Over the years, the Savannah Country Day School has earned a reputation as an academic leader, providing exceptional learning opportunities for students at every grade level. Continuing that tradition, County Day recently partnered with Global Online Academy (GOA), a nonprofit consortium of leading independent schools around the world, to offer innovative online classes to Upper School students. Through an invitational membership, Country Day joined top U.S. and international schools, offering state-of-the-art online classes in a wide range of subjects. “The Global Online Academy is strategically advancing our commitment to teaching and learning at Savannah Country Day, providing our students with exciting new opportunities for growth,” says Head of School Kef Wilson. “This is just the next step to offer our students a first-rate education that is, by any measure, unmatched by area schools.” GOA classes are designed to be interactive, challenging and relevant, encouraging students to become more independent learners. The 40+ course offerings are treated as electives and complement existing Country Day core classes, emphasizing active learning while encouraging discussion, collaboration and creativity.

DID YOU KNOW?
Savannah Country Day is one of four independent schools in the state – and the first school outside metro Atlanta – to be invited to participate in the Global Online Academy.
Because the GOA classes are so small, we really bonded as a group thanks to the many forms of communication we used.

I definitely want to work in the medical field one day,” she says. “I’ll probably major in biology in college, but my goals for right now are to get as much exposure to science classes as I can in high school.”
Richard Chen
Grade: 11
GOA Classes: Introduction to Computational Thinking, Beyond Photoshop: The Art of Code, Introduction to Java

Richard Chen, a junior at SCDS, decided to take three GOA computer science classes as a way to explore his growing interest in the field.

“Although school offers me a variety of challenging classes, GOA gave me an opportunity to learn more about computer science,” he says. “I had never taken an online course before, but when my teacher first described it to me, I was very excited to work with people from all around the globe.”

Fascinated by learning Python computer coding at Country Day, he welcomed the opportunity to dig deeper, enjoying the kind of computer science classes typically offered in college. In his Introduction to Java class, he imported stock market prices from Yahoo to help create a program that predicts whether a company is a good investment or not.

“That project was not only fun,” he explains, “but I feel like it was a great example how useful computer science is.”

Cecilia Belzer
Grade: 11
GOA Class: Filmmaking

Cecilia Belzer began making movies with her cousins at a young age, frequently assuming the role of director.

“As we got older, the movies became more than just something fun,” she recalls. “We began planning them: writing scripts, buying props, organizing films around family vacations.”

As her interest in filmmaking grew, Cecilia decided to enroll in a GOA class focused on the art of making movies. Over the course of the semester, Cecilia made short films weekly, creating original selections ranging from 25 seconds to five minutes. “I loved getting to make a movie every week,” she raves, “and sharing them with new people around the world.”

“Filmmaking has been one of my hobbies for as long as I can remember. With GOA, I was able to take that hobby and learn in a school setting.”

Grace Win
Grade: 11
GOA Classes: Bioethics, Fiction Writing

For Grace Win, a junior with a talent for composing poetry and short fiction, GOA classes have served as a journey of discovery.

In her Bioethics course, she gained a global perspective on issues ranging from abortion to organ transplants. In her Fiction Writing class, she discovered a passion for original works by international authors and learned skills that have made her a stronger writer and better storyteller.

“I like to read, write poetry, and work on short stories in my free time,” she says. “I thought that taking fiction writing would be a great way to hone my writing skills and add more depth to my writing by learning about how to develop the many aspects of a story like plot, characters, and detail.”

An avid writer, Grace loved the opportunity to participate in activities that encouraged collaboration with other students in her class. In her fiction writing class, students took turns posting a line or two to start a story, along with a photo, on a discussion board. Other students would continue the story, adding their own lines and photos.

“My favorite part of the GOA experience is working with my online classmates through group Skype calls for writing workshops or discussion circles,” she adds. “GOA does an incredible job of helping students feel connected to their classmates. Discussions with people from different cultures who have had completely different experiences than myself are fascinating.”

“Taking a GOA course ultimately made it easier for me to be more independent with my studies and more diligent with my time management.”
GLOBAL ONLINE ACADEMY SUCCESS STORIES

Geena Panzitta
Grade: 10
GOA Classes: Poetry Writing, Fiction Writing

Geena Panzitta, a sophomore at SCDS, loves learning and is always seeking out new opportunities and new challenges. Inspired by writers ranging from Flannery O’Connor to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Geena chose GOA classes devoted to writing poetry and fiction writing because she wanted to work on her writing in greater depth. Although she enjoys writing, she knew the structure of the GOA class would hold her accountable and encourage her to write more regularly.

“I found my peers to be immensely supportive and compassionate, open-minded and kind,” she says. “Particularly in my poetry class, we were asked to write about topics that meant something to us, and there was a lot of vulnerability involved. I opened up far more than I expected I would, and I’m so happy I did because it resulted in some of my best work.”

An exercise in which students wrote a poem about their “local” proved to be an epiphany for Geena. “Reading these pieces opened my eyes to the rest of the world,” she reports. “Many of the pieces I read from other students and wrote myself were about problems the world faces. Whether it was local problems or issues that impact the whole globe, I learned a lot from this experience.”

Uyen-Vy Hoang
Grade: 11
GOA Classes: Global Health, Neuropsychology

The international nature of the GOA program served as a major draw for Uyen-Vy Hoang, a junior at SCDS with interests in medicine and epidemiology. “I was curious as to what it would be like to work in a global setting,” she says. “I was interested in how unique the courses were compared to those offered in a more conventional high school curriculum.”

In her Global Health class, Uyen-Vy read Steven Johnson’s Ghost Map and analyzed the events that occurred during the 1854 Broad Street cholera outbreak in London. In her Neuropsychology course, she led a fundraising campaign to support a nonprofit organization that supports individuals suffering from neurological disorders. “Before experiencing GOA, I never really gave much thought to the idea of being part of a global community,” she explains.

Uyen-Vy enjoyed the interdisciplinary approach to the Global Health class, which examined the impact socioeconomic class issues can have on health, as well as the independence and self-determination that comes with online learning. “GOA has broadened my horizons through allowing me to participate in an international community of education,” she says, “causing me to consider my role as a citizen in a global society.”

Patti Tao
Grade: 11
GOA Classes: Number Theory and Game Theory

Although Patti Tao is a champion tennis player and an accomplished musician in the Upper School Orchestra, she’s also a gifted math student with a passion for numbers. “I really like math and I’d heard a lot of interesting discussions about number theory and game theory,” she says. “When I heard about the Global Online Academy, I wanted to try it out. I thought it would be a cool opportunity to take a class online and with people I’d never met.”

Over the course of the year, she mastered the art of managing her time and learned important lessons about the importance of communication, particularly in an online class. She also exercised her creativity to solve complex problems and enjoyed collaborating with students from around the world, working together to understand concepts and develop innovative solutions. “It was cool to experiment,” she says of this online learning environment. “It took a lot of work, but it was definitely worth it.”

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