



The University of Georgia

**Graduate Portfolio in Community Engagement
COVER SHEET**

Date of Submission: 2014 (due April 1 or November 1 for review cycle)

Name: Bantu D. Gross

Department and Major: CHDS-RLST Degree: PhD

Expected Semester/Year of Graduation: Summer 2014

Email: [REDACTED] Preferred Phone: [REDACTED]

Mailing Address: [REDACTED]

Portfolio Faculty Mentor Name: Dr. [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]@uga.edu

Title of Community Engagement Portfolio Project: Young Urban Farmer Develop

Project is: Engaged Research Engaged Teaching Engaged Service & Outreach

Workshop Attendance Dates: (if via GRSC 7870S or 7970S, indicate semester/year)

- Introduction to Community Engagement Spring 2013
- Preparing the Graduate Portfolio in Community Engagement Spring 2013

Sample Portfolios will be available online via the Office of Service-Learning's website.

- May we include your Portfolio on the website?: Yes No

Please include all the following with your Portfolio submission, assembled as a single PDF:

- This Cover Sheet
- Personal Engagement Philosophy (2 pages)
- Description and Self-Assessment of Community Engagement Project/Activity including
 - Narrative overview/description (1 page)
 - Impact/anticipated impact (1-2 pages)
 - Reflective assessment, linking to engagement philosophy and future (2 pages)
- Curriculum Vitae, including relevant engagement experiences (2-4 pages)
- Letter of support from faculty mentor (1-2 pages)
- Appendices with any additional supporting information, including community feedback;
List content here:

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Date received:

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Outcome of Review:

Personal Engagement Philosophy

During the 1930's, John Dewey introduced the world to the philosophy of experiential education. This philosophy of teaching emphasized the importance of creating an environment where the experience of learning is central to education. Gaining much traction in the field of Recreation and Leisure Studies, this philosophy of teaching advocates for the creation of environments where students are able to be engaged in ways that traditional methods of teaching do not afford. Programs such as Outward Bound have been known to use outdoor settings as learning environments where individuals are able to develop social skills and personal growth. Dewey's philosophy of teaching has also been known to inspire some of the work of Paulo Freire, who in 1970 wrote the book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In this book, Freire presents a radical philosophy of teaching that breaks away from the traditional form of teaching he referred to as the *banking model*. The banking model as posited by Freire is a style of teaching where the student is viewed as a vessel waiting to be filled by a teacher who possesses the knowledge. However, Freire voiced a displeasure with this form of teaching and believed it to be dehumanizing. Instead, Freire advocates for a *dialogic model* of education, where teacher and student "become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (Freire, 1970, p. 80). Thus my personal engagement philosophy is based on the works of Dewey and Freire.

Traditionally used for educational and recreational purposes, challenge courses offer the potential to serve communities in a myriad of ways. Some of the ways I used challenge courses in the past included: helping groups improve their communication skills, assisting individuals in the development of leadership skills, and creating environments where groups must develop a strategy to solve a problem. Prior to developing activities for invited groups there was a collaborative dialogue between the agency and community group. Establishing this connection was not only important for ensuring that the day's activities went well, but also for creating a trusting relationship with the community. Partnering with the community in this way allowed us to develop a mutual trust between each other. In my work with communities I find that when one is able to develop the trust of a community, great results tend to follow.

A mentor once shared with me a story about an experience he had with a young woman on a challenge course, that I believe exemplifies how trust is developed. On our site we have a several obstacles and one of the more intimidating challenges is climbing a 50 foot wall. While leading a wall climbing activity a young woman who had a history of being sexually abused by men, decided she was going to climb the imposing 50 foot wall. As daunting as the wall appeared that day, an even larger obstacle for her was learning to trust the male attached to the opposite end of her rope. In this scenario, issues of sexual assault and violence against woman were raised, which prompted a discussion about ways to prevent such attacks. Following an exploration of this topical area the young woman began the process of trusting males as evidenced by climbing the wall with a male instructor guiding her up the wall.

Experiences such as these is what compelled me to look into the RLST program and find ways to conduct community engaged work. Until now most of my training was in the field of psychology, so enrolling into the RLST program meant immersing myself into a new discipline. Along this journey one of the courses that aided me in learning more about community engagement was GRSC 7870S:Service Learning Course Design. In this class I came into contact with topics such as the history of service learning, best practices in service learning, and connecting with the community. The information conveyed in this course and classroom

discussions were very enlightening, however I was most intrigued by the topic of what makes for effective community-engaged work.

