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2-9-2022

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Recommended Citation

Office of Marketing and Communications, "Finding love at GSU" (2022). *Newsroom*. 73.
<https://opus.govst.edu/newsroom/73>

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University Park, IL,
February
09,
2022

Finding love at GSU



It's February and love is in the air at **Governors State University** (GSU). But love is meant to be shared and that could be challenging as the spring semester kicks into full swing. Calendars are packed, and to-do lists are long. Do busy hearts grow fonder?

The **GSU Newsroom** asked with three Jaguar couples who met their sweethearts and longtime lovers as colleagues or while earning their degrees here at GSU. All three couples opened up about how to keep their connection strong while meeting all the responsibilities that life brings.

Rob and Sarah Solon



The first couple, Rob and Sarah Solon, met in a GSU Honors Program course, Writing Studies I. They are both seniors who will be graduating from the College of Health and Human Services and are coming up on their two-year wedding anniversary in April. While the two are looking forward to the milestones this year, they have not been untouched by the tensions of college dating.

“It can be difficult to juggle a new relationship on top of a job and a demanding college course load, among other responsibilities at home,” said the two, who both plan to go on to graduate school in their respective fields - Rob in Community Health and Sarah in Psychology. However, they find that healthy communication is the key to balancing home-and-college life.

“If something big is coming up in a class, such as a project, we communicate that,” Rob said. They offer the same advice for dealing with hardships such as finances, poor health, and the loss of loved ones, which they believe have made their bond stronger than ever before. “We’ve had a lot of points where we were tested, but when we hit low moments we teeter totter back and forth in support of each other.”

Lisa and Luke Helm



Lisa and Luke Helm, who've been married for 10 years and have been GSU colleagues for more than 25, also stressed the importance of communication. It's been vital over the years, as the two have juggled work, volunteer and home commitments, including taking care of foster kids. They have also taken occasional classes as well. In addition to communicating, how else does the couple cope? Luke, Institutional Advancement Officer, said "in the best of all possible worlds, you create a routine and you keep to it."

"For example, we try to go for a walk in the evening after dinner. That's a decompressing time for us," he said. "In the worst case, if you're not keeping a routine, one of you is self-correcting and saying 'we need to stop working for a bit.'"

It's also helpful that they both work at the same place since they have a chance to talk on their way to and from work. They both also typically have the same busy seasons.

"If I worked at a school district and Luke worked at a law firm, we'd never see each other," said Lisa, Program Director from the Office of the Provost.

Dr. Jintong Tang and husband Dr. Shaji A. Khan



Alumni Dr. Jintong Tang ('03) and her husband Dr. Shaji A. Khan ('01), who met at the university a month after Tang began her first semester, have turned to co-authoring publications together as a form of bonding.

"My colleague once said 'oh, you and your husband write papers together? To me that is the most romantic thing in the world,'" she said. "Then I realized yeah it is. We've been working together a lot."

"That's the fortunate part about having both husband and wife in academia," she said. "We both know how to serve students and we are also each other's best critics."

Despite their demanding jobs as university professors, the two also continue to connect over a value they equally hold dear: family.

"We are always on the same page as it relates to family values," she said. "He's Indian and I'm Chinese and it is our tradition and our family value to take care of our aging parents for example."

These three couples started off as colleagues and classmates, but soon committed to one another and to reaching their goals, both professional and personal. Their dedication is remarkable during a month filled with passion to inspire us all year long.