



UA's Student Community Engagement Center Empowers Students as Community Leaders ⁶

TRANSFORMATION *through* COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

THE DIVISION OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS ANNUAL REPORT

2019

Division of Community Affairs
ANNUAL REPORT 2019

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From the **PRESIDENT**

To Members of The University of Alabama Family:

I congratulate the Division of Community Affairs not only on another successful year in 2019, but on the excellent model with which it describes its ongoing activities: Relevance, Reciprocity, Research and Resilience. Having such a model to guide current and future work provides a sense of direction that speaks well of the operation that will help keep their focus in setting goals for the future.

It is also with great pleasure that I note the important role students play in the Division. To quote Dr. Pruitt: "From the ground up, students are at the core" of a new group working under Community Affairs' direction, the Student Community Engagement Center. I look forward to reading about their work in future issues of the *Annual Report*.

I also applaud the repeated recognition of the importance of forming partnerships involving faculty, staff, students and community members. This is how to get important work done and the way to give students an important role in our University story. And once again I thank the Division for the key role it plays in our successful Fulbright Awards efforts.

Stuart R. Bell

President



**From the
VICE PRESIDENT FOR
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**

*Relevance. Reciprocity. Research. Resilience.
These four concepts best summarize how our
University uses its resources and personnel to
address issues and solve problems of critical
importance in our state and in the larger society.*

Once again, 2019 was the kind of year in which we had so many successful programs vying for attention. It is difficult to know where to start my *Annual Report* review. As you will see when reading this publication, we have again been guided by the 4 Rs of Relevance, Reciprocity, Research and Resilience. By pursuing this model, we most likely have had our best year ever.

In many ways our students are at the heart of what we do, working as graduate assistants, hourly workers and as volunteers. They not only make many of our programs possible; they make them successful. Take the cover story about the Student Community Engagement Center (SCEC). As our lead story for the publication, the SCEC sets the tone for this entire issue. This story is what Community Affairs is all about. Students are full partners in the work of the Division, and SCEC empowers students to use their own skills to develop new projects and support established ones. From the ground up, students are at the core of this new group that is working in a beautifully renovated section of Capital Hall.

It was also a good year for the *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*. With an editorial board comprised of some 49 distinguished scholars from throughout the United States and several foreign countries—and created, edited and published right here in Tuscaloosa—JCES is recognized as one of the world's leading journals in engagement scholarship. The editor is Dr. Marybeth Lima of LSU, and the associate editor is Dr. Drew Pearl of our staff. They are assisted by seven others, four of whom are members of our own Division of Community Affairs. While other journals in our field have opted to go 100 percent online, JCES remains committed to hard copy as well. There remains a value of the physical object that you can hold in your hand and turn the pages.

In each *Annual Report* we report the University's Fulbright winners, a process aided by the CCBP staff. In 2019-2020, in part due to the work of Dr. Beverly Hawk of our staff, UA had 15 Fulbright winners, putting us for the fourth time in five years in the Top Producer category.

As our executive director of CCBP, Dr. James E. McLean gives us a report on our successful research grants program, led by visiting grants expert and author David G. Bauer. During 2019, 10 teams completed the program and another 12 began the course. One of our own, Dr. Nicole Prewitt, reports that teams from two of the programs she directs participated and describes it as a "great team-building process."

Andrea Zeigler once again directed one of our most intensive programs, Swim to the Top, a program that works with the Benjamin Barnes YMCA to teach vulnerable youngsters about water safety and how to swim. Some 121 children and youth ages 4 to 14 were given the opportunity to improve their swimming ability. The importance of this work is underscored by the fact that African American youth ages 5 to 19 are more than 5 times as likely as whites to drown in swimming pools.

Finally, Dr. Nicole Prewitt directed another successful HomeFirst program. This program is a financial wellness initiative that serves low- to moderate-income individuals and families throughout Greene, Hale and Tuscaloosa Counties seeking first-time homeownership or foreclosure prevention.

These are just a few of our many successful Community Affairs programs now with multi-year success. I congratulate all the faculty, staff, students and community partners who are responsible for this important and outstanding work.



spotlight on

STUDENTS

GLOBAL CAFE

UA's Student Community Engagement Center Empowers Students as Community Leaders

Drew Pearl, Director of Community Engagement Research and Publications, CCBP

When The University of Alabama's Student Community Engagement Center (SCEC) opened its doors in April 2019, it did so with the primary purpose of providing students with the space and resources to effectively engage with community partners, while at the same time advancing their scholarly, research and educational goals. Students have always been essential partners in the programs hosted through the Division of Community Affairs, and the SCEC purposefully builds on that tradition by centering students as full partners and colleagues in the work of community-engaged scholarship. Not only does this empower students to contribute their own expertise and insight to new and established community/university partnerships, but it also models that an intentional participatory approach is reflective of the way the Division builds and supports transdisciplinary collaborations.

