

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
OFFICE OF SERVICE-LEARNING  
2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

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### **Introduction**

Since 2005, the University of Georgia Office of Service-Learning (OSL) has focused on expanding academic service-learning courses locally and globally through a range of faculty development programs. With its unique partnership between the Vice President for Instruction and the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach, the OSL is a bridge between the instructional and public service missions of the University, enabling students and faculty to apply classroom knowledge and research to community issues. In this way, the OSL helps strengthen UGA's historic land- and sea-grant mission by encouraging integration of teaching, research, and service through service-learning and community engagement.

The University is now recognized as a Carnegie Community Engaged institution in part because of its commitment to and support for curricular engagement through service-learning, and also because of the OSL's leadership in delivering programs designed to build faculty capacity for community engaged teaching and scholarship. The OSL is now poised to expand its original focus on faculty development to include supporting community engagement initiatives across the University. This strategic plan establishes the following four goals for the next five years in order to build on the OSL's strong record of accomplishments and to enhance UGA's support for service-learning and experiential learning:

1. **Build Faculty Capacity**— Encourage engaged teaching and research through expanded faculty development opportunities.
2. **Enhance Student Learning**—Create new academic pathways for service-learning and experiential learning.
3. **Encourage Community Engagement**—Support community-university partnerships for expanding service-learning and experiential learning opportunities.
4. **Institutionalize Engagement**—Measure impact and expand funding to sustain service-learning and community engagement activities.

### **Mission**

The UGA Office of Service-Learning supports academic service-learning and community engagement initiatives designed to enhance students' civic and academic learning, promote engaged research that is responsive to community needs, and contribute to the public good through mutually beneficial community-university partnerships.

### **Service-Learning at UGA: History and Accomplishments**

In 2005, the Provost's *Task Force Report on General Education and Student Learning* recommended forming an office that would coordinate, promote, and expand service-learning courses across campus

and through study abroad. The establishment of the OSL represented the culmination of a nearly decade-long effort to encourage and support student and faculty engagement in the community through academic courses and scholarship. The *Task Force Report* also recognized the increasing importance of community engagement to student learning and to supporting UGA's mission as a land- and sea-grant institution:

Students should recognize their responsibilities as citizens of their communities. Precisely because the state supports higher education, the university will always be engaged in solving the problems of the local community, the state, and the nation. The university can help the community, but engagement within the community can also help the university attain a myriad of educational goals. (p. 4)

For this reason, the Vice President for Instruction and the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach agreed jointly to support the Office of Service-Learning through a partnership that is unique nationally and that symbolizes a commitment to connecting the instructional and public service missions of the University for the mutual benefit of students, faculty, and the community.

The OSL began its work with three principal goals:

1. Providing support for faculty designing and teaching service-learning courses.
2. Developing institutional structures for tracking and assessing service-learning.
3. Forging stronger connections between academic and public service units to expand service-learning courses and experiential learning opportunities.

Since its inception, the OSL's focus on faculty development has resulted in a diverse portfolio of programs open to all career tracks of faculty—such as the Service-Learning Fellows program; funding and grant opportunities; awards and recognition programs; and the development of faculty leaders across campus.

**Efforts to institutionalize service-learning** have resulted in the following OSL accomplishments:

- Implementation of an S designation for identifying service-learning courses in CAPA.
- Development of systems for collecting enrollment and course tracking.
- Implementation and analysis of a service-learning course survey to assess service-learning's impact on student learning.
- Integration of service-learning in over a quarter of UGA's study abroad programs.

**In the 2019-20 academic year**, service-learning courses were offered in all 17 of UGA's schools and colleges:

- 242 service-learning courses were taught through 463 course sections.
- 9,630 undergraduate and graduate/professional students were enrolled in service-learning courses.
- An estimated 336,000 service hours was provided through service-learning courses to local and international communities, representing a \$8.4 million benefit to the community.

