

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program entitled Learning in Context (LIC).
LIC, which began in 1996, is an educational program founded through an agreement with GSU, Prairie State Community College, the Ford Heights Community Board, School District 169 and the Community Economic Development Agency of Cook County.

Hundreds of students in School District 169 receive tutoring and services through LIC from several people from the GSU family, including people from staff, Student Affairs and Services, Student Life, Student Development, the Registrar’s Office and the Office of Admissions. Students ranging in age from 12 to 25 years within the Ford Heights community who achieve a required academic and attendance record are virtually guaranteed a four-year higher education scholarship starting at Prairie State and finishing at GSU.

As a community operating with a 97 percent low-income population, the program is an added incentive to strive for an education.

Dr. Willie Davis, superintendent at District 169, says the success of the school district has achieved ties in directly with the LIC program.

“There is absolutely no question about it,” said Davis. “When you get children on a one-on-one basis, you can literally attack the skills that the students may possibly lack, and we make the tutors that come from Governors State part of our team. There is an absolute correlation between the successes here and the work of Learning in Context.

“Learning in Context is more than an academic program; it’s an economic tool. Educational status of individuals goes hand-in-hand with economic status as (the students) become job-ready and receive employment,” Davis said.

At Bright School, IGAP scores have shown a very similar increase to those of District 169. On the reading portion of the test, sixth grade students scored 25 points higher than last year’s scores, while eighth graders bumped theirs up 21 points.

On the math portion of the exam, both the sixth and eighth grade students improved ten points over last year.

With a mobility rate of 30 percent and a low-income rate of 95 percent, students are producing scores equivalent to the state average. The Illinois low income state average is 36.3 percent. GSU’s involvement at Bright School has been substantial in that students from both Bright School and GSU are receiving an education at the same time.

This year, 13 students are taking elementary education courses through GSU at the facility for the first part of the day. During the second half of the day, GSU students go into the classrooms and help faculty teach such subjects as social studies and math. A cooperative partnership exists between GSU and Bright Elementary which combines teaching/learning theory with actual classroom practice.

Classroom teachers at Bright receive one-credit tuition waivers for each trimester in which they supervise a preservice teacher.

Dr. Victor Toewish, principal at Bright, says the relationship with GSU has been a big help in more ways than test scores.

“I think that you can’t have enough assistance in a school, because education is partly about getting as many people as possible to come in and help out. And that definitely includes GSU.

“The program has helped teachers assist in individualizing instruction and permitting them to create small groups to work with,” said Toewish. “Our youngsters receive the cutting edge of educational concepts. Whenever you bring thoughts and ideas to the classroom, it helps.”

This successful learning environment at Bright School also translates to the GSU students operating in the learning lab, who say their experiences operating in a Chicago Public School system are invaluable.

GSU student Colleen Unrath of Homewood, who is pursuing a degree in special education from the College of Education, said she likes the experience gained in the classroom. I love to work with the kids in an active environment. The things that you learn here, you get to apply right away.”

Katie Cesiaik of Tinley Park, another GSU student working in the learning lab at Bright, echoed Unrath’s statements, adding that making contact and formulating relationships with the kids has been a positive.

“It’s a great experience, and it’s extremely gratifying to work with the kids,” Cesiaik said. “You look forward to seeing them each day.”

Icons

Teaching

Service

Technology

Diversity

@govst.edu will always report accomplishments that help GSU meet its mission statement. Look for these icons which will indicate stories that directly relate to GSU’s four goals.
Black Colleges and Universities Fair a first for GSU

The Hall of Governors was elbow-to-elbow on Friday, Nov. 13, as more than one thousand prospective students attended the first Black Colleges and Universities Fair at Governors State University.

Representatives from approximately forty traditionally African American schools around the country took the time to talk to students, answering any questions they might have had, and giving them the information that might help them make a final decision on where they go to college in the fall.

There was also an opportunity to educate the prospective students on the specifics of obtaining a college loan.

Brenda Hooker, a financial aid representative from Chicago State, spoke to a packed house in Engbretson Hall, laying out the examples for academic requirements as well as the several financial aspects and obstacles new students may encounter.

Students were then given the option to ask any questions they had on either of the subjects.