The design of the SCEC was heavily influenced by students and what they believed would be most relevant to their interests and the needs of their partnerships. Notably, all of the students recognized the need to encourage collaboration among seemingly disparate disciplines in order to work to address some of the most pressing

societal issues. To this end, students from the following six colleges and one school actively engaged over the course of the SCEC's first year: the College of Communication and Information Sciences, the College of Community Health Sciences, the College of Education, the College of Engineering, the College of Human Environmental Sciences, the School of Social Work and the Honors College.

Dr. Kellie Mayfield, an assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition at Georgia State University, visited the SCEC in October 2019. Mayfield is a mixed-methods researcher who specializes in community-based approaches and focuses on the availability of healthy foods. Mayfield gave two different workshops. The first focused on her experiences doing mixed-methods community-engaged research, and the second focused on working in authentic partnership with vulnerable populations. Hearing from Dr. Mayfield helped participants to see not only how evidence-based research can contribute to the public good when working in partnership with the community, but also how community engagement can provide the framework for engaging in mutually beneficial partnerships in the spirit of co-creation.



Several students came together for an informal reflection session to talk about plans for the following year. Students commented on the opportunities to connect with and learn from others in different majors or degree programs, as well as those working with different community partners. To many of them, the SCEC provided them with a space to better understand the many exciting things in community engagement across the campus. As the conversation turned toward plans for the 2020–2021 academic year, the prospect of cohort-based programs for students and the organizations in which they are involved was raised. Students felt that intentional community-building over a full year would be beneficial in the continued growth of UA students' involvement in community engagement and in the SCEC. These suggestions have been incorporated into the future plans for the SCEC.

Students have always been central to the work of community engagement, and it was their vision that served as the initial spark for the SCEC, so it is only fitting that their insight has identified the pathways for its continued growth as we look to the future and establish a model for student involvement in community-engaged scholarship.

To learn more about the Student Community Engagement Center, visit ccbp.ua.edu/student-community-engagement-center or contact Dr. Drew Pearl at apearl@ua.edu or 205-348-2148.

UA Named 2019 Fulbright Top Producer; 15 Student Winners Named for 2019–2020

Beverly Hawk, Director, Global and Community Engagement, CCBP
Diane Kennedy-Jackson, Publications Coordinator, Division of Community Affairs

The University of Alabama is a national leader in the U.S. Student Fulbright Program. UA has experienced record success in the national Fulbright competition, and the University has been recognized as a Fulbright U.S. Student Top Producer in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

The Center for Community-Based Partnerships has been a key contributor to the UA Fulbright advising initiative. Through Global Café, Fulbright student alumni have worked hard to increase the number of applicants and winners in order to pursue Top Producer recognition, given to those few universities that achieved at least 10 winners who went forth to serve on their Fulbright Awards in a year.

UA has won 71 student Fulbright awards to 27 different countries from 2012–2019. During this period, the UA Fulbright student advising program has grown to engage with students and scholars across campus. UA award winners come from many departments, and UA campus Fulbright advisors are now drawn from the Capstone International Center, Modern Languages and Classics and the Center for Community-Based Partnerships. Through our work together, UA advances the first goal of its strategic plan to offer opportunities to develop global perspectives that will shape students' opportunities throughout their lives.

2019 was a landmark year for Fulbright at UA. We celebrated one Fulbright top producer class as they finished their service in spring 2019, and we congratulated another Fulbright top producer class as they departed in autumn 2019 to begin their service.

Fifteen UA students served on Fulbright Awards in 2018–2019

Rachel Combs of Florence, a graduate in political science and German, taught in Germany.

Jeremy Connor of Huntsville, a graduate in music performance (woodwind and percussion) and a master's student in German linguistics, taught in Germany.

Carrigan Fain of Gardendale, a graduate in international studies with a minor in Spanish and captain of the UA women's softball team, taught in Malaysia.

Dwyer Freeman of Haddonfield, New Jersey, a graduate in German language and literature with a minor in critical theory through social study, taught in Germany.

Nicole Henderson of Wellford, South Carolina, a doctoral candidate in anthropology, pursued research titled "Um Ciclo Vicioso: Cultural Beliefs, Stigma, and Substance Use in Brazil."

Maggie Holmes of Madison, Mississippi, a graduate in biology with minors in Spanish and psychology, taught in Spain.

Natalie Kidd of Birmingham, a graduate in biochemistry, conducted research titled "Modulation of Regulatory/Suppressive Actions of Gamma T-cells with a Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR)" at the University of Kiel's Institute of Immunology in Germany.

Madeleine Lewis of Huntsville, a graduate in religious studies and applied mathematics, taught in Montenegro.

Richard Lewis of Birmingham, a graduate in English with minors in social innovation and leadership, business, and creative writing, taught in Malaysia.