The Carnegie Foundation defines community-engaged work as a "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity." During a class discussion in GRSC 7870S we discussed this term's meaning and how it actually plays out in society. As I pondered this concept I considered how oftentimes when I hear about community engaged work it seems artificial or disingenuous. An example of this would be when a well-financed individual or group donates a large sum of money to a financially needy group and expects their donation to solve the problem. Now, the donor may find great delight by offering this gesture, but I believe true community engaged work goes beyond donations and requires working alongside the needy. Neglecting the development of a relationship where both sides contribute, creates a relationship where one side is in need. Thus, I believe for community-engaged work to be successful, it involves the development of a relationship where both sides mutually benefit.

Lastly, through my experiences with working in communities I have come to learn that unless one commits to thoughtful reflection about why they are serving a community, one's motivation begins to wane and they are likely to abandon their work. While serving as a tutor with an after-school program at UGA our supervisor stressed the importance of being there for the students we served. This meant being there on-time and never missing a session. Our supervisor was of the impression that when students saw a high level of commitment among the staff they too would become more committed. As the semester carried on I found myself growing weary sacrificing my Saturday mornings to help students with their school work and observing some students were also growing tired as evidenced by their absence. Eventually I would begin forging a more personal relationship with one student who was abandoned by his father, and was experiencing difficulties outside of school which prevented him from excelling in the classroom. Concerned about this student's life situation I became more invested in my work and rejuvenated to continue. As a result I continued in the program until my final semester at UGA and have helped this student enter college.

Inspired by the individuals, groups, and lessons learned along the way I have come to realize that for one to conduct effective community-engaged work one must: (1) develop community trust, (2) gain formal education on community development, (3) develop mutually beneficial relationships, and (4) commit yourself to the task ahead.

Community Engagement Project/Activity

Overview of Program

In partnership with the Athens Land Trust and Classic City High School, the Young Urban Farmer development program (YUF) is an urban farm-based, youth entrepreneurship program located in Athens, Georgia. Modeled after Grow Dat, a youth urban farming program in New Orleans, LA. The YUF program exists to offer at-risk high-school students an opportunity to learn about sustainable agriculture practices, acquire entrepreneurial skills, and develop leadership abilities. Some of the practices YUF participants engage in include typical farming activities, attending sustainable agriculture workshops, and participating in entrepreneurial development courses. Using this three-prong approach YUF students are able to acquire skills and abilities that will help them become future vendors of farmer's markets, leaders of their community and productive well-rounded citizens.

I joined the Athens Land Trust in June 2013 and became the YUF coordinator following the departure of my predecessor. At the time the program was approximately six months old and lacked a curriculum and direction. Upon my arrival I was charged with creating a classroom curriculum, developing relationships with students, and helping students to realize their potential as entrepreneurs. The tasks were laid out to me early on and I accepted the challenge of being able to establish the YUF program as a transformative and empowering program.

As the YUF coordinator I was responsible for leading eight high school students and numerous volunteers from diverse backgrounds in an array of activities at the West Broad Market Garden (WBMG) located on West Broad St. in Athens, GA. Some of the activities YUF students primarily participated in included: sowing seeds, watering plants, and harvesting produce. In addition to the manual labor that took place in the garden a great deal of information was passed along to students in the field and classroom. Lacking an extensive knowledge of how to manage a farm I relied upon my ability to network with individuals from the field of agriculture. One method I frequently employed was inviting experts from the various agencies and UGA to discuss water conservation, basic gardening, and composting with the YUF. Furthermore, as a result of my belief in the usefulness of experiential education, I regularly scheduled workshops and field trips for students to attend as a way to expose them to various settings and to get hands-on experiences. Examples include a tour of UGA's soil lab to learn about soil composition and having members of Athens Clarke County Stormwater team visit the YUF to assist with creating rain barrels and educate them about water conservation.

