

STEVEN YOHO

Providing Educational Opportunities to a Diverse Student Population

One of the oldest universities in Georgia, **South University** was founded in 1899 in Savannah, Georgia. The university was first established as Draughon's Practical Business College focused on teaching the fundamentals needed by successful businesses including accounting, banking, shorthand, bookkeeping, and typewriting. However, over the past century, South University has transformed from its humble roots of a two-year college, into a university offering undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degree programs. It has evolved as a university providing a supportive learning environment that encourages students to engage with a community of faculty, staff, and students eager to play a role in helping them achieve their educational dreams.

"We continue to shape our goals as an environment defined by excellence in academics, student experience, and growth," says **Steven Yoho** (Chancellor and CEO at South University). He envisions South University to become an excellent educational institution identified by others for the commitment to its mission viz. dedicated to providing educational opportunities for the intellectual, social, and professional development of a diverse student population. Steven expects that more students should have the benefits that result from a South University degree. By the end of this decade, he aims to create an environment attracting more students nationally from around the globe.

INDUSTRY-DRIVEN CURRICULUM

South University offers more than 45 programs through its ten campus locations and online. These programs focus on workplace needs to meet the employer job demand and community development opportunities. Its degree programs are particularly designed to lead its students to their highest potential by combining relevant coursework and applicable experience with supportive faculty in a professional environment. *"Whether that career finds them working in a hospital, a courtroom, or a business, our students get the education that will allow them to be highly competitive in their chosen field,"* says Steven.

Furthermore, the university provides an industry-driven curriculum that



Steven Yoho
 Chancellor & CEO

PRIORITIZING HEALTH AND SAFETY

In the past few years, due to several external factors, South University has developed the institutional capacity to be agile and respond effectively to many outside forces. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, brought a serious threat to its students, faculty, and staff. Steven states that the university approached this crisis by making health and safety a priority for its students, faculty, and staff. It acted quickly relying on guidance from the internal health experts at the CDC along with state and local public health leaders.

South University's motivated faculty used the CDC model and created an Online Contact Tracing training course available free of cost for the public to help track the virus. Steven believes that the university community has responded excellently to the many additional campus health and safety requirements and technology changes to effectively modify the learning environment. He affirms that this agile response has enabled the university to fulfill its mission to prepare students to learn and serve in their chosen professions.

Note to the Students

“ At South University, we provide a warm, supportive learning environment that will encourage you to engage with a community of faculty, staff, and students eager to play a role in helping you achieve your educational goals. “

THE SOUTH VIRTUAL REMOTE FORMAT

After monitoring the rising virus cases in early 2020, South University made a decision to move its campus-based students from in-person learning to a new remote learning format called *SouthVR* (South Virtual Remote) in the spring of 2020. This format was designed to help

its students continue their education during the pandemic, while also keeping their safety in mind. SouthVR differs from both campus and online classes by offering live schedules instruction in a remote environment that encourages interactivity and collaborative working groups.

Upholding the role of faculty in creating the new format, Steven added, *“Our faculty built dynamic resources to enrich the SouthVR courses and to ensure that we continued to provide the close-knit experience that the South University community cherishes.”* Additionally, the faculty held remote office hours, provided virtual tutoring, and scheduled one-on-one meetings to ensure that the university continues to offer the quality student experience that its students expect and deserve.

Steven further asserts that the university has experienced success in this modality as students shared that they continued to feel a part of the classroom community with peer to peer and faculty collaboration in real-time, while learning remotely. SouthVR continues to be available for its students and the university is anticipating its use in the future to support the students.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS

Heading into 2021, Steven's primary focus is to use the university's mission and prepare the students for success. He strives to use innovative approaches and strategic thinking concentrating on three critical elements—academic quality, consistency for improvement of student retention, and growth.

He further adds, *“Every action and immediate relentless pursuit is toward these institutional measures to develop and progress as a comprehensive university. The university's students, staff, and faculty will be critical to achieving success in both directions.”* In the next five years, South University aims to provide numerous extra-curricular opportunities for an increasingly diverse student body and culture. ^{TEM}



teaches students the skills necessary to be a practitioner of the discipline, while promoting critical thinking, effective verbal and written communication, and an appreciation for life-long learning. It takes pride in the South experience of small classes that offer a hands-on experience that shapes students' skills and excellence in their chosen field as well as shape their character through community involvement, volunteerism, and pursuit of life-long learning.

EMPHASIZING ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT

At South University, students participate in activities such as industry panels, networking events, workshops, internships/externships, and professional organizations. Steven believes in providing students with opportunities to interact with peers, professors, professionals, and alumni and prepares them for their chosen profession.

The students' career development begins upon matriculation with college success skill development – such as time management, working in teams, and thinking critically. *“Each student is assigned a Career Services representative as they near graduation to assist with creating a resume, job search skill development, and connections to employment opportunities in their field of study,”* adds Steven.