Georgia Blackstone, coordinator of the event through her program, Educational Talent Search, said the students were on their best behavior.

"I think everything went fine. We had 909 kids come from high schools in the area by school bus, and we had another 150 just walking in by themselves," Blackstone said.

"As is with the first time for anything, there are some glitches, but we can work through those." Pat Carter, dean of Student Affairs and Services, was also pleased with the turnout.

"It was wonderful to see so many kids here," said Carter. "I think it went well, and the kids were incredibly well-behaved."

The fair was also a chance for a former faculty member to come back and see Governors State.

Dr. Alma Vinyard, former professor in the College of Arts and Sciences, was on campus in an advisory role for Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Ga.

"It was nice to come back and visit Governors State and see how well it's doing," Vinyard said. "It's a good feeling."

Computer tech center coming to Ford Heights

Students and community members in Ford Heights will soon have a chance to learn or add on to their computer skills starting next year.

In a cooperative agreement between Ford Heights School District 169, Ford Heights Library District, Ford Motor Company and Governors State University, a new community technology center will open up at Cottage Grove Middle School in Ford Heights.

Ford Motor Company has already purchased twenty computers and other necessary equipment at a value of $40,000 for the new center, to be opened some time in January. Staff from District 169 has been working hard painting and wiring the room to handle the computers, while Ford has already accepted delivery of the units.

GSU has served as the grants administrator for the project.
Happenings

New faces at GSU

The GSU community welcomes the several new faces who have joined us in recent months:

--Sheryl Davidson 
CELCS

--Joyce Allen 
CELCS

--Jean A. Maher 
CELCS

--Martha Menninger 
CELCS

--Achieng Obuong 
CELCS

--Jennifer Warren 
CELCS

--Tiffany Boyd 
CELCS

--Paul A. Erling 
CELCS

--Marva Hampton 
CHP

--Kenneth Pearson 
ITS

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Transfer Day/Open House keeps growing

Pat Carter, Dean of Student Affairs Services, addresses an attentive crowd during transfer day in Engbreton Hall.

The turnout for GSU’s annual Transfer Day/Open House was considered a success, with more than 250 students and fifty parents coming out to the university on a sunny Saturday.

According to Michael Toney, executive director of enrollment services, the event went well. "The event was excellent. We feel that it went very well, and it showed what can be done when you have people on campus working together as a team," Toney said. "We had representatives from all of the colleges, student affairs and public affairs. And from all indications from the information we received, the feedback stated it was a very successful event. There were more prospective students than were here last year, every year it’s getting better.” Of the prospective students in attendance, Toney said most of the students in attendance were transfer-bound from a community college, and that more than sixty applications were received that day.

Toney said it appears another transfer day will take place in the spring of 1999. Toney said the spring event would focus more on the “early intervention” of high school students planning to attend community colleges. “We really want to focus on (early intervention) and invite the high school students out here. We want to expose them as early as possible to GSU and make use of the articulation agreements we have with their community colleges,” Toney added. “Forty to fifty percent of current high school students are estimated to attend community college institutions. We want to show that GSU is a healthy and viable option.”

"A Christmas Carol"

The Center for Performing Arts is hosting Charles Dickens’ beloved Christmas classic, “A Christmas Carol,” Dec. 20 at 3 p.m. The show will have the added special effects of Franz Haray to enhance the experience. Tickets for the show are $29.50 for adults, and $19.50 for children 16 and under. Come and enjoy Dickens’ great tale and some wonderful Christmas carols as part of the holiday season.
Ecosystem partnership receives funding from state to continue research projects

The Thorn Creek Ecosystem Partnership recently received some excellent news following the state’s distribution of funding through the Conservation 2000 program. The ecosystem partnership has received financing and is going ahead with plans to study and purchase an integral wetlands site that acts as headwaters for Butterfield Creek. These efforts are possible through Conservation 2000’s awarding of two grants to the Butterfield Creek Steering Committee and the Butterfield Creek Watershed, both part of the Thorn Creek Ecosystem Partnership.