Identifying conferences for students to attend was also an area of interest I wanted to implement into the YUF program. My interest in having students attend conferences served the purposes of introducing students to agriculture professionals, having them develop networking skills and becoming aware of different areas of agriculture. In October 2013, the students and I attended a sustainable agriculture conference in Oconee County. Prior to attending this conference, I conducted a brief workshop on what students should expect, business dress, and professionalism. At this conference students were able to learn about farm inspections, plant disease and organic pest management, food preservation, and gained a deeper understanding of the differences between organic and naturally grown certification. Seeking another way to help students see the link between agriculture and business, we attended the Georgia Youth to Business conference at UGA. At this conference the YUF were able to network with business professionals and other young people from Georgia. Noticing that the YUF seemed nervous

about interacting with other young people at the conference I paired them up and assigned them workshops to attend. Once given their assignments, YUF were directed to report back during lunch with the group and share what they learned. During our lunch discussion a workshop leader participated in the exchange of ideas generated from the workshops the YUF attended

Our attendance at the Georgia Youth to Business Conference was a great kick-off to the next phase of the program I wanted to implement--entrepreneurship. Guided by a textbook left by my predecessor I was able to locate key principles I believed would help the YUF develop a sound business plan. Topics covered in this phase of the program included: (1) developing a meaningful and impactful business in your community, (2) writing a business statement with your vision and goal, and (3) exploring personal reasons for creating a business in your community. In addition to leading classroom discussions and exercises, business managers and leaders were invited to talk with the YUF about personal finances, good credit versus bad credit, and finding your niche market. Following the teaching pedagogy of Paulo Freire, I encouraged students to become actively engaged with the material presented by myself and guest lecturers. YUF's business plan drafts revealed to me that they were procuring the material in meaningful ways as evidenced by the philosophy statements they crafted. All of the YUF made mention in their philosophy statements the idea of creating a business that promoted the development of safer and healthier communities. This indicated to me that students were becoming aware of how their business could either encourage or discourage positive growth in communities.

Originally, business plans and presentations were a dream that was never fulfilled under my predecessor, but as a result of my efforts to accomplish this goal it came to fruition. Yet again relying on the relationships I forged with community leaders in Athens, GA I was able to secure a space at Classic City High School for students to conduct their business presentations. In preparation for their business presentations, each student's business plan was thoroughly reviewed, with the help of a colleague, to ensure that they were able to articulate their budget, marketing strategy, and their personal journey. While preparing students for their presentations I was able to pull together a panel of community and business leaders to rate student's business ideas similar to the show *Shark Tank*. Unlike the Shark Tank show, where participants compete for startup money, students were not in competition with one another, instead this platform assisted students with developing public speaking skills.

It should also be noted that during this phase of the program I was in the initial stages of my transition out of the role of YUF coordinator due to my impending move to Galveston, TX. Consequently, not only was I still leading the YUF in agricultural, business, and leadership activities, but also mentoring the incoming YUF coordinator. This was a very interesting period for me because now I began to think more intently on the legacy I wanted to leave behind and how to best train my successor to carry the torch. On a personal note, since I was not afforded a formal orientation to the YUF program because it was still in its infancy I wanted to be a part of the new coordinator's orientation to ensure things ran smoothly.

Following their business presentations and making edits YUF students began developing products for sale at the WBMG farmer's market. As recently as 2010 the Rocksprings community, where the WBMG is located, was designated as a *food desert* due to community members' limited access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. So, in an effort to offset this problem the WBMG hosts weekly farmer's markets that provide community members with opportunities to purchase fresh locally grown produce, attend educational workshops addressing health disparities, and participate in health screenings. YUF students play a central role in

eradicating the food desert designation by taking part in the production and harvesting of fresh produce sold at farmer's market held on Tuesday's and Saturday's during the market season. Also included at these markets are local small business owners needing a platform to sell their merchandise. It is here that the YUF are able to put on display products they have created and see firsthand how business is really done. During the first market of this year, May 2014, all the YUF were able to make a sale, with one student being able to sell out of their merchandise.

Another area I contributed to the development of the YUF program was by promoting academic achievement. Through a conversation I held with the previous YUF coordinator I was informed me that many of the students were not receiving proper guidance on the classes they should be registered for or receiving support for the classes they were taking. Seeking to remedy this issue, I contacted a friend who was proficient in math to serve as a tutor. My friend was able to visit the WBMG on Tuesday's and offered math tutoring to interested YUF. As a result of the tutoring received one student saw their grades in Math rise from an F to a C in one semester. Additionally, I provided student with information about colleges and informed students about important test dates for the ACT and SAT. In fact I was organize a campus visit to Piedmont College in Athens, GA for students to meet faculty in the nursing and business departments. I believe by including this component to the YUF program students will be encouraged to consider college and possibly deciding to major in either business or agriculture.

