

## Program Reflection

As I conclude my final semester of coursework in the EdD program at Georgia Southern, it is a bittersweet time. I expected to not enjoy being a doctoral student, but have been pleasantly surprised. When asked how classes have been going, my normal response is that I expect the other shoe to drop any day now. But the truth is that shoe never dropped, even through Statistics classes, which were my biggest fear going into a doctoral program. The process of deciding to go back for an EdD is often wrought with others expressing how terrible their experience has been in their own journey. However, I felt continually supported and encouraged throughout my work at Georgia Southern. I started in the fall of 2017 and went in having to play catchup because of my lack of traditional educational research classes in my graduate degree in English. This first semester of coursework, I was disheartened to learn I had an extra class to take, but this class was truly a gift, as I not only enjoyed Dr. Shannon-Baker's teaching immensely, but I also was able to start considering myself as an educational researcher. It was in this pre-requisite class that I began examining how to make my research study a reality. From this first semester on, I only appreciated the program and faculty more. While some classes did not meet my expectations, I can honestly say they all helped me hone in my research and writing skills.

During my time in my doctoral classes, I have grown both in relation to my work as a practitioner scholar and as a professional in my field. I have taken on new leadership roles in professional organizations, served as a consultant for other learning center program reviews, and even published a chapter in a text. I know that the learning outcomes of the EdD program gave me the confidence to pursue many of these opportunities. I now see myself as a leader in the field and am willing to take on extra areas associated with that identity. For instance, I am currently serving as a program reviewer for a college learning center in California, identifying issues of assessment and subsequent solutions for that learning center. It is through my work in the doctoral program that I began viewing myself as an educational leader and one that has the experience and knowledge to review other tutoring programs. Additionally, my confidence in assessing data for the purpose of improvement has increased because of the work I was able to do in my statistics classes in the program. I have gained this relevant and current skillset because of the work I did with Dr. Zinskie.

When I began my doctoral journey in the fall of 2017, I was a professional that knew she wanted to be a leader in her field, but also worried that she did not have the skillset to be one. Now, as I finish my final semester of course work and prepare to begin my dissertation, I am certain that this doctoral journey has made me a better researcher, educational leader, and practitioner. I have indeed developed through the courses I have taken, but my development can be seen outside of the coursework. I now serve as a leader in several professional organizations in the learning assistance field, am a mentor for a new professional, have published in the field, and serve as a consultant for other programs. Prior to starting the program in 2017, I saw myself as a professional, but was insecure about my abilities as a leader. Now, reflecting on my journey through this program, I see that I am a scholar practitioner and hope to impact higher education learning assistance for the better through my research and work.

