For Immediate Release

What do Andrew Young, Warren Davis, Tibby Dejulio and Nancy Harris all have in common? All of these public servants have been recently interviewed by students in Georgia Perimeter College political science professor Tamra Ortgies Young’s Intro to Public Administration class.

The massive class interview project covered course material such as public policy development and budget decisions by going directly to the source—the public officials themselves. Students set up and recorded their interviews with mayors, city managers, judges, police commanders and city and county commissioners. Then the students put the recorded three to five minute interviews on a website, www.gpc.edu/engage/csp to provide metro Atlanta communities with the insight of expertise of public officials on the functions of government.

“I wanted to have a project that was more than ‘Hi, how do you like being mayor, and I wanted to be able to reinforce the course material from someone who is a public official and who is an expert with the subject,” says Ortgies Young.

Students also learned managerial and time management skills, as well as how to use technology, she adds. “It was not just about interviewing—it was getting everything done in timely manner. It was script checks and reviews, and getting feedback from others in the class before they ever interviewed a person,” Ortgies Young says.

The hardest part of the project was just getting in touch with their subjects,” students say.

Shakeel Gillani, a political science major, interviewed Decatur city manager
Peggy Merriss. “I loved the assignment and I learned a lot. (As a student) I would never had gone to a city hall, but I got to see how it was running, and how busy it was.”

“This project took what I was learning in the classroom and in textbooks to the outside world—it really helped me understand how real life situations work,” says Manonh Soumahoro, who interviewed Rudolph Smith, the city manager of Norcross.

“One thing I learned was make sure you do research...and with the internet, you can find out how someone voted on the issues and what is important to them,” says Matt Davis, who interviewed Snellville City Council member Kelly Kautz on a proposed ethics policy for the city. “This was the coolest project I have ever had to do in college.”

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Georgia Perimeter College, the third largest institution of the University System of Georgia, serves more than 25,000 students through four campuses and several sites in metro Atlanta. For additional information, visit www.gpc.edu