The final component of the YUF program is the leadership piece. I found it important to help students view themselves as leaders and sought ways to help them exhibit leadership abilities. One of the ways I was able to accomplish this task was by requiring students to lead visitors of WBMG on garden tours. In preparation for this assignment I conducted mock tours with the YUF to help them become comfortable in this new role. I reminded students of the lessons they received on composting, growing produce, and water conservation. Following the lectures and mock tours the YUF were prepared to lead. The YUF were granted many opportunities to demonstrate this ability, most notably during farmer's markets and when the Boys & Girl club visited WBMG. During YUF lead tours, guests were introduced to what the YUF did on a typical day and sometimes the YUF would share with visitors their future ambitions. Students discussed an interest in working in the fields of medicine, culinary, and agriculture.

In closing, being able to lead the YUF program has allowed me to experience what it is like to develop a new program. As noted earlier when I arrived the YUF program lacked a curriculum and direction. By coming in when I did I was able to help create the foundation of a program that employs at-risk students, while educating them about agriculture, business, and leadership skills. Additionally, upon my exit I was able to mentor to the incoming YUF coordinator, providing them with the tools they need to continue developing this program.

Rationale for involvement and links to discipline/career goals

I can recall during my youth watching NBA games on Saturday evenings with my father and during the commercial breaks watching advertisements showing NBA players helping underprivileged kids in poverty stricken neighborhoods. I remember thinking to myself that this was one of the coolest things in the world and told myself that when I had an opportunity to give back I would. As a result of unfortunate events, Hurricane Katrina, I was granted an opportunity to serve underprivileged kids. In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina ripped through New Orleans and caused many residents to relocate to various states and cities. Several weeks following the storm I finally settled down in Baton Rouge, LA and began volunteering with a local church. It was here that I made a commitment to make serving underprivileged youth in low-income neighborhoods a personal mission.

Presently, my involvement as the YUF program coordinator and educational experiences as a doctoral student in Recreation & Leisure Studies have prompted me to reflect on ways I can advance my skill set into other areas of my life, namely after school tutoring programs. Since being enrolled at UGA I have been involved with two afterschool tutoring programs, Empowered Youth Programs (EYP) and Center for Latino Achievement and Success in Education (CLASE). I have also been fortunate enough to be in the role of tutor and supervisor. Additionally, I have also been able to play an integral in incorporating leisure activities into the CLASE program. Working under the direction of Dr. Pedro Portes and alongside several graduate students we are researching ways to improve students' academic scores, with one method being incorporating leisure activities.

Conducting this current work with CLASE and previous community experiences has led me to look for similar programs that I may network with, to help me further think of ways to create my own after-school program. One program that has caught my attention is the Louisiana Outdoors Outreach Program (LOOP). LOOP introduces students identified as at-risk and from underserved areas to the outdoors and incorporates classroom relevant education. By combining the two components students receive a hands-on learning experience. My hope is that one day I can take what I have learned in thus far and create learning opportunities for students in leisure settings, while growing as a scholar who reports on the effectiveness of such programs.

Impact

As it relates to impact of the YUF program five students have graduated from high school or obtained a GED. Three students have full-time jobs, and two students have been admitted into college, beginning classes this summer. Another indication of the program's influence is that some of the graduates routinely return to WBMG to volunteer. Many of the students have shared with their teachers, who would then relay them back to me, student's testimonies of how being a part of the YUF has been one of the best things to happen to them. One teacher noted how several of the students began attending class more often and were more involved in classroom instruction. Another sign of the YUF program's impact was when a student acknowledged me as a positive influence in his graduation speech. What makes this story significant is that this particular student, initially was not admitted into the YUF program. However, as a result of volunteering and receiving great peer recommendations I admitted this student into the YUF program.

Evidence of the YUF program's impact was also captured in pre-post test administered to students during the hiring process and upon graduation from the program. Pre test assessed

students knowledge of agriculture prior to being admitted into the program. Student responses revealed very few had strong backgrounds in agriculture. Considering that many lacked an understanding of agriculture I saw this as an opportunity to test the effectiveness of the program. Unfortunately, I am unable to report on the post test results at this time because they have either not been administered or reviewed. However, I project that based on what I have observed from the YUF in this program they will demonstrate an increased awareness of agriculture.

