

**Service-Learning Course Survey:  
Data Analysis of Minority Student Learning Outcomes and Pathways to Success**  
*Dr. Shannon O. Wilder and Dr. Andrew Pearl*

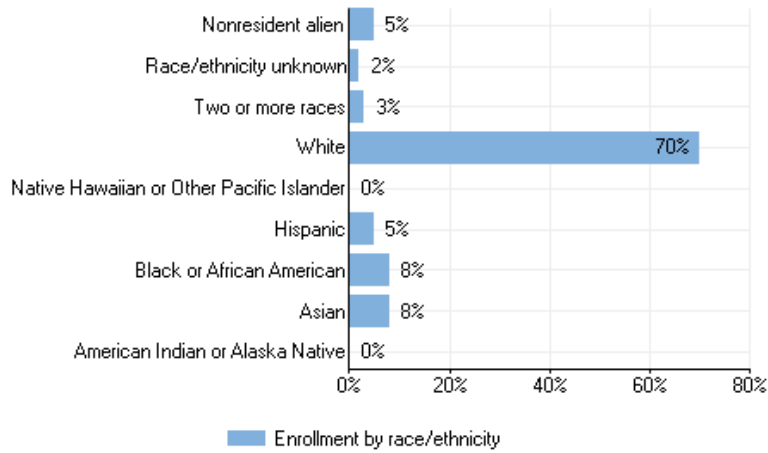
**The Students**

The University of Georgia (UGA) is a large, public land-grant institution with very high research activity that is also classified as community-engaged by the Carnegie Foundation. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the undergraduate and graduate students at UGA. Figure 1 shows the racial/ethnic percentages of enrolled students. Table 2 shows the graduation rates for the entire student population including gender and race/ethnicity (collected from IPEDS).

*Table 1: Enrollment by gender: Fall 2013*

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
All students	34,536	14,773	19,763
Undergraduate	26,278	11,320	14,958
Graduate	8,258	3,453	4,805

*Figure 1: Percent of all students enrolled, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2013*



*Table 2: Graduation rates (150% of normal time)*

<b>Overall graduation rates (2007 cohort)</b>	<b>Rate</b>
Total	83%
Men	81%
Women	84%
American Indian or Alaska Native	50%
Asian	84%
Black or African American	76%
Hispanic or Latino	81%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	NA
White	84%
Two or more races	83%
Race/ethnicity unknown	50%
Nonresident alien	75%
Transfer out-rate	6%

During the 2013-14 academic year, 182 unique service-learning enhanced courses were taught at UGA, and 377 course sections with service-learning were offered. These courses represented over 7300 student enrollments (representing both undergraduate and graduate/professional). Based on end-of-course surveys, students reported an average of 24 hours of service per class, totaling over 175,000 hours of service. According to estimates of the value of volunteer time this represents about \$3.9 million in benefit to the community. At least 28 service-learning course sections were also offered in study abroad contexts in 2013-14. Service-learning coursework is available in all of UGA's 17 schools and colleges.

Course and enrollment counts help the institution track how widespread service-learning courses are at UGA, but they do not help us understand the impact of this experience on student learning or assess the quality of the experience. To assess impact and quality, after every semester at UGA, a supplemental end-of-course survey is administered to students enrolled in service-learning courses. This survey is available to all service-learning course instructors on a voluntary basis. Of particular interest for research and analysis is understanding the motivations, learning outcomes, career-related outcomes, and pathways to success for students who are traditionally underserved and underrepresented at the University of Georgia. Currently, the survey captures race/ethnicity of respondents but does not capture first generation status, which is another important and growing underrepresented group across campus. Through analysis of student responses to the survey, we can gain a better understanding of the types of activities students are engaged in and what student report as the impact of these experiences and if there are reported differences by race/ethnicity.

Table 3 provides a race/ethnicity breakdown of the UGA student respondents to the service-learning end-of-course survey during the 2013-2014 academic year. The responses are heavily weighted toward White students. When controlling for students' demographic characteristics during research and assessment of multiple student learning outcomes, there are no significant differences that emerge related to race/ethnicity. However, this may be an artifact of the clear over-representation in the sample of White students. The voluntary nature of the survey could also contribute to this as well. Continued efforts are underway not only to enroll a broader and representative range of minority students in service-learning courses, but also to encourage all students enrolled in service-learning courses to respond to the end-of-semester survey so that we are able to better capture their learning outcomes in order to provide all students with pathways to successful academic careers. A new experiential learning requirement at UGA may make the service-learning course survey mandatory for all service-learning courses.

A revision of the survey will be undertaken in order to add items that capture issues such as campus climate, engagement, and sense of belonging related to their service-learning experiences that might help us better understand the experience of historically underrepresented students in comparison to White students. In addition, demographic information will now ask students who choose to provide this information if they are first generation college students.