Butterfield Creek flows through the communities of University Park, Richton Park, Matteson, Olympia Fields, Flossmoor, Homewood, Chicago Heights and Glenwood. It acts as a tributary to Thorn Creek, its final destination. Research through Governors State University identified the wetland site, adjacent to the intersection of Old Plank Road and Central Avenue in Matteson. Acting as a headwaters for Butterfield Creek, keeping the land in its native state would help control flooding along the creek. Research indicates that during instances of rain, it is better to allow the water to permeate the soil instead of being channeled down the creek.

As made apparent by the deluge of rain that fell in 1997 causing heavy damage, alternative ways of dealing with rainfall instead of the more traditional ways of retention and channeling are welcome suggestions. Peggy Glassford, head of the Butterfield Creek Steering Committee, said the hard work and efforts of the Thorn Creek partnership have provided invaluable information and research.

“This site acts as a sponge. It’s a natural storage site for rainwater. If the area is not preserved, it’s estimated that flooding effects could increase more than 500 percent in the future,” Glassford said. “Identifying the area has been key.”

Dick Mariner of the Butterfield Creek Steering Committee said the work with Dr. Jon Mendelson and Dr. Karen D’Arcy, both instrumental in the Thorn Creek project, has supplied direction for the project. Mendelson is the chief grants contact for the project.

“I’ve been really impressed with the way the group comes together, gets acquainted with the people and the information, and understands how to take the next logical step,” Mariner said. “Now it’s up to all of us to come up with a plan of action.”

GSU Alums travel abroad

Several alums recently "took over" France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Luxembourg, traveling to several countries as part of the group’s first-ever European tour. Director of Alumni Relations Rosemary Hulett-Porter, center, and other alums took time to pose next to a classic automobile. Next year’s trip may be to Greece.

Prisoner civil rights videotape produced

The Communication Services Department at Governors State University has recently completed a videotape project entitled "Filing Prisoner Civil Rights Cases in the Federal Courts."

The project was initiated by Judge Marvin Aspen, chief judge of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, when he phoned Dr. O.W. Goldenstein, division chair for GSU’s College of Arts and Sciences, and Mike Mahoney of the John Howard Association. The Chicago Bar Association also assisted in production efforts.

The 25-minute film was produced to educate prisoners of their rights when filing cases in the federal court system.

Aspen’s motivation was spurred when recent changes in the Prison Litigation Reform Act may have gone unnoticed, leaving prisoners not understanding their rights. The result could be prisoners paying for any charges while they have a slim chance of even being heard.

The videotape is set for distribution to prisons in Illinois and throughout the country.

Columbus monument to be cited in report

Governors State University and one of its several recognizable works of art have made their way into a national publication.

GSU’s carillon tower will be featured prominently in a National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) publication featuring monuments constructed in tribute to Christopher Columbus. The NIAF report of Columbus monuments is expected to be released to the media in October 1999.

GSU’s carillon tower is one of more than 48 monuments that have...
The Nutcracker coming to Center for holidays

The Center for Performing Arts is giving residents of Chicagoland a chance to see Salt Creek's ballet, "The Nutcracker" as performed by principal dancers of the American Ballet Theater of New York. There are two chances to come and see the special holiday event. There is a matinee show at 1 p.m. and an evening performance at 5 p.m.

Tickets are $21.50 for adults and $15.50 for children 16 and under. Don't miss the chance to see a nationally renowned dance company perform a classic here at Governors State. For additional information, contact the theater box office at 708-235-2222 or visit the box office adjacent to The Center entrance.

Veronica Hunt
November Employee of the Month

The November Employee of the Month is Veronica Hunt. On the nomination ballots for Hunt, the description of her work has common threads. "Energetic," "helpful," "motivated" and "friendly" appear throughout her nomination.

Hunt, who works as a secretary in the Provost's office, has been at Governors State University for one year and nine months, coming to the university after working as a senior secretary at Household International. And according to Deborah Holdstein, professor of English and rhetoric in the College of Arts and Sciences, Hunt is more than able to handle an intense workload.

"Veronica is not only extremely skilled, but kind and helpful. She is reliable, efficient, trustworthy, knowledgeable and helpful."

Another nomination, submitted by Program Administrative Assistant Loretta Haddox, stated that Hunt's "willingness to please, accommodate and assist the university staff and the community as a whole is highly commendable."

