**Growing at Georgia Southern**

By: Mikaila Moses

Catherine Bishop Hoopaugh, better known to her colleagues as Cat, is the Associate Director of Georgia Southern University's Office of Student Activities. She also oversees the school's programming arm under the University Programming Board, a student-led organization that dedicates its work to creating safe and inclusive events for the GS student body.

Cat did not always see herself working in higher education. Originally wanting to be a child psychologist, she attended Mercer University for her undergraduate studies. While there, she gained experience working in marketing and public relations as well as event planning and management. Gaining a love for the line of work, she continued that path while pursuing her master's degree at Georgia Southern University

"When I came to Georgia Southern and worked for intramurals, I got my master's in higher education administration," says Hoopaugh. "So that's kind of what led me into this field."

Once she graduated from GS, she stayed in Statesboro, where she has now been for almost ten years, working at OSA in addition to UPB. She works alongside students daily, aiding them in professional development and helping them learn the importance of networking and serving the student body. Cat and UPB strive to keep themselves knowledgeable about trends amongst students so that they can continue to serve them to the best of their abilities.

"We might think something is cool, but students might not be into that," she says. "It's all about asking the students what they really want to see and like taking that into consideration and actually using the feedback we get."

As Associate Director, Cat takes pride in helping students learn and grow outside of the classroom, since she was once a student looking for guidance herself. Taking on a leadership role in the UPB office, she makes sure not to micromanage her team, building a family-like atmosphere that can

spread to the rest of the Statesboro campus. Her willingness to be a servant leader helps execute campus events, from idea to execution.

In addition to being a servant leader, Cat also leads with a lot of grace and understanding. She emphasizes the need for tough love amongst her team. “Yes, we're going to have fun. I'm going to give you grace, but also there are going to be expectations and I'm going to hold accountable as well.”

No day in her position looks the same, but her adaptability helps her overcome whatever challenges the job might throw at her. Cat implements tactics and strategies that align with the university’s mission, vision and values. She knows that she not only represents herself and the students, but also UPB, OSA and Georgia Southern as a whole.

”It’s all about growth for me. I want to see students grow and succeed and be successful,” Hoopaugh says. “I want them to have fun while they're in school. You know, you only get to college once”.

Hoopaugh plans to stay in Statesboro and at Georgia Southern for a while, starting a family and establishing roots in the growing college town. She continues to promote her belief in inclusivity through UPB, passing it down to every student she provides guidance to.