Reflective Assessment

Being able to serve in different capacities and in various communities over the last seven years has been a gratifying experience. Through these experiences I have come to observe how my personal engagement philosophy and teaching have developed. As indicated in my personal engagement philosophy the work of Dewey and Freire has inspired my work. Leading the YUF program over the past year, has allowed me to more fully develop my philosophy in a non-traditional setting using a dialogic model of teaching. I believe my efforts were effective as evidenced by a YUF student's note written for me: "You changed all of our lives and touched our hearts. We will never forget." Additionally, I received similar feedback from colleagues who offered me advice on ways to build the YUF program.

Brainstorming ways to improve the YUF program I have come up with three suggestions. Incorporating these suggestions will improve team work and communication skills among students, entrepreneurship curriculum, and sustainability of the program. Including a field trip to the UGA challenge course will assist in the development of skill areas students identified as being weak. Activities at the challenge course will encourage students to work together on problem solving and developing strategies to overcome obstacles. Secondly, the entrepreneurship aspect could be improved by helping students better develop their presentation skills and general knowledge of business. Students were only responsible for presenting a business plan, however having students present incremental assignments, on various aspects of business, that culminate with the final business plan may have been more beneficial for students. Lastly, hiring an assistant to help with the logistics and development of the program would be helpful. During my tenure I was fortunate enough to receive the aid of an intern to help with the scheduling of guest speakers, field trips, and helping students develop their business ideas. Additionally, the intern helped with the general supervision and management of eight high school students. I believe that by following these suggestions the sustainability of the YUF program will greatly improve.

Since my transition from the YUF program, I have continued working towards my goal of after-school programming by working as an Upward Bound TRIO Program instructor at Galveston College. I lead courses on Interpersonal Relationships and Leisure & Wellness for fifty high school students. This experience will help me gain additional experience working with students, but this time there will be a more intense focus on college readiness and also helping first time college students excel in college. Furthermore, I will now have had community experience working with youth across three states, Louisiana, Georgia and Texas.

My future community aspirations include writing a National Science Foundation grant proposal for a postdoctoral fellowship with the Tulane University Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching. If funded, I will work alongside Dr. Michael Cunningham in community engaged research to examine programs for overcoming adversity and promoting resilience in vulnerable adolescents. Additionally, I hope to connect with the Grow DAT and LOOP programs as well as serve on the board of several nonprofit organizations, and church youth groups in New Orleans,

LA. Lastly, I would like to secure a tenure-track assistant professor position with Tulane University, where I can conduct service learning.

References

- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Herder and Herder: New York.
- Glover, T.D. (2004). Narrative inquiry and the study of grassroots associations. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 15(1), 47-69.
- Harden, T. (2009). *A Service or Commitment? A Black Man Teaching Service-Learning at a Predominately White Institution*. In *African Americans and Community Engagement in Higher Education: Community Service, Service Learning, and Community-Based Research*. Edited by Stephanie Y. Evans, Colette M. Taylor, Michelle R. Dunlap, and DeMond S. Miller. SUNY Press.

Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy, Recreation & Leisure Studies
University of Georgia (UGA), Athens, GA 30602

Anticipated Graduation: December 2014

Master of Arts, Psychological Counseling
Nicholls State University (NSU), Thibodaux, LA 70310

Graduated: July 2010

Bachelor of Science, Psychology
Southern University A&M (SUBR), Baton Rouge, LA 70813

Graduated: July 2008

Associate Degree, Management-Marketing
Delgado Community College, New Orleans, LA 70119

Graduated: May 2006

RELEVANT WORK HISTORY

Athens Land Trust
Young Urban Farmer (YUF) Program Coordinator

Athens, GA
June 2013-May 2014

- Led at-risk high school students in entrepreneurial activities, farming tasks, and social engagements
- Developed program curriculum, lesson plans and establish program goals and objectives
- Networked with local vendors, community members and farmers to lead workshops for YUF students

UGA-Center for Latino Adolescent and Success in Education
Research Assistant

Athens, GA
September 2013-August 2014

- Supervise tutors of after-school program serving Latino students
- Recruit participants for cultural adaptation and adjustment scale study
- Conducted literature review of eth-gender, ethnic identity and cultural adaptation

UGA- Empowered Youth Program
Research Assistant

Athens, GA
November 2011- Present

- Develop and nurture academic and social excellence in adolescents.
- Guide rising juniors and seniors in high school with pre-college planning.
- Create grade appropriate lesson plans for middle and high school.

