

College and Community Collaborations: An Integrated 1st Year Experience

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Warm-Up

Your charge:

- Build a first-year learning community
 - On a brand new campus!
- Five academic faculty from five distinct disciplines
- Team teaching?
- Focus on leadership development
- Rural population, many first generation college students

The University of North Georgia

Mission statement:

The University of North Georgia, a regional multi-campus institution and premier senior military college, provides a culture of academic excellence in a student-focused environment that includes quality education, service, inquiry and creativity. This is accomplished through broad access to comprehensive academic and co-curricular programs that develop students into leaders for a diverse and global society. The University of North Georgia is a University System of Georgia leadership institution and is The Military College of Georgia.



UNG - Blue Ridge

UNG's Blue Ridge Campus opened in Fall 2015 and offers a variety of educational pathways that include dual-enrollment courses for high school students, a full-time program for first-time freshmen with courses that will enable students to complete degrees in regional high-demand disciplines, courses for adult learners getting started in college or returning to college to complete a degree, as well as continuing and professional education programs for career growth or personal enrichment.

LEAP Initiative at UNG



- LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise) is an AAC&U (Association of American Colleges and Universities) initiative designed to provide institutions of higher education with a practical framework for delivering an inclusive liberal education in a complex and diverse world.
- LEAP Georgia is committed to developing the LEAP vision through creation of purposeful pathways for students and high levels of student achievement of the Essential Learning Outcomes.
- UNG's LEAP Initiative is focused on renewing liberal education through faculty-driven reform and innovation by promoting High-Impact Educational Practices (HIPs) and institutional alignment with the LEAP Initiative and its Principles of Excellence.

First-Year Experiences

- First-year seminars or other programs bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis.
- The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies.

➤ AAC&U

Learning Community

- The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with “big questions” that matter beyond the classroom.
- Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors.
- Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines.

➤ AAC&U

Academic Service-Learning

- ...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.

➤ Bringle, R., & Hatcher, J. (1995). A service-learning curriculum for faculty. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 2, pp. 112-122.)



The Faculty Role

Blue Ridge Scholars Program



Inspiration for the Program

- Our program is based on the Guttman Community College model, with key differences:
 - Community college vs. four-year university.
 - Urban context (NYC) vs rural context (Blue Ridge, GA)
 - Guttman courses: Statistics, City Seminar, & Ethnographies of Work.
 - UNG Scholars Courses (core): Algebra, Statistics, English, Political Science, Psychology, & Philosophy.

The Program

- First two semesters of college
- Four classes each semester (connected by common theme)
- 1-hour leadership course
- Service-learning project (related to the year's theme)
- Meetings with Academic Success Coach
- Lunch and Learns



1st Semester Courses

- ENGL 1101
- MATH 1111
- POLS 1101
- PSYC 1101
- One (non credit) hour leadership course
- Exploration of service-learning project through course assignments

2nd Semester Courses

- ENGL 1102
 - MATH 2400
 - CGLO 1503
 - PHIL 2200
 - Leadership Course
-
- Additional work on service-learning project, including course assignments and work in the community

Scholars Themes

- 1st Year- Alcohol and Drug Abuse in our Community.
- 2nd Year- Poverty and Resilience in the North Georgia Mountains
- 3rd Year- Promotion of Fannin County Schools' efforts to Get Georgia Reading

Challenges

- Our classes have distinct course objectives.
- We must strike a balance between the typical course content and projects related to the program theme.
- The structure of the program does not lend itself to team teaching (like Guttman's program)
- We have to be cognizant of students' time.
- Choosing meaningful projects that are not excessive "extra work."

Challenges cont.

- Certain majors prefer different mathematics courses.
- Scholars divided for mathematics courses.
- Students regularly skipping 1-hour (non credit) leadership seminar.
- The instructor of the seminar now documents and reports performance.
- The seminar now accounts for 5% of students' grade in each of the academic courses.