Taebryanna Sims of Mobile, a graduate in international studies with language study in French and Korean, taught in South Korea.

Shelby Smithson of Mobile, a graduate with a bachelor's and a master's in social work and studies in the Turkish language, taught in Turkey.

Theresa Stoddard of Eads, Tennessee, a graduate in interdisciplinary studies, global inequities and human rights, and Spanish, taught in Spain.

Kaylyn Williams of Hoover, a graduate with a bachelor's and a master's in accounting, taught in the Czech Republic.

Amanda Wolosz of Midland Park, New Jersey, a graduate in economics and finance with a minor in history, taught in Poland.

Annika Wulff of Army Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, a graduate in communicative disorders and German language and literature, taught in Germany.



Eleven UA students Departed to Serve on their Fulbright Awards for 2019–2020

Tommy P. Brazie of Huntsville, a graduate in international studies and German language and literature with a minor in French and the certificate in global studies, taught in Germany.

Amanda Filardo of Prospect, Kentucky, a graduate in international studies with minors in Russian and Italian and the certificate in global studies, taught in Kazakhstan.

Courtney Geary of Somerset, Pennsylvania, a University Fellow, a Blackburn Fellow, a 2019 graduate of New College majoring in interdisciplinary studies with minors in international studies and educational studies and language competency in Arabic, taught in Jordan.

Ciara Malaugh of Madison, a graduate in political science and a Truman Scholar, taught in Romania.

Larry Monocello of Erie, Pennsylvania, who holds a bachelor's in anthropology from Case

Western Reserve University and a master's in biocultural medical anthropology from UA with language study in Korean, conducted research titled "Male Body Ideals and Mental Health among Men in South Korea."

Amica Rapadas of Homewood, a graduate in international studies and geography with a minor in Chinese and the certificate in global studies, taught in Taiwan.

Pamela Grace Turner of Fairhope, a graduate in public relations and international studies with a minor in Spanish, taught in Colombia.

Sophia Warner of Birmingham, a Blackburn Fellow and a graduate in international studies with minors in German, Russian and liberal arts through the Blount Scholars Program, taught in Germany.

Samantha Wetzel of Hudson, Illinois, a graduate in public relations and foreign languages and literature with a concentration in German, taught in Germany.

Ellery Wiemer of Lombard, Illinois, a graduate in marketing with a concentration in global business, a minor in German and the certificate in global studies, taught in Germany.

Madeline Willoughby of Houston, a graduate in elementary education with classroom leadership expertise and international English teaching experience, taught in Malaysia.

Students who win a Fulbright Award win the chance to study, research, or teach abroad. Success in the Fulbright Student Award competition is the result of a demanding two-step national peer-review process. The applications that receive a positive review from the U.S. national juries in step one are forwarded to the host countries for selection and are approved by the national J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. Through this international community engagement

opportunity, UA students receive funding to serve abroad, share their culture, learn cultural lessons and bring those insights back to their U.S. communities.

The Fulbright juries are drawn to UA students because community engagement, academic excellence, international studies and global perspectives are characteristics the program values.

Those interested in learning more about the U.S. Student Fulbright program may visit international.ua.edu and us.fulbrightonline.org, or contact UA Fulbright advisers [Dr. Matthew Feminella of modern languages and classics, mfeminella@ua.edu](mailto:mfeminella@ua.edu); [Dr. Beverly Hawk of the UA Center for Community-Based Partnerships, beverly.hawk@ua.edu](mailto:beverly.hawk@ua.edu); or [Megan Wagner of the Capstone International Center, megan.wagner@ua.edu](mailto:megan.wagner@ua.edu).



Sophia Warner, Germany



Madeline Willoughby, Malaysia



spotlight on

CAMPUS & FACULTY

UA Crossroads Serves Campus, Prepares for New Initiatives

Lane McLelland, Director, Crossroads Community Engagement Center

Research

The statements on the following pages reflect the critical leadership skills gained by students who have participated in the Civic Leadership Dialogues hosted by the Crossroads Community Engagement Center since fall 2017. This credit-bearing course serves as a civic learning “laboratory” in which diverse UA student leaders are offered an experiential education to acquire the democratic knowledge and capabilities that can only be honed through hands-on, face-to-face, active engagement called for in the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future* (2012).

In 2018, Crossroads established a research protocol to learn from the 2017–2018 pilot group, as well as from each successive cohort, how to offer more effective civic engagement practices in higher education and local communities. In 2020, the initial findings based on the data of the first five cohorts will be presented at the annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, and Crossroads staff will continue to prepare related analyses for publication. This research demonstrates extraordinary promise for promoting respect and increased community understanding in today’s politically contentious environment.