Lafourche Parish Juvenile Justice Facility
Challenge Course Facilitator-Social Services Counselor

Thibodaux, LA
May 2009- August 2010

- Provided individual and group therapy services for residents identified as having ADHD, ODD, depression, anxiety, and sexually aggressive youth.
- Led challenge course services provided to residents and families of residential programs.
- Coordinated services provided to residents by outside agencies such as mental health and substance abuse treatment as indicated.

NSU-Wellness Education
Graduate Assistant

Thibodaux, LA
August 2008-December 2008

- Created and instructed an online smoking cessation course entitled “It Pays to Quit.”
- Directed a psychosocial education program for sanctioned and referred students called “Back on Track.”
- Educated peers on campus about excessive alcohol consumption.

Joy Corporation
Student Intern

Zachary, LA
August 2006-December 2006

- Mentored at risk adolescents and helped them create resumes.
- Conducted individual consultations with adolescents.
- Tutored adolescents with GED preparation and homework.

VOLUNTEER WORK

Taste of Athens Event
Greeter/Raffle Volunteer

Athens, GA
February 2013

- Greeted and interacted with patrons as they entered the event.
- Sold raffle tickets to patrons attending event.
- Responded to assistance requests from patrons and staff members.

Athens Land Trust
Assistant Basketball Coach

Athens, GA
January 2013-Present

- Provide mentoring to team members identified as at-risk.
- Assist head coach with coordinating practices and scheduling games.
- Lead members of team in assigned basketball drills.

Hancock Community Development Corporation
Reading Mentor

Athens, GA
September 2012- Present

- Assist mentee in developing an interest in reading and comprehension of vocabulary.
- Promote the articulation of thoughts and independent thinking.
- Enhance mentee’s attention span through one-on-one structured relationship.

Council on Aging- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
Volunteer

Athens, GA
June 2012- August 2012

- Assisted with the harvesting of fruits and vegetables.
- Loaded and unloaded boxed meals onto delivery truck.
- Prepared bags of groceries for delivery to needy families.

Athens Farmer's Market- Chili Cook-Off
Event Director

Athens, GA
August 2011- December 2011

- Led a team of nine undergraduate students from the University of Georgia.
- Met with local business owners to gain sponsorship.
- Donated money raised from event to a non-profit organization.

Gardere Initiative
Member

Baton Rouge, LA
October 2006- August 2008

- Improved the mental health and lives of individuals in the community.
- Organized service experiences that met community needs.
- Promoted community well-being and educated families about risk and protective factors.

HIV/AIDS Education (SAMHSA)/Red Cross
Peer Health Educator

Baton Rouge, LA
October 2006- July 2008

- Trained by the Red Cross in HIV/AIDS education and prevention.
- Provided information about HIV/AIDS through group discussions, individual sessions, and lectures to prevent risky sexual behavior.
- Developed and conducted presentations for college students on health-related issues.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Organizations

- Graduate and Professional Scholars (GAPS) Community Engagement Co-Chair, University of Georgia
- Diversity Research in Education and Multiculturalism (DREAM) member, University of Georgia
- African Graduate Student Organization member, University of Georgia
- Student Government Association, Southern University of Baton Rouge
- Alcohol & Other Drugs Coalition member, Nicholls State University
- Recovery Peer Advisor Council Member, DHH-OAD

Presentations/Lectures

- Grantham, T., & Gross, B. (2013). *School-community partnerships that nurture talent development in African American males: The role of faith-based organizations*, Georgia Association of Gifted Children Conference, Athens, GA.
- Gross, B. (2013). *The influence of community partnerships*. Undergraduate level lecture-FYOS 1101: University and Community Engagement in Talent Development, University of Georgia, Athens, GA.
- Johnson, C., Powell, G., Pate, J., & Gross, B. (2011). Co-taught Undergraduate level four courses in Recreation and Leisure Services (RLST), University of Georgia, Athens, GA.

Courses

- GRSC7870s: Service-Learning Course Design:
Foundation in theory and practice of integrating academic service-learning into course design and instruction
- RLST 7380: Leisure and Aging:
Leisure behavior in later life with attention to programs and services for older adults in both community and institutional settings.
- RLST 7130: Leisure Education:
Emphasis is on the recreation professional's facilitative role in assisting individuals and groups to achieve satisfying lifestyles.
- RLST 9800: Teaching in Recreation and Leisure Studies:
Teaching in recreation and leisure studies with faculty supervision.
Non-traditional format: Student teaches course or parts of course under faculty supervision.