Today, the OSL is emerging as a national leader in innovative service-learning programming. OSL affiliated faculty frequently present at service-learning teaching and research conferences, serve on conference and journal editorial boards in the field, and host delegations from visiting institutions

interested in modeling initiatives based on UGA programs. In 2010, the OSL hosted the Gulf-South Summit on Service-Learning and Civic Engagement Through Higher Education, a national conference attended by over 500 faculty and administrators. In June 2014, the OSL hosted the Campus Compact Diving Institute, an international institute for training new professionals in the service-learning field.

Additionally, the OSL provided leadership for the University's successful 2010 application for the Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement Classification. This elective classification is the result of an ongoing national dialogue in higher education challenging colleges and universities to renew their civic purpose by forming collaborative partnerships to address community needs. The OSL also coordinates UGA's annual application for the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, the highest federal recognition of a university's commitment to service-learning and general community service. As a result of the OSL's leadership, UGA has been recognized on the Honor Roll since 2006.

For a research university like UGA with a rich history of public service, our challenge is to continue integrating community engagement across the University's teaching, research, and service missions. Through this strategic plan, the OSL will build on its strengths and continue to provide leadership for the development of innovative programming to support service-learning, engaged research, and community engagement initiatives.

## **2020 Strategic Goals**

Through its four strategic goals, the OSL will broaden its reach to become a comprehensive community engagement office in keeping with offices at peer and aspirant institutions that support service-learning, engaged research, community-university partnerships, and a broad array of experiential learning opportunities for UGA students.

### **Goal 1: Build Faculty Capacity— Encourage engaged teaching and research through expanded faculty development opportunities**

The OSL will continue to build on successful faculty development programs, like the Service-Learning Fellows, that help build faculty capacity and leadership for expanding service-learning course offerings, as well as creating new opportunities for engaged research.

#### ***Strategy 1.1 - Create new faculty development and leadership opportunities***

The OSL has worked with faculty across all career tracks to integrate service-learning and community engagement principles into faculty activity. The OSL will build on signature faculty development programs through the following activities:

- Support faculty incorporating service-learning into courses offered through the First-Year Odyssey program and more 1000- and 2000-level courses.
- Expand existing faculty development workshop series on service-learning best practices;
- Develop online workshops and resources for use in service-learning courses.
- Reach out to more faculty interested in service-learning and experiential learning.
- Work with schools and colleges to create customized faculty development workshops and opportunities.

- Provide funding and opportunities for experienced service-learning faculty to take on leadership roles in support of institutional initiatives that will advance service-learning and experiential learning across campus.
- Continue to provide individual consulting and course design support for interested faculty and graduate students to ensure service-learning courses are aligned with best practices in service-learning research.

***Strategy 1.2 – Develop Support Programs for Engaged Research***

Community-engaged research is a collaborative approach that involves all partners in a research topic important to local partners with the aim of improving quality of life and enhancing communities. Research that responds to community needs is a natural outgrowth of service-learning projects and can lead to additional opportunities for undergraduate research. In addition, faculty may also find opportunities to connect service-learning activities with new research directions and broader impacts to society when seeking grants and funding. Building on existing faculty development programs, the OSL will promote engaged research opportunities through the following activities:

- Integrate community-based research principles into existing faculty development programs.
- Provide information and create incentives for service-learning affiliated faculty to consider scholarship of teaching and learning and community-based research projects in conjunction with their service-learning course activities.
- Develop a seed funding program to support faculty conducting research in conjunction with or related to their service-learning courses.
- Continue to recognize faculty through the Service-Learning Research Excellence Award.
- Provide avenues for faculty to connect to OSL-sponsored research projects.