Reciprocity

The students in the Civic Leadership Dialogues represent key campus constituencies and come to us as a result of reciprocal relationships with our valued UA partners who are working to improve the civic health of our communities. Similarly, partnering with the Office of Student Involvement and the Ferguson Student Center to host weekly Campus Dialogues, Crossroads facilitates open and honest engagement of issues related to identity, current events and campus life. For the past four years, these Wednesday gatherings have made it possible for multiple student organizations and departments from the Divisions of Student Life and Academic Affairs to build awareness of community issues among students, faculty and staff.

Since 2015, Crossroads has hosted its monthly Networking for Inclusive Campus Engagement Breakfast to provide a supportive structure that encourages further collaboration on programs or initiatives that foster a campus culture that is welcoming and inclusive of the rich diversity of experiences and identities on campus. Also in 2015, Crossroads began offering high-impact workshops to introduce the concepts and practices that foster a more inclusive mindset. These Practicing Inclusive Engagement (PIE) workshops have been delivered around campus and across the country, engaging participants in



My main takeaway as a participant is to simply be open to hearing new and engaging ideas. It’s okay to change your stance on something and that does not mean that you were weak in your position, it simply means that you are able to grow and learn new perspectives. Further, my time participating in the discussion showed me that I don’t have to be an expert in the field to have an intelligible conversation with someone, and there isn’t a need to throw out technical jargon to feel as though you know more than you do. This probably was one of the biggest lessons to me and honestly the biggest shift in mindset as well.

— Malik Seals

asking questions such as: “What part of my identity is most difficult to discuss with others who identify differently?” and “What perspectives haven’t we heard yet?”

Relevance

Under its new name in 2020 — Crossroads Civic Engagement Center — the Center will be a vital resource for UA by working to develop the civic capacity of its students and community partners in ways that help build a healthy democratic society at the Capstone and beyond. As part of its new mission and vision, Crossroads will continue to do work relevant to our campus and community partners through its dialogue initiatives and will develop a broader suite of learning modules and workshop experiences that include opportunities to reflect on and share perspectives about what it means to be an engaged citizen. These new Civic and Inclusive Values workshops (*CIVshops*) ask participants to engage with questions such as: “How do my actions impact my neighbor?” and “How do I use my whole vote — my actions at the ballot box and beyond — to make positive change?” Because being inclusive is critical to true democratic engagement, the PIE workshop curriculum will continue to be provided as an integrated component of the wider offerings of the *CIVshops*.

Engaged Learning

The UA Crossroads staff knows that collaborative work can increase the reach and effectiveness of campus and community programs, making initiatives more resilient to changing audiences and funding. Therefore, beginning fall 2019, we

In addition to getting to discuss topics that I am really passionate about, seeing my peers moderate discussions also taught me important lessons in leadership. The Crossroads instructors took on extremely difficult topics on which people can have very staunch views. They did this effectively and full of grace, enabling our group to leave these dialogues stronger than when we entered. They provided a model that I used when it was our group’s opportunity to lead a tough dialogue. My peers demonstrated dialogue skills I not only needed within the class but also in future conversations after this amazing semester of growth.

— Emma Mansberg

expanded the resources we provide for campus and community partners in the area of engaged learning — the process of prioritizing the learner within educational spaces. By focusing on the fundamentals of effective facilitation and content delivery, we can create experiences that invite diverse perspectives and increase the recall and application of concepts. Through the ongoing success of our PIE workshops, our brand of workshop design and facilitation has become recognized across campus as relying heavily on interactive activities, purposeful use of music and unique visual aids. This year, we have shared our expertise and resources with partners through three main avenues, including

our Engaged Learning Series, Facilitation Stations and Partner Consultation.