The University of Georgia

Department of Counseling and Human Development Services

April 11, 2014

Dr. Paul Mathews
Office of Service Learning
University of Georgia

Dear Dr. Mathews and others:

I am very pleased to write a letter of support of Mr. Bantu Gross as a candidate for the Graduate Portfolio in Community Engagement. While a full time doctoral student in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services, he has nevertheless been active with the Athens African American community in working on community gardens and local food production through the Athens Land Trust and the Rutland School. This also provides a fine real world back drop for his academic work on enabling AA youth to overcome inhibitions associated with “acting white”. Growing up in New Orleans, Bantu was occasionally subjected to the charge that he was “acting white” while pursuing some of his academic and expressive ambitions. It has become something of an academic mission of his to understand his own feelings on the subject in a broader context and to examine more generally the patterns of identity development around race and personal expressiveness.

With respect to his progress, after a relatively slow start he has come along faster than anyone I can remember in nearly 30 years of teaching in Research I institutions. He completed the written component of his comprehensive examination this past summer, has a dissertation prospectus that is very well grounded in the appropriate literature on racial identity and leisure-related identity formation, and is likely to be ‘admitted to candidacy’ by the end of this spring term. Interviewing 8-10 African American UGA students about their experience before and since coming to UGA, he expects to complete all data collection and analysis by the end of summer term and will likely complete the dissertation and defend it by the end of fall term 2014. We are quite confident in fact that he will be competitive for a tenure track position in leisure studies in the country somewhere when he finishes and that his dissertation work will result in at least one published article or perhaps a book.

It should be noted that Mr. Gross is not narrowly focused on his particular coursework, but has brought the issue of “Acting White,” and the scholarship around it, to the attention of the wider campus

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April 11, 2014

community in giving guest lectures, participating in several panel discussion, in doing an interview on the subject for print media, and in his current work with the Land Trust. I believe the combination of his commitment to the subject of the development of racial identity, and the examination of practical ways to enhance it with African American youth, will lead him to make many important contributions both inside and outside of academia in the years to come.

I recommend him for the Graduate Portfolio in Social Engagement without reservation.

Sincerely,

██████████, Professor

May 5, 2014

Dr. Paul Matthews
Office of Service Learning
University of Georgia

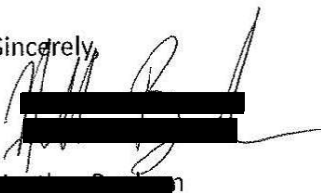
Dear Dr. Matthews,

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of support on behalf of Bantu Gross for the Graduate Portfolio in Community Engagement. Bantu joined the Athens Land Trust staff in the summer of 2013 as the Young Urban Farmer (YUF) program coordinator. Since his involvement with the YUF program Bantu has led two groups of eight high school students from Classic City High in an array of activities related to sustainable agriculture and entrepreneurship. Through these exercises Bantu has demonstrated skills such as leadership, communication, and most importantly networking. From his networking, Bantu has met leaders of other youth programs who have brought their youth to volunteer at the West Broad Market Garden. Additionally, these networking skills have produced phenomenal guest speakers who have shared their knowledge about agriculture, business, and leadership with the YUF.

As Director of Operations, working alongside Bantu has allowed me to see all the great things he has been doing in Athens. Knowing that others are recognizing his talents is gratifying. In the past six months the YUF program has been chronicled in an online journal article, Seed & Plate, and will be the subject of a documentary conducted by a journalism student at the University of Georgia. Bantu has also been interviewed by an aspiring journalist, a Clarke Central High school student, seeking to highlight the YUF program.

I look forward to hearing about his accomplishments as he continues his journey in Galveston.

Sincerely,



[Redacted signature]

Director of Operations
Athens Land Trust

Appendix A: American Public Health Abstract Submission

The Young Urban Farmer Development Program (YUF)

Bantu D. Gross, Doctoral Student, Recreation & Leisure Studies, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA

Issues: Since 2012, the Young Urban Farmer Development Program (YUF), has operated at the West Broad Market Garden located in a low-income, underserved, and predominately African American neighborhood. Additionally, this neighborhood has been designated as a *food desert* due to community members' limited access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. In an effort to offset the lack of healthy food and fresh produce, YUF students take part in the production and harvesting of fresh produce sold at farmer's market held on Tuesday's and Saturday's during the market season.