According to Hunt, her job is made easier having a kind and hard-working group of co-workers around her.

"Everyone is very nice, and we all have a really good working relationship," Hunt said. "The work is fast paced, but it's exhilarating and satisfying as well. I really enjoy the people I work with.

Hunt lives with her husband of 14 years, James. She has two boys, Matthew, 13, and Joshua, seven.

Employee of the Month Award winners receive a certificate of appreciation, a $150 check and tickets to a show at The Center for Performing Arts. Each employee of the month is eligible for the Employee of the Year award.
Civil Service Senate Day entertainment

Many civil service members of Governors State took time to enjoy several events during Civil Service Senate Day on Nov. 20. Among the activities was the Fabulous Salami Brothers, above, who performed at The Center for Performing Arts.

Glen Campbell helps Foundation with special plans for a Country Christmas on Dec. 5

Grammy Award-winner Glen Campbell will be at The Center for Performing Arts for two shows on Dec. 5.

The concert, aptly titled “Glen Campbell's Country Christmas,” will include several holiday music favorites, as well as his original favorites such as “Gentle on my Mind,” “By the Time I Get to Phoenix,” “Wichita Lineman” and many more.

The concert will benefit the Governors State Alumni Foundation, a foundation responsible for distributing several scholarships to hard working GSU students each year.

Shows are at 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. Tickets are $29.50 for adults, and $19.50 for children 16 and under.

For further information on the concert, contact The Center at (708) 235-2222, or stop by the box office near the entrance to the theater.

Alumni news

Alumni continue to achieve

Governors State University congratulates alumni as they gain success. GSU proudly announces recent achievements of its alumni:

- Brian E. Murphy, graduate of Governors State University, was appointed as partner at Grant Thornton, LLP, specializing in state and local taxation.

- Dorothy Griggs, master’s graduate of GSU, accepted the position as a learning disabilities teacher at Holmes School in Maercker Elementary, District 60.

- William E. August, who achieved a master’s degree in business administration from GSU, was appointed vice president and audit director of Chicago Title Corporation. August is responsible for the company’s internal audit function.

- Colleen Casey, who earned a bachelor’s degree from GSU, accepted the position of social worker at Lyon’s Township High School, District 204.

- Debbie Collins, master’s graduate in educational administration, accepted the position of development learning teacher in the special education department at Eisenhower High School, District 218.

The GSU community sincerely extends the best of luck and wishes to all.
GSU faculty to take part in teleconference

Governors State University is taking part in a national videoconference entitled “Blacks and Latinos in Higher Education: Coalition or Competition?”

The teleconference, slated for Dec. 2, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the University of Illinois - Chicago, takes a close look at how the two largest minority populations in the United States are addressing potential for their achieving unprecedented educational, political, economic and social progress within a higher education setting.

GSU faculty members Glen Abbott and Michael Toney will be serving as local panelists during a planned one-hour and 30-minute question and answer period. The event is cosponsored by the Illinois Council for College Attendance, Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education, the Illinois Committee on Black Concerns in Higher Education and Professionals for Latino Recruitment in Higher Education.

Meet... Patrick Ormsby

If you’re looking for someone who knows what the south suburban area is all about, search no further than Patrick Ormsby. He is the president of Bimba Manufacturing, constructors of pneumatic actuators that work in everything from automated computer chip assemblers to Disney theme park characters. Bimba’s local sites are in Frankfort and Manteno, with headquarters here in University Park. His early years were spent in Homewood, where his mother still lives in the same house he grew up in. He and his wife now live in Olympia Fields.

With that kind of diverse community background, Ormsby’s knowledge of the region as well as his business acumen make him an ideal fit for the foundation board at Governors State University. According to Ormsby, he was asked to be on the board by GSU President Paula Wolf after attending a local business luncheon “quite some time ago.”

Since then, he has managed to land a spot as vice president of fundraising for the university foundation board and is a member of the advisory board for the school of business. GSU gets to benefit from Ormsby’s business skills when he lends his hand to the foundation and their fundraising efforts.

“They’ve asked that I provide some leadership to help put it together; and from a strategic point of view we’ve had some success. Project management applies to my work at Governors State. We know what the expectations are, and we lay out a plan of action on how to meet them.”