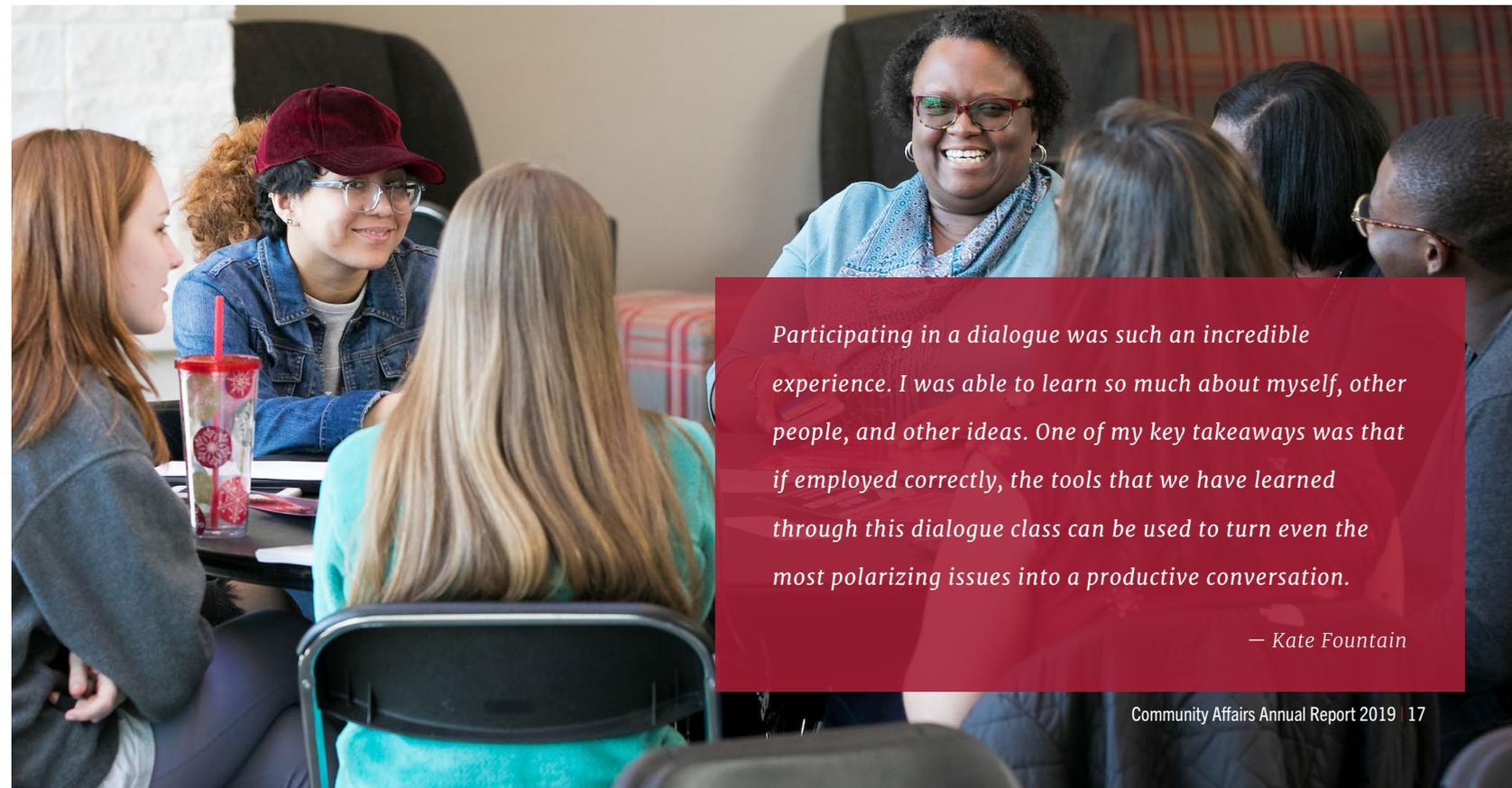
The Engaged Learning Series is a facilitation training and certification program provided for a cohort of UA community members. The inaugural cohort, scheduled to launch in January 2020, includes professional staff representatives from the Culverhouse College of Business, UA Honors College, the Center for Community-Based Partnerships and undergraduate and graduate student staff from UA SafeZone and Crossroads. Each participant who completes at least 10 of 13 sessions during the series will be certified as an Engaged Learning Facilitator by UA Crossroads.

Crossroads also supports partners in their engaged learning goals through Facilitation Stations. These one-time, staff-led sessions cover the basics of facilitating, along with important “Dos and Don’ts.” They are designed to be introductions

or refreshers for students, staff, or faculty groups that regularly deliver content on campus and are seeking ways to improve their technique and increase effectiveness. During the second half of 2019, Crossroads staff provided multiple Facilitation Stations for campus partners, such as Housing and Residential Communities and the Women and Gender Resource Center (WGRC).

When one-on-one sessions are necessary for a campus or community partner’s goals, Crossroads staff provide engaged learning consultations. This year, Crossroads provided these consultations for residential advisors in Tutwiler Hall and Bryce Lawn, as well as for the “Men’s Story Project” hosted by the WGRC.

To learn more about the Crossroads Community Engagement Center, visit crossroads.ua.edu or contact Dr. Lane McLelland at lane.mclelland@ua.edu or 205-348-6930.



Participating in a dialogue was such an incredible experience. I was able to learn so much about myself, other people, and other ideas. One of my key takeaways was that if employed correctly, the tools that we have learned through this dialogue class can be used to turn even the most polarizing issues into a productive conversation.

— Kate Fountain

Program Trains Community and University Partners for Successful Grant and Fundraising Efforts

James E. McLean, Executive Director, CCBP



A primary goal of the Division of Community Affairs is the creation of partnerships that engage communities and change lives for the better. In most cases, doing so requires money. The Division's Winning Grants and Sustaining Communities Program was developed to address this need by training community/University teams in the skills of grantsmanship and fundraising, thereby enhancing opportunities to obtain essential funds. Grants assist our partners with developing and implementing programs, while fundraising provides sustainability.