Description: The YUF, in partnership with the Athens Land Trust and Classic City High School, is an urban farm-based, youth entrepreneurship program located in Athens, Georgia. Modeled after Grow Dat, a youth urban farming program in New Orleans, LA, the YUF exists to offer at-risk high-school students an opportunity to learn about sustainable agriculture practices and gain entrepreneurial, leadership, and job skills.

Lessons Learned: Thus far, community members have benefitted from farmer's markets by being able to purchase fresh locally grown produce, attend educational workshops that address health disparities, and participate in health screenings. Furthermore, farmer's market allow YUF students the opportunity to promote and sell products they have developed in entrepreneurial classes.

Recommendations: Currently, the YUF is seeking to expand from 8 to 16 students by August 2014 in order to offer more at-risk high school students, who are largely disconnected from their food, opportunities in the field of agriculture and job skills.

Appendix B: Curriculum

Goal: Sustainable Agriculture

Objective	Tasks	Outcomes
Water Conservation	Construct rain barrels Water testing	Reduce excess water usage

Objective	Tasks	Outcomes
Composting	Lessons: What is composting, importance of compost, home composting, etc. Logging compost collected from local restaurants and coffee shops	Ability to compost at home, educate family, friends, peers, and guests at farm. Knowledge of composting methods

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Green house	Caring for seedlings Construction & Maintenance	Identify healthy and unhealthy plants. Ability to repair and assist with the building of a greenhouse.

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Planting & Pruning	Direct sow seeds into plant beds, trays, and pots Attend pruning workshops	Able to grow personal plants Prune blueberry bushes, fruit trees, and various types of produce. Understand the importance of using quality pruning shears. Demonstrate fundamentally sound pruning techniques

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Bed Prep & Maintenance	Weed out plant beds, boxes & rows. Mulch rows	Identify weeds Aware of natural and organic methods to reduce weed growth

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Nutrition	Cooking Demonstrations Food processing workshop Serve safe	Proper food handling Thinking critically about food intake Discuss fast food practices and implications for local food movement

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Conferences/Workshops	Demonstrate good listening by asking good questions	Be able to teach their peers as well as guests of the farm what they learn

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Food Justice	Think critically about our farming methods vs. those of commercial farms	Understand access to food Chemicals affect on environment and body

GOAL: Entrepreneurship

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Business Plan Development	Topics covered: Sole proprietorships, General partnerships, Corporations, etc. Perform market research and need analysis. Cost Benefit Analysis	Successfully present completed and coherent business plan Acquire basic business skills Improve business vocabulary Gain prioritizing skills

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Financial Management	Topics covered: Credit card rates, Student Loans, Stocks & Bonds, Mutual funds, building credit responsibly	Understand differences between banks & credit unions, good & bad credit, loans, and credit cards Open a savings account

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Communication Skills	Read business journals, articles, books, etc. Discuss their businesses with their peers as well as guest lecturers and visitors of the farm	this task is also the outcome. Communication skills are all about the process.

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Product Development	Complete Unit analysis Locate similar products and perform comparative analysis Research branding ideas	Finished prototype for display. Create a unique or improved product Know their customer

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Conferences/Workshops	Attend conferences and workshops. Network with professionals in agriculture, sciences, and related disciplines.	Awareness of current trends and topics in the field. Improve critical thinking skills

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Farmer's Market	Participate in the setting up and breaking down of tents and tables. Networking with vendors Various tasks aimed at growing attendance: canvassing, targeting and inviting specific groups, etc	Demonstrate ability to work in fast pace environment Develop customer service skills Increase attendance at weekly markets

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Alternative Economies	Guest lecturers on cooperatives and credit unions	The ability to talk about the different models and think critically about who they benefit

GOAL: Leadership

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Garden Tours	Students will lead visitors of WBMG on tours of garden	Students will demonstrate awareness of crops growing in garden. Ability to communicate effectively (practice eye contact, listening and collaboration) with each other on these tasks as well as with WBMG guests

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Social Justice	Identify societal issues in work community and home community	Empowered to take action to effect positive change Engage formally and informally in dialogue about these issues

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Volunteering	Students will direct volunteers in various garden tasks	Improve ability to work collaboratively while organizing people into work groups and giving direction

Objective	Task(s)	Outcome(s)
Mentorship	Veteran students will be assigned neophyte employees at the start of the semester The pairs will be required and encouraged to work together on specific tasks	Positive relationships between neophyte employees and veterans A culture of partnership and camaraderie amongst the employees

Appendix C

Seed & Plate article link below and article attached:

<http://theseedandplate.com/bantu-gross>