

The Journey of Dr. Checo Colón Gaud

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Dr. Reyes TCLD 423I Fall 2026



“At that point, I already made such a long jump away from the island that it was easier for me to, to be like, "All right, this is just part of the journey.”

Dr. Checo Colón-Gaud



Map of Puerto Rico outlining where Mayaguez is on the map.

“If that helps somebody in the future kinda go like, "Yeah, it's okay to have tattoos," or, "It's okay to be Hispanic in this field," or, "It's okay to just be a little bit different or unique," totally fine.” Dr. Checo Colón-Gaud

COMMUNITY STORY

Dr. Checo Colón-Gaud

Dr. Checo Colón-Gaud is the Associate Dean of the Graduate College and biology professor at Georgia Southern University. He was born in 1978 in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, a city located on the island's western coast. He left the island his sophomore year of college at the University of Puerto Rico to run track at the University of Texas at El Paso where he earned his bachelors degree in biology.

He later completed his masters degree at Louisiana State University and his PhD. at Southern Illinois University. His research component for his PhD was located in Panama Central America. After his gaining his PhD he moved to Illinois and he completed a Post doc back at the University of Puerto Rico. As he was doing that he got exposed to the University of Georgia and then eventually landed at Georgia Southern University.

During the interview Dr. Checo shared how Puerto Rican culture shaped his identity. He described Puerto Ricans as being super family orientated or super connected. He empathized the importance of family, language, music and food in everyday life. He explained that traditional Puerto Rican foods include things like rice, beans, and plantains. While music is constantly present in his culture and was a major influence throughout his life.

One of the strongest symbols of Puerto Rico is the Puerto Rican flag, which he says Puerto Ricans love to display everywhere. He also highlighted the coquí, a small tree frog that is a beloved cultural symbol of Puerto Rico and represents his connection to the island. Even after living outside Puerto Rico for many years, he continues to celebrate and share his heritage through these traditions and cultural symbols.

REFLECTION: FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Dr. Checo Colón Gaud has knowledge rooted from Puerto Rico, Panama, Louisiana, Illinois, Texas, and Georgia. He has experienced many cultures and traditions throughout his life that have impacted his role at Georgia Southern. He uses his experiences to encourage not only Hispanic students but all diverse students at Georgia Southern. His goal is that students see it is okay to be unique in any role.

PRIMARY SOURCES



Dr. Checo Colón-Gaud's possessions that resonate with him and his roots to Puerto Rico.

WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS

From this interview project, we learned that talking with someone directly can teach you a lot more than just reading about their experiences. We enjoyed hearing Dr. Checo explain his life in his own words because it made the conversation feel more real and personal. We also learned that interviewing someone takes good listening skills because some of the best questions came from paying attention to what he said and asking him to explain more. This project helped me become more comfortable having a meaningful conversation with someone and learning from their experiences.

In our future teaching, we could use Community Archives by having students interview people in their families or communities. We also think this would make learning more personal and give students a chance to hear stories and perspectives they may not normally learn about in class.

ORAL HISTORY



REFERENCES

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(C. Colón Gaud, personal communication, September 10, 2026)