Planning for the program took place in 2015 and the first cohort began in January 2016. Revisions were made to the format and length of the program for the 2017–2018 academic year based on participant feedback from the first cohort. Today the program includes workshops that address federal grants, foundation and corporate grants and professional fundraising. Other topics covered include finding matching funds for grants, reviewing grants and team building for grant success.

The workshops are taught by nationally acclaimed grant trainer David G. Bauer, the author of more than 15 books on the topic. The workshops are based on his award-winning books, *The "How To" Grants Manual: Successful*

Grantseeking Techniques for Obtaining Public and Private Grants, and *The Fund-Raising Primer: A First Book for Individuals Involved in Raising Funds for Not-For-Profit Organizations*. What sets this program apart from similar endeavors is that each workshop is accompanied by grant coaching sessions with Bauer, who is considered by many to be the best grant trainer and grant coach in the country.

The program is organized around teams, each of which addresses a community-identified need relevant to the team's respective community. Teams are co-led by a community member and faculty, staff, or student from The University of Alabama (UA). The program begins in August each year and runs through the following June. During this period, the teams clarify their need, identify potential funders and develop a grant proposal supported by Bauer's coaching.

During 2019, a cohort of 10 teams completed the program and another cohort of 12 teams began. The teams addressed issues ranging from social needs to health care, from education to veterans, from technology to higher education and more, with a geographic range spanning from Mobile to North Alabama.

A unique characteristic of this program is that UA and community members are equal partners

in the process. This reciprocity carries over to the determination of the fiscal agent for the grants that are sought. The fiscal agent selected is the entity that is in the best position to be awarded the grant. More often than not, that entity is the community partner rather than the University, as evidenced by the fact that the University has been selected in less than 10% of these cases. It does, however, often become a subcontractor.

The relevance of the program can be seen in the results achieved by its participants.

Dr. Nicole Prewitt, director of Programs and Partnerships for Community Engagement at UA's Center for Community-Based Partnerships, shared that teams from two of the initiatives for which she is responsible — Saving Lives and the Tuscaloosa Consortium for Higher Education (TCHE) — participated in the 2018–2019 cohort. "It was a great team-building process for both teams," said Prewitt. "The Saving Lives team developed a draft proposal to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation related to connecting faith communities and public health using a collective impact approach. The TCHE team focused on broadening minority participation in mass communication and developed a draft proposal to the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation."

During that same year, Dr. Jermaine Mitchell and a team from the University of Montevallo partnered with UA's Swim to the Top program team to create and identify ways to fund a dual-generation swim intervention program with the goal of reducing unintentional drownings among rural African Americans. Mitchell was involved with the Swim to the Top program (see page 24) while a student at UA, and utilized the experiences and knowledge gained as a result to inform the creation of Dive into Thrive, with plans for the program's implementation at the University of Montevallo, where Mitchell is an assistant professor of exercise and nutrition science.

Acquiring grants that allow for program creation and launch is but one aspect of the Winning Grants and Sustaining Communities program. As the program name implies, sustainability beyond the initial funding and creation is key to a program's long-term success and impact on the community. This is where the training component for professional fundraising comes into play as an equally important aspect of Bauer's grants program.

For more information on the Winning Grants and Sustaining Communities program, contact Dr. Jim McLean at jmclean@ua.edu or 205-348-4189.



spotlight on

COMMUNITY

HomeFirst Program Teaches Financial Literacy, Places Participants Closer to First-Time Homeownership

Ashley Cunigan, Student Assistant, CCBP

As an initiative of the Center for Community Based-Partnerships, HomeFirst serves Greene, Hale and Tuscaloosa County individuals and families on their path toward first-time homeownership or foreclosure prevention. Dr. Nicole Prewitt, director of Programs and Partnerships for Community Engagement, leads a service-learning course to introduce students to effective strategies to promote financial and housing stability in the United States, emphasizing pathways to homeownership among low- to moderate-income populations. Susan Kasteler serves as the program coordinator responsible for service learning.

The mission of the HomeFirst initiative is to serve Greene, Hale and Tuscaloosa County individuals and families on their path toward first-time homeownership. Anita Lewis, director of the Greene County Housing Authority, commented that smaller communities are often overlooked for potential homebuyers. "We see everyone around us growing. Our residents deserve a nice home. If we can help them step up, then we need to do everything we can." The housing authority properties in Greene County give residents an opportunity to buy the house they are currently renting. The HomeFirst program helps these participants prepare for that process.

Part of the preparation process is provided to community participants by University of Alabama students. As a part of a service-learning course, students are trained to serve as financial coaches within the HomeFirst program. Eleven student coaches and four student leaders supported the HomeFirst program in 2019, collaborating with 75 community participants about their financial plans.

