

Profile: Founding Dean of the College of Optometric Medicine

Georgia Southern University seeks an entrepreneurial and visionary academic leader to serve as the Founding Dean of its new College of Optometric Medicine. This is a rare opportunity to establish and lead Georgia's only College of Optometric Medicine from its earliest stages of development through accreditation and enrollment. Supported by a nearly \$30 million state investment, the Founding Dean will shape the College's vision, academic programs, clinical partnerships, facilities and culture while recruiting its founding faculty and staff. The Dean will play a pivotal role in increasing access to eye care across Georgia, particularly in rural and underserved communities, and in building a lasting legacy for the profession, the University and the state.

The College of Optometric Medicine is being established at a pivotal moment for healthcare education and workforce development. Growing demand for vision and eye care services, coupled with the need to expand access in underserved communities, has created an opportunity for Georgia Southern University to launch a transformative new professional school. As Georgia's only college of optometry, the College will prepare future generations of practitioners, foster innovation in patient care, and serve as a catalyst for improved health outcomes throughout the state and region. The Founding Dean will have a unique opportunity to shape a college whose impact will be felt for decades to come.

The Dean will report directly to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and serve as a member of the university's senior academic leadership team. As the College's inaugural Dean, the successful candidate will serve as the chief architect of a new professional school and will lead the development of a contemporary Doctor of Optometry program that reflects the nation's best practices and prepares graduates to meet evolving healthcare needs. Working closely with university leadership, healthcare providers, professional associations, government officials and community partners, the Dean will establish a strong foundation for long-term success while advancing Georgia Southern's mission of educational excellence, research, service and community impact.

Candidates should possess an earned Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) degree from an ACOE-accredited program, or an equivalent terminal degree with substantial experience in optometric education; a record of scholarly achievement and leadership consistent with appointment at a senior faculty rank; and progressively responsible leadership experience in higher education, healthcare, or professional education settings. Experience with accreditation, strategic planning, program development, faculty recruitment, and external partnership building is highly desirable.

Applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Application materials should include a curriculum vitae and a letter of interest addressing the leadership opportunities and qualifications outlined for the position. All inquiries, expressions of interest, nominations, and applications will be held in confidence. Materials, inquiries or nominations may be submitted to gsoptometry@usg.edu. Confidential inquiries may be directed to 678-424-6974.

About Georgia Southern University

Georgia Southern University (Georgia Southern), part of the University System of Georgia, is a public comprehensive university with its main campus in Statesboro, about 200 miles southeast of Atlanta and 55 miles northwest of Savannah. What began as the First District Agricultural & Mechanical School, a land grant college that opened in 1908 with four faculty members and fifteen students, has since become a R2 University (Doctoral University with high research activity) enrolling over 31,500 students and boasting a global network of over 160,000 alumni.

Georgia Southern has continuously built on its historic strengths as it evolved into the institution it is today, serving its local communities, the state, the region, the nation, and the world. With the leadership of President Kyle Marrero and Provost Avinandan Mukherjee, Georgia Southern continues to develop and broaden its capabilities.

Georgia Southern is the state's largest and most comprehensive university south of Atlanta. Georgia Southern's annual economic impact in FY2024 was a record \$1.167 billion, nearly 2% higher than the previous year. The first-year ("IPEDS Freshmen") retention rate for the fall 2024 cohort was 81.5%, and recent 6-year graduation rates have been 53–55%.

In addition to its R2 classification, Georgia Southern is also classified as "military friendly," serving over 4,000 military affiliated students, and has also achieved the Carnegie Community Engagement classification.

Georgia Southern University is accredited by The Commission on Colleges and Universities (formerly the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges or SACSCOC). The next Fifth-Year Review is scheduled for 2031, and the next Reaffirmation is scheduled for 2035.

About the University System of Georgia

The University System of Georgia comprises our 25 institutions of higher education and learning as well as the System Office. Our USG Statement of Core Values are Integrity, Excellence, Accountability, and Respect.

These values serve as the foundation for all that we do as an organization, and each USG community member is responsible for demonstrating and upholding these standards. More details on the USG Statement of Core Values and Code of Conduct are available in USG Board Policy 8.2.18.1.2 and can be found at

https://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section8/C224/#p8.2.18_personnel_conduct.

Additionally, USG supports Freedom of Expression as stated in Board Policy 6.5 Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom, found at

<https://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section6/C2653>.

Georgia Southern University provides equal opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, religion, age, veteran status, political affiliation, or disability. Individuals in need of reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act to participate in the search process should notify Human Resources: (912) 478-6947.