*Table 3: Profile of service-learning survey responses*

	# of respondents
American Indian/Native American	3
Asian/Pacific Islander	54
Black/African-American	37
Hispanic/Latino	12

Multiracial	3
White (non-Hispanic)	332
Prefer not to answer	24

### **Institutional Supports and Issues**

The UGA Office of Service-Learning (OSL) 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. The OSL reports jointly to the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach and the Vice President for Instruction. The OSL provides a wide range of resources and programs to facilitate high-quality service-learning experiences on campus. These resources include:

- Service-Learning Fellows program: This is a year-long faculty development program that provides an opportunity for selected faculty members to integrate service-learning into their teaching, research, and public service work while becoming recognized campus leaders in service-learning pedagogy and community engagement.
- Service-learning workshops designed for faculty members and graduate students interested in exploring best practices for designing and implementing service-learning enhanced coursework. Two examples of workshops offered are Introduction to Effective Service-Learning Course Design and Integrating Critical Reflection in Service-Learning.
- Resources on the website, including modules specifically designed for supporting faculty members and students interested in engaging with Latino communities. These modules are intended to help build background knowledge and more effectively prepare students to work with the diverse Latino communities in our area. Each module includes a video; links for additional, detailed information about topics covered; and sample reflection questions that can be used or adapted by instructors to discuss content with students.
- Mini-grants, up to \$500, are intended to directly support activities related to developing, implementing, or expanding academic service-learning opportunities for UGA students.
- The OSL lending library contains an extensive collection of books and periodicals relating to service-learning which faculty members and students may access.
- The UGA Service-Learning Course Directory lists service-learning coursework (both classes designated with an S and those not designated) by semester. This directory database is intended to be used both by students interested in service-learning course opportunities, as well as administratively to track service-learning activities on campus.
- PSO Student Scholars program provides the opportunity for a select cohort of undergraduate students to explore and engage with the University of Georgia's public service and outreach (PSO) mission. Supported by the Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach, and administered through the Office of Service-Learning, this year-long program is intended to provide deeper understanding of PSO's purpose, breadth, and depth through supervised service experiences with PSO and communities, to help students link their public service experiences with their career and educational goals, and to create a community of student scholars who understand the role of public service in Georgia and more broadly.

Academic courses with a service-learning component can be designated with an S suffix through CAPA, UGA's online course approval system. The course approval process can be used to

revise existing courses or propose new courses by designating the “S” suffix, and by providing evidence of service-learning in the Course Objectives and/or Topical Outline section of the course approval form. As of 2015, about 80 courses have received this designation.

Recently, an experiential learning graduation requirement was passed by University Council which is expected to dramatically scale up the number of service-learning courses available to UGA students. This will also allow the OSL ramp up assessment efforts.

### **Community Issues**

Despite being the home to UGA, Athens-Clarke County is among the poorest counties in the nation, with myriad, interrelated community issues, including poverty, food insecurity, and low high school graduation rates. To address these wide-ranging needs, each year the Office of Service-Learning sets priority areas to support campus-wide collaboration, community engagement, and interdisciplinary service-learning. Each “engagement hub” has one or more lead faculty members who help focus efforts, foster communication, and convene interested collaborators and community partners. In past years, these hubs have led to development of new coursework, successful funding of initiatives with federal grants, and innovative development of community partnerships. AmeriCorps VISTAs also help support many of these initiatives. The OSL also maintains long-term relationships, multi-faceted partnerships with several community organizations, including the Clarke County School District (CCSD) and the Athens Community Council on Aging (ACCA). These relationships lead to high-quality, mutually-beneficial partnerships that are conducive to promoting student learning and development.

Further, the OSL manages two sustained programs that identify and impact the Athens-Clarke County community. Experience UGA, a new partnership between the University of Georgia and the Clarke County School District, was launched with the goal of bringing every Clarke County student to UGA's campus for an annual field trip and opportunity to experience learning on a college campus, explore college options and interact with UGA students. Campus Kitchen at UGA is part of a growing national network called The Campus Kitchens Project (CKP). Each school affiliated with CKP shares the common goal of reducing food waste through sustainability efforts and combating food insecurity by addressing its root causes. UGA's Campus Kitchen student organization has partnered with the Athens Community Council on Aging to alleviate end senior hunger in the Athens area. As part of the Senior Hunger Coalition, CKUGA recovers food which would otherwise be wasted and transform it into healthy, balanced meals delivered to area senior citizens identified as food insecure. About 25 service-learning courses a year engage with this project in different ways depending on the course objectives.

### **The History/Evolution of the Program – How did it end up as it is?**

The Service-Learning Course Survey, which is used to assess student experiences in service-learning courses was developed and implemented in 2007 by the OSL's Service-Learning Curriculum Committee and was redesigned in 2009. Between Fall 2009-Fall 2011, 1290 students from 84 course sections (54 unique courses) in 26 departments have participated in the survey.