Academic Services

Blue Ridge Scholars Program



Scholars Advising

- Mandatory advising session each semester
- Preferential scheduling, set just before early registration
- In-depth discussion of career goals and academic plans
- Course scheduling and assistance with registration
- Needs met across multiple departments (Financial Aid, Registrar's Office, etc)

Scholars Academic Conference

- Required each semester
- Preferential scheduling, set around midterms
- Scholars are given the opportunity to evaluate and modify goals they set during orientation and to discuss
 - academic successes and opportunities
 - challenges and available support services
 - anything they feel the need to talk about

Tutoring

Each semester, support is offered for writing and math. Scholars are strongly encouraged to participate.

Outreach services are provided for At-risk Scholars.

Communication between professors and Academic Success Coach is key.



Leadership Lunch and Learn Program



FREE LUNCH! 😊

Topics that promote success
(study skills, career
assessment, library resources,
money management, etc.)

Opportunity to engage with
professionals



Lunch and Learn Program (Part II)

Leadership Certificate Option:

- Goal: develop students' leadership skills outside of the classroom
- Non-credit, co-curricular

Encourages students to reflect on their own leadership style and enhances their competency level in areas that most graduate programs and employers are looking for:

- Core values / Self-awareness
- Leadership Assessment
- Oral and Written Communication
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Civic Engagement
- Career Planning

Academic Affairs Events

Like Lunch and Learn sessions, target Core Competency Areas while assisting with

- Transition between high school and college
- Study skills (time management, notetaking, etc.)
- Career Planning
- Knowledge of important university policies
- Enhancement of classroom instruction





Our Community Partner: Fannin County Family Connection

Sherry Morris



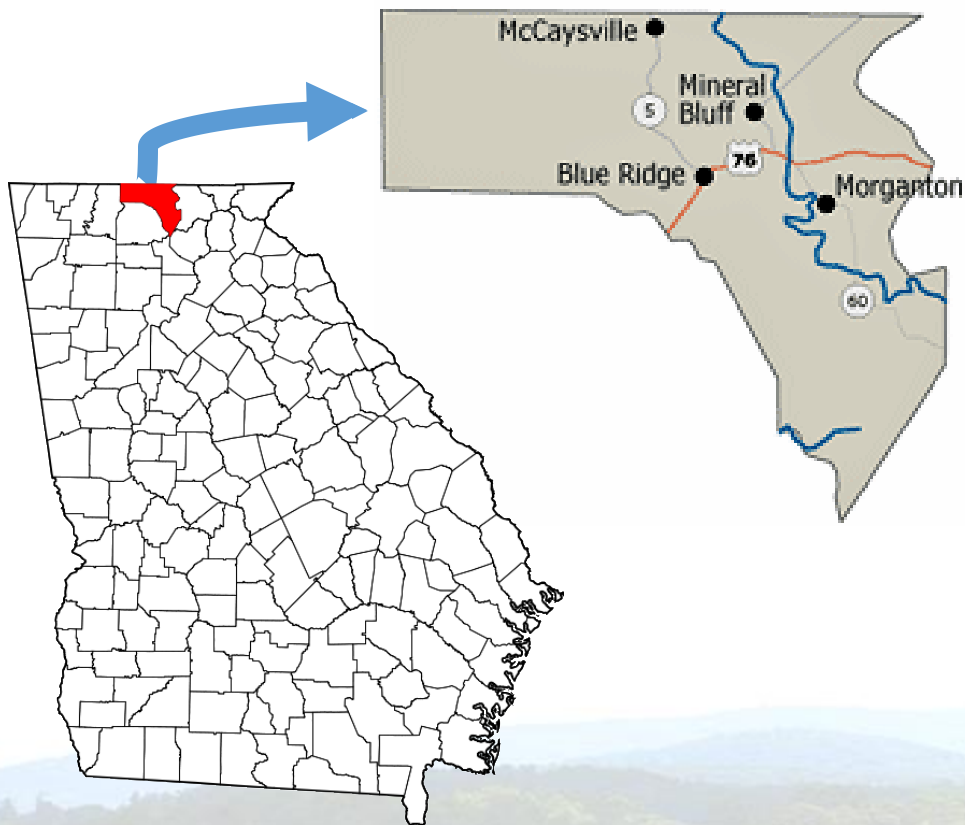
Fannin County Family Connection

- The mission of Fannin County Family Connection, Inc is to improve the well-being and health conditions of families in Fannin County through a collaborative system of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual supports.