***Strategy 1.3 – Create Academic Connections with PSO Units***

In support of *Strategy 2.4* of Public Service and Outreach’s (PSO) *2010-15 Strategic Plan*, the OSL will work to create more connections between academic and PSO units in order to provide service-learning and engaged research opportunities that are linked to PSO initiatives. In addition, the OSL will continue efforts designed to reduce barriers to PSO faculty participation in instruction in the following ways:

- Recruit additional public service faculty for participation in the Service-Learning Fellows program;
- Develop and disseminate resources for PSO faculty interested in connecting with instruction through service-learning courses or internships;
- Create mechanisms for PSO and academic faculty to collaborate on community engaged research projects.

**Goal 2: Enhance Student Learning—Create new academic pathways for service-learning and experiential learning**

Enhancing the academic and civic learning of UGA students through experiential learning opportunities is central to the OSL’s mission. The OSL will continue to support the development of new service-learning courses and other experiential learning opportunities through all of its programming.

***Strategy 2.1 - Expand curricular pathways for service-learning and experiential learning***

Service-learning methodology can be integrated effectively across the curriculum, from first-year programs to graduate coursework. The OSL will support the development of new courses and new

academic programs designed to increase opportunities for students to engage with the community through the following activities:

- Develop an Engaged Scholars Certificate program that provides a curricular pathway for undergraduate students to take a range of service-learning courses and internships and develop a culminating portfolio of community engaged coursework, activities, and research;
- Expand service-learning course opportunities through the First Year Odyssey seminars and general education courses;
- Partner with Office of International Education to create more international service-learning opportunities through study abroad and curriculum internationalization efforts;
- Promote development of additional service-learning enhanced and “S” suffix courses.

***Strategy 2.2 - Increase graduate-level opportunities for service-learning and community-based research***

In 2013-14, about 10% of graduate students at UGA took part in service-learning enhanced coursework in some 66 course sections offered across campus. As future faculty, a growing number of graduate students are also interested in learning about service-learning pedagogy and community-based research in preparation for the academic job market. The OSL will provide professional development and academic opportunities for graduate students to explore community-engaged teaching and research in the following ways:

- Develop a Graduate Portfolio in Community Engagement in partnership with the Graduate School that provides an opportunity for graduate students to develop and document competencies relating to community-engaged teaching, research, and public service and outreach.
- Support the development and implementation of service-learning courses at the graduate level, including GRSC courses for the Interdisciplinary Certificate in University Teaching.
- Create an online course on integrating service-learning in STEM disciplines for the NSF-funded Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning Network (CIRTL).
- Provide mini-grant funding to support graduate students involved in service-learning.

***Strategy 2.3 - Connect students to experiential learning opportunities in Public Service and Outreach***

The OSL promotes opportunities for students to understand and engage with the University’s land- and sea-grant mission through administration of the Public Service and Outreach Student Scholars Program, established in *PSO’s 2010-15 Strategic Plan (Strategy 2.2)*. Over the next five years, the OSL will develop this into a signature student program for PSO by working with faculty in every public service and outreach unit to create experiential learning opportunities for selected students. This year-long program is intended to provide deeper understanding of PSO’s purpose, breadth, and depth through supervised 150-hour internships with PSO and communities, help students link their public service experiences with their career and educational goals, and create a community of student scholars who understand the role of public service in Georgia and more broadly.

**Goal 3: Encourage Community Engagement—Support community-university partnerships for expanding service-learning and experiential learning opportunities**

The creation of mutually beneficial community partnerships is essential for expanding service-learning and experiential learning opportunities. The OSL serves as a nexus for community and campus collaborations by convening community members and university faculty and students around important

societal issues, developing and managing partnerships for multiple service-learning courses and experiential learning connections, creating tools for measuring impact, and promoting interdisciplinary collaboration around community-identified needs.

***Strategy 3.1 - Develop and support “Engagement Hubs” to promote interdisciplinary collaboration***

The OSL will establish and support themed “Engagement Hubs” that concentrate resources and funding on timely community needs such as food issues, service-learning in K-12, connections to the Latino community in Georgia, or other emerging community issues. Engagement Hubs create academic and community partnerships around public issues and link these needs to service-learning courses, faculty research, and public service initiatives. Hubs are also designed to incubate engaged research projects, spur interdisciplinary collaboration, and provide new contexts for experiential learning that do not require faculty to establish independent partnerships.

