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Illinois Lieutenant Governor visits GSU

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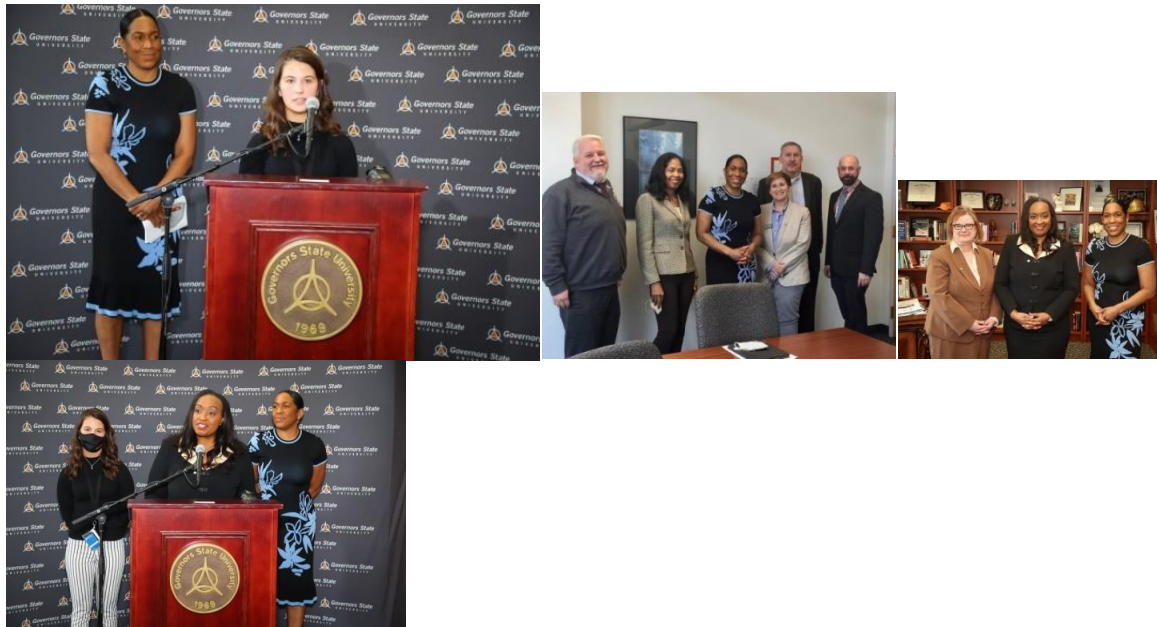
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University Park,
April
15,
2022

Illinois Lieutenant Governor visits GSU



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Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton met with [Governors State University's](#) (GSU) faculty, staff and students Tuesday, where they talked about the need to focus on retention for teachers and educators of color amid a state and country-wide teacher shortage.

Illinois school districts revealed that 88% of schools say they have a teacher shortage problem, according to a recent study, with a National Education Association study finding that people of color make up large percentages of individuals wanting to leave the profession early. These facts inspired Stratton to embark on a statewide tour, which brought her to GSU on April 12.

“I think one of the statistics I heard of was that any students of color end up leaving the profession within five years and we know that has been exacerbated because of the pandemic,” Stratton said at a press conference following their meeting. “So we have to listen to educators to find out what more can be done to stay in the classroom, teaching our students, as well as making sure there is a diverse pipeline coming along the way that those teachers mentor.”

She spent the morning with GSU’s cabinet before meeting with administrators and students. For Stratton those conversations were an important first step in addressing the shortage.

“I think what we have to do first and foremost is we have to listen to those that are closest to this issue,” she said at a press conference following their meeting. “That includes the students who are in teacher preparation programs and it includes those that are teaching and leading and facilitating these programs, like the administration here at GSU and other institutions.”

President Dr. Cheryl Green noted the efforts already underway at GSU, which were made possible by the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Act,

signed into law July 28. The legislation directed \$1.1 million to the university for [training, mentorships and scholarships for early childhood workforce professionals to pursue advanced credentials](#) over the next two years. So far, the funds have been used to create a Masters of Arts program that has over a dozen students. It'll also help fund the creation of a Bachelor of Arts program slated for the fall. Both programs have been designed to accommodate busy work schedules, offering weekday evening and Saturday morning courses in addition to an option to perform coursework online. Student will be eligible to receive financial aid for their education and they will also have access to academic support via the Writing Center and the Academic Resource Center.

Recently the university has also received another financial contribution that'll help bolster it's early childhood programming. [The Community Foundation of Will County Amazon gave the university a \\$60,000 grant](#). It will be used to develop and launch an eighteen-month paraprofessional to early childhood educator career pathway program. It'll help fill a void in schools and early childhood centers.

In her remarks about these efforts, Green said: "I am excited to promote educational opportunities for rural students, marginalized students, underrepresented minorities, women and all the citizens of Illinois," she said.

Haley Pallela, who represented students at the press conference and is President of GSU's Education Association, applauded GSU's dedication to education training.

"GSU has provided me with the knowledge and skills needed through our intensive course work, meaningful field experience and supportive faculty," she said. "Becoming a teacher is more important than ever."