— GEORGIA —
family connection[™]

Fannin County, GA



Total Population : 24,017

Median Household Income:

Fannin: \$41,487

Georgia: \$53,468

Individuals in Poverty:

Fannin: 14.1%

Georgia: 16.1%

Families, with children, with
annual incomes less than 150%
of the federal poverty threshold:

Fannin: 31.7%

Georgia: 32.0%

Fannin's stats do not reflect reality for kids

- Fannin is a mecca for second homes and eventual retirement homes for higher income families. This skews the average income greatly.
- Approximately 2/3 of the children in the school system are eligible for free and reduced lunches. Fannin provides free breakfast to every child.
- The county is a “Have & Have-not” society.



Types of Poverty

- **Situational poverty** is generally caused by a sudden crisis or loss and is often temporary. Events causing situational poverty include environmental disasters, divorce, or severe health problems.
- **Generational poverty** occurs in families where at least two generations have been born into poverty. Families living in this type of poverty are not equipped with the tools to move out of their situations.

- **Rural poverty** occurs in nonmetropolitan areas with populations below 50,000. In rural areas, there are more single-guardian households, and families often have less access to services, support for disabilities, and quality education opportunities. Programs to encourage transition from welfare to work are problematic in remote rural areas, where job opportunities are few.
- The rural poverty rate is growing and has exceeded the urban rate every year since data collection began in the 1960s. The difference between the two poverty rates has averaged about 5 percent for the last 30 years, with urban rates near 10–15 percent and rural rates near 15–20 percent (Jolliffe, 2004)



Effects of Poverty

Poverty involves a complex array of risk factors that adversely affect the population in a multitude of ways. The four primary risk factors afflicting families living in poverty are

- Emotional and social challenges
- Acute and chronic stressors
- Cognitive lags
- Health and safety issues



Poverty Simulation Promotes Understanding



THE 3 HOUR POVERTY SIMULATION, PROVIDES PARTICIPANTS THE OPPORTUNITY to:

- EDUCATE yourself about poverty in your area
- SIMULATE one (1) month of living in poverty
- TALK about your experience with others
- Begin to DISMANTLE barriers that perpetuate poverty
- COLLABORATE with community members



UNG was our partner in preparing for this event and for bringing it to the community.

A New Outreach is Formed



- With greater understanding of poverty and its effects, comes willingness to help. Through the work of UNG and Family Connection, a Poverty Awareness Group has formed with emphasis on:
- Literacy
- Transportation
- Self Sufficiency Skills



A Student's Perspective

Blue Ridge Scholars Program



The Program and Me

- 19 year old Sophomore at UNG
- First-year Blue Ridge Scholar and student
- Mentor to 2017-2018 cohort.
- In the Summer of 2016, I was invited to the first ever “Scholars Preview night” and was completely blown away.
- Joining the program was One of the best and most impactful and decisions of my life.



What Makes the Program Special to Me

- “What makes the program special for students, like myself?”
- A vast amount of student resources thanks to the dedicated faculty and professors.
- There are 4 Distinct Things Which make the program standout and shine.
 - Relationships, The Knowledge and Experience Gained, and the Impact.

Relationships

- The program was designed for a cohort of students to complete their core classes together while also incorporating service-learning projects and leadership courses into each semester
- The Cohort aspect of the program was beyond beneficial, helped with the “Freshman 15”
- Developed personable skills through Cooperation and teamwork, and became a tight knit group, “a little family”
- Established friendships and lasting relationships with Students, Faculty, and Staff

Knowledge and Experience Gained

- Engaged, involved, and passionate professors.
- Leadership Class: leadership skills, study habits, time management
- Service-Learning aspect of the Program allotted a chance to give back to and aid our struggling community as well develop communicative and organizational skills.
- Examples of Community Outreach within the program:
 - Creation of Pamphlets to be dispersed among the local high-school.
 - Volunteering with Family Connections to positively influence the community.
 - Presenting at the local high-school.

The Impact

- The scholars program has fashioned myself and others to be successful students and effective leaders for the future.
- The program has aided me in defining my voice not only as a student but as an individual.
- (Without sounding too cliché) The Scholars Programs truly has changed my life for the better.





Thank you!

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