Most recently, it was redesigned again in the summer of 2013 when the OSL initiated a major overhaul of the end-of-course survey that is distributed to service-learning students at UGA. The goal was to capture more detailed information related to specific course characteristics and instructor decisions that contribute to student success. Further, the revised version of the survey captures detailed information about how online course components affect student learning

outcomes. During the redesign, several resources were consulted to inform our selection of survey items, including:

- Bringle, R., Phillips, M., & Hudson, M. (2004). *The measure of service learning: Research scales to assess student experiences*. Washington, DC: APA.
- Gelmon, S., Holland, B., Driscoll, A., Spring, A., & Kerrigan, S. (2001). *Assessing service-learning and civic engagement: Principles and techniques*. Providence, RI: Campus Compact.

The survey not only helps the OSL investigate student outcomes and pathways to success, but also gives instructors fine-tuned details of anonymous student feedback, encouraging them to reflect on what worked in their course, and what might be improved in future service-learning course offerings.

**A short anecdote that reveals how the program is embodied/enfleshed/enacted in relationship. It could be the story of a life, or a relationship, or a mistake, but just something to hold onto to give a sense of the program as lived in/not static**

In the end-of-semester survey, we ask students to briefly reflect on their experiences and report if they (anonymously) would like to share an experience that stands out to them, or if they have any concluding thoughts or suggestions about service-learning at UGA. Below are some of the most illustrative quotes from minority student respondents that we believe succinctly capture student learning, student development, and pathways to success. All emphasis is added to highlight specific elements of the quotes.

- “I will always remember this experience. It **gave me a better understanding** on what makes a student gifted and also how to interact with different behaviors.”
- “Service-learning has helped **increase my cultural capacity** for social work and better **prepare me for my future career.**”
- “Would strongly recommend service-learning for students interested in **leadership** or **personal development.**”
- “I **felt like an actual lawyer**, and not a student. I think it may be difficult to adjust to going back to class after this.”
- “It is much **more effective to learn by doing** than by reading and discussing.”
- “Service-learning courses such as this one, would allow UGA students to **learn more about different cultures.**”
- “I’m a criminal justice and psych major. I enjoy volunteering in the community and **will maybe even pursue a career related to the topics in this class.**”

**What makes the program sustainable? What makes the program vulnerable? What threats to the program’s vitality exist? What dilemmas of practice is the program facing?**

At UGA, there has recently been an experiential learning graduation requirement passed by University Council. Service-learning will play a key role in providing opportunities for undergraduate students to engage in experiential learning, which holds great promise for the sustainability of the OSL as a central support unit, as well as service-learning in general, on campus. There has already been increased faculty interest in the Service-Learning Fellows program in anticipation of the experiential learning graduation requirement.

The experiential education graduation requirement also represents potential vulnerabilities. As the numbers of students and faculty members interested in service-learning increases, the OSL needs to maintain a consistent definition of service-learning and continue to advance best practices. A primary issue will be sustaining the quality of the service-learning experiences offered so that students and community partners each continue to benefit. Further, increased attention and participation in service-learning has the potential to overburden community partners who may not have the capacity to work with an increased number of university partners and service-learning courses. In addition, with experiential learning as a graduation requirement, faculty members and students are likely to feel more pressure to offer/enroll in service-learning to meet the requirement. If these individuals are not prepared to/not interested in engaging with the community, and feel forced to do so, they are likely to end up causing more harm than good in the community, and will not achieve the positive outcomes that are associated with service-learning.

**The Edges of the Project – Where the project hopes to go, what is happening that might be beyond expectations (dangerous or exciting)?**

It is clear from our analysis of historic and current service-learning course survey data that this instrument was not designed to capture what could be unique perspectives and experiences of historically underrepresented students at UGA as they engage in service-learning courses. We are currently grappling with ways this instrument could be adapted to make sure we are broadly capturing relevant information from these students. This is an instrument that is used broadly across many kinds and iteration of service-learning courses to assess the impact of service-learning in its many forms. Many institutions are seeking to implement such a tool, and we have shared (and will continue to share) our survey instrument with other institutions with the goal of assisting in the assessment of service-learning courses at other colleges and universities. In this spirit, how can we also adapt this instrument to better serve the needs of and capture viewpoints of underrepresented students? In addition, how can we capture data that also can inform our institutional approach to service-learning more broadly without privileging some students voices over others? These are key questions for our work.

In addition to on-going assessment and program evaluation of service-learning courses, the OSL is engaged in research efforts, grounded in established theory, to contribute new knowledge to the literature. Research resulting from analyses of the course survey has already been presented at multiple international conferences, including the Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC) and the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE). There are plans to continue to advance this scholarship through publishing peer-reviewed journal articles to continue to disseminate the lessons we have learned from our experiences.

There are also opportunities to explore the alignment between this work and other on-going research in the OSL. For example, in partnership with a faculty member in UGA's Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, on-going research is exploring how service-learning impacts students' employment outcomes. In addition, in partnership with a faculty member in UGA's Department of Public Administration and Policy, we are exploring the motivations first-year students from underrepresented minorities, particularly how those motivations relate to service-learning.