The 15 students and three HomeFirst staff members provided 231 coaching meetings and completed 330 financial coaching modules. Throughout the meetings and modules, students provided knowledge and resources for successful homeownership. Volunteer coaches not only gave assistance in Tuscaloosa, but also traveled to Hale and Greene Counties. Student coach Arianne Esteve was able to help participants from all three counties. "It was cool to see different people at different stages. I worked with different participants weekly. This program shows that it is never too late to look at buying a house."

Residents in these smaller communities mentioned that they appreciated students reaching out and hoped the program would continue for years to come. Participants in Hale County met at the Hale Empowerment



Revitalization Organization (HERO) offices in Greensboro. Participant Deja Jackson stated the curriculum was "straightforward and well-taught" and she has been able to track her spending due to her participation in the program. When asked about her experience working with a student, she stated, "It was a good experience."

HomeFirst coaches made efforts to help participants develop applicable savings plans, raise their credit scores and reduce debt. Participant Shikaishia Edwards said the most important thing she learned from HomeFirst is the importance of a credit score and how to raise it. "I didn't know it was so important before," said Edwards. "Since I came here, my credit score has jumped up 45 points."

Ashley Adams, senior student in Human Resources Management, was a coach in last year's HomeFirst program. "We [student coaches] are financially coaching people who haven't been able to purchase a home step by step," said Adams. "It [the program] has made a huge impact on me too." Adams said she did not have an idea of how to make savings before but

now, as she will start her job in a few months, she has a clear plan.

The specially designed HomeFirst curriculum covers savings, money management, banking, credit building, debt reduction and homebuyer readiness. Student coaches met with participants over three months to guide them through the curriculum. The goal is to help participants identify the obstacles blocking their way to purchasing a home, and develop solutions. With the assistance of HomeFirst, coaches were trained to offer one-on-one support to their clients while developing a broad-based action plan for homebuying. Student coaches not only offered assistance for savings plans but were able to help participants at any step on their path toward housing stability.

At the conclusion of the semester, HomeFirst participants were awarded with certificates for their involvement in the fall 2019 cohort. Additionally, upon completion of the program, 91% of participants felt very confident in their ability to manage money and 80% reported some or a lot of progress in paying off debt.

Several student coaches mentioned that the program was a great experience for them to learn more about developing a financial plan. To ensure program sustainability and community support, ongoing coaching will be provided to participants during the spring and summer with plans for a new team of student coaches to begin coaching new participants in fall 2020.

To learn more about HomeFirst, visit ccbp.ua.edu/homefirst or contact Dr. Nicole Prewitt at nbprewitt@ua.edu or 205-348-9819.

Swim to the Top Dives Deep, Breaks Through the Surface

Andrea Ziegler, Director for Community Education, CCBP
Daniela Susnara, Program Coordinator, CCBP

Within the United States, drowning is the leading cause of unintentional injury-related death for children ages 1 to 4. Providing accessible swim lessons, water safety information, and tips for proper supervision around water are simple solutions to prevent drownings. Further, children and youth ages 5 to 19 who are African American drown in swimming pools at rates 5.5 times higher than Caucasian children in the same age range. With these recurring statistics in mind, the Division of Community Affairs initiated its Swim to the Top program in June 2014.

Swim to the Top is an out-of-school-time summer program that offers children and youth from Tuscaloosa's West End free swim, physical education and academic enrichment programming. The program operates in partnership with the Benjamin Barnes YMCA summer program, making Swim to the Top a free program for all YMCA summer camp participants. During June 2019, the program was implemented with the support of The University of Alabama's College of Education, the Benjamin Barnes YMCA, Tuscaloosa PARA and First Tee of Tuscaloosa.

Through community partnerships, 121 children and youth ages 4 to 14 participated in Swim to the Top during 2019. Within the swimming and water safety component of the program, 84.42% of the children improved their swimming ability

by at least one "swim level" as described by the American Red Cross Learn to Swim program. Not only did students learn to swim, they also gained confidence and awareness around the water.

One participant from the 7 to 9-year-olds' group shared, "My family is not like, into swimming. But I want to teach them something that I learned. Like how I did the doggy paddle, the treading [water]. 'Cause, I mean, they don't really know how. I feel like I could show them like the rules ... how [the instructors] taught me, and then how I got taught how to swim. Like, I could teach the next generation."

While children and youth participating benefited significantly from their involvement in Swim to the Top during June 2019, so did the instructors. Swim to the Top swimming, physical education and academic enrichment instructors are made up of past and current University of Alabama College of Education students. Working as a Swim to the Top instructor provides an opportunity to practice new teaching pedagogies, styles and curricula in a supported environment. One instructor, a graduate student in the College of Education's Department of Kinesiology, described her experience teaching at Swim to the Top,

sharing, "Nothing was necessarily set in stone that said, 'You have to do this,' or 'You have to teach this way.' It was more about investing in our own practices and figuring out our students and how to best design your lessons to fit the students. I thought that freedom was huge. The amount of autonomy that we had as instructors was incredible."