***Strategy 3.2 - Establish an AmeriCorps\*VISTA program***

Also known as the domestic Peace Corps, AmeriCorps\*VISTA is a national service program that provides funding for full-time staff members assigned to non-profit or educational organizations to support development of community programs aimed at poverty reduction. The OSL will develop an AmeriCorps\*VISTA program to support community partnerships for service-learning, and strategically place these members in select organizations to function as liaisons between the OSL and community in order to provide additional support for faculty teaching service-learning courses.

***Strategy 3.3 – Develop Community-University Partnerships and Support for Service-learning and Experiential Learning***

Service-learning initiatives at peer and aspirant institutions often have established procedures and staff dedicated to coordinating sustainable community-university partnerships and providing support for faculty teaching these courses. The OSL will implement the following strategies to help create, support, and assess partnerships for service-learning and experiential learning:

- Develop a staff position to help coordinate, develop, and assess relationships with community partners.
- Establish an award or program to recognize exemplary partnerships.
- Create risk management protocols to support service-learning and community partnerships, and implement a process to formalize partnerships through MOUs.
- Establish benchmarks to assess partnerships and community impact.
- Expand and administer the Campus Kitchen at UGA program to provide a central project hub for service-learning courses focused on food insecurity, aging issues, and food access.
- Establish and administer the Experience UGA field trip program in partnership with the College of Education and the Clarke County School District, and link service-learning courses to this partnership.
- Provide funding and administrative support for transportation to off-campus service-learning sites.
- Create a community-university lecture and events series in partnership with internal and external organizations.

**Goal 4: Institutionalize Engagement—Measure impact and expand funding to sustain service-learning and community engagement activities**

The OSL will continue to support service-learning’s institutionalization through the development and refinement of systems for assessing service-learning’s impact and effectiveness. Additionally, the OSL

will seek outside funding support for service-learning and engagement activities in order to sustain and expand the work and impact of the OSL.

***Strategy 4.1 – Develop mechanisms to track and report institutional data on service-learning***

The OSL will continue working with units across the University to improve institutional data gathering on service-learning courses and community engagement initiatives. This strategy will be accomplished through the following activities:

- Work with UGA’s colleges, schools, and select PSO units to assist the OSL in creating an improved system and better communication for tracking and assessment of service-learning’s growth across campus.
- Implement a web-based Service-Learning Course Directory application to allow real-time tracking and updating of service-learning course offerings, as well as a search and browse feature for students and advisors.
- Collaborate with the Office of the Vice President for Instruction and other campus units on strategies for tracking service-learning courses during implementation of Athena.
- Collaborate with other OVPI units and schools and colleges to create a streamlined system for designating service-learning courses to improve the “S” suffix designation process.
- Collaborate with Academic Planning to provide leadership for new assessment and data-gathering methods in support of the 2020 UGA Strategic Plan.
- Conduct research on service-learning’s impact on retention and persistence toward graduation in partnership with Institutional Effectiveness.

***Strategy 4.2 – Enhance assessment of service-learning and community partnerships***

The OSL conducts extensive assessment of the impact of service-learning courses through the Service-Learning Course Survey, and evaluates all faculty development and student programs sponsored by the office to improve effectiveness. Assessment and evaluation will remain a high priority, and the OSL will continue to provide institutional leadership to explore new approaches for quantitative and qualitative assessment of community engagement and service-learning. Particular focus will be devoted to developing ways to measure the impact of service-learning on existing community partnerships.

***Strategy 4.3 - Create a development and fundraising plan***

As the OSL becomes a more comprehensive community engagement office, new funding sources must be cultivated. Over the next five years, the OSL will focus more aggressively on attaining external funds by creating a development plan and seeking out external grants to fund initiatives.