Swim to the Top is primarily sponsored by the Division of Community Affairs. During 2019, additional monetary support was acquired from the USA Swimming Foundation, the Target Community Foundation, and the Walmart Community Foundation. All three awarded grants that supported the implementation of free swim lessons, goggles and swim supplies for the participating children and youth. Additionally, research about the program was presented at the Ninth International

Conference on Health, Wellness & Society in Berkley, Calif. and at the Engagement Scholarship Consortium Conference in Denver, Colo., and was published in the book, *Moral Development and Behavior: New Research*.

Swim to the Top has become a well-known and trusted program not only in the YMCA community, but throughout the West End community of Tuscaloosa. As trust has developed throughout the community, there has been an expressed need by community members to offer more opportunities for swim times and lessons for parents and family members. The Swim to the Top program plans to explore additional opportunities to provide free water safety and swim lessons for adults in the West End community.

To learn more about Swim to the Top, visit ccbp.ua.edu/swim-to-the-top or contact Daniela Susnara at dsusnara@ua.edu or 205-348-1007.



Annual Report Demonstrates How Faculty, Staff, Students and Community Partners Put Theory into Practice

Drew Pearl, Director of Community Engagement Research and Publications, CCBP
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As you have seen, this year's Division of Community Affairs Annual Report features stories grounded in the 4 Rs — Relevance, Reciprocity, Research, and Resilience — while celebrating the invaluable contributions of UA students, faculty, staff and community partners. Our approach to community engagement is built on authentic engagement through innovative programs that channel our mission of teaching, research and service toward improving quality of life for individuals and communities in Alabama and beyond.

This means that we are committed to intentionally framing our community engagement work as connected to the academic mission of the institution, with programs built on a theoretical foundation, informed by the current literature, and guided by empirical evidence.

Our Annual Report is organized to shine a spotlight on the work of UA's students, faculty, staff and community partners. As this report demonstrates, the success of each of our programs is due to the combined contributions of these groups. In particular, we provide an overview of how we think about student involvement in Community Affairs, and how our work is informed by, and in turn contributes to, a growing body of knowledge.

The work being done in the Crossroads Civic Engagement Center is a perfect example of our mission. As you read starting on page 14, Dr. Lane McLelland, the director of Crossroads, often points to the *Crucible Moment* report (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012), as a guiding light for their programs. This report contains four recommendations for colleges and universities to make civic engagement and education an institutional priority: **1)** foster a civic ethos across all parts of campus and educational culture; **2)** make civic literacy a core expectation for all students; **3)** practice civic inquiry across all fields of study; and **4)** advance civic action through transformative partnerships. By strategically building a network

of students, faculty, staff and community partners, Crossroads serves as a crucial hub of democratic engagement and civic action that reaches across all disciplines and units.

An excellent illustration of how students at UA engage with their communities through their coursework, the HomeFirst program (see page 22) is clearly having a tremendous impact on the program participants as they navigate the complex world of first-time homeownership and foreclosure prevention. In addition, the benefits of the program extend to the students enrolled in the associated service-learning course. According to Bringle and Hatcher (1995), service-learning is a "course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an



organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility” (p. 112). This definition is reflective of how we view community engagement at UA — our work with community partners is inextricably connected to our academic mission. In other words, we work in partnership with the community in service-learning courses because it is a highly effective way for our students to achieve their academic goals. Beyond academics, service-learning can also positively impact students’ personal development, including their self-efficacy, leadership skills and abilities, and career trajectory (Brandenberger, 2013), and is among the high-impact educational practices that increase student engagement, particularly students historically underrepresented in higher education (Kuh et al., 2017).

In the Division of Community Affairs, students have always been critical to the success of our programs, and the Student Community Engagement Center (SCEC), which you read about on pages 6–7, embodies this spirit and is the next

step in how students are empowered to be leaders for community engagement. Students really act as equal partners in Community Affairs, which means they contribute equally and provide new insight and ways to approach our community/university partnerships (Cook-Sather et al., 2019; Cook-Sather et al., 2014). The SCEC provides students with the space and resources to maximize both academic and social impact, with the guiding principle that students who lead community-engaged scholarship “can connect the community, the faculty, and the university in a powerful, productive alliance (Zlotkowski et al., 2006, p. 9).

Whether they are working directly with us as employees or involved in one of the many programs we support, students play an important role in almost everything we do in Community Affairs, and many continue to be involved even after they graduate, as some become members of our Community Affairs Board of Advisors (see communityaffairs.ua.edu/board-of-advisors).

We hope these examples have provided you with a brief look at how our programs are developed so that students can help to drive transformation through community collaborations.

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The stories throughout this publication are but a sampling of the Division's efforts. To learn more about the work of the Division of Community Affairs and its initiatives, visit us online at communityaffairs.ua.edu.

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