Center for Serve-Learn-Sustain

Annual Report 2015-2016

Georgia Tech | Center for Serve-Learn-Sustain

Overview

The Center for Serve-Learn-Sustain (CSLS) began operating as an official unit of Georgia Tech in Fall 2015, with the arrival of its inaugural Director, Dr. Jennifer Hirsch. The Center's mandate is to implement Tech's new Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), "Serve-Learn-Sustain" (SLS), a key component of the Institute's 2015 SACSCOC reaffirmation of accreditation. This entails working with all six colleges and with units across campus to develop opportunities for students to engage in curricular and experiential learning opportunities focused on the theme, "creating sustainable communities." More broadly, the mandate entails making sustainable communities work a key focus at Tech, bringing together research, teaching, and practice. The plan addresses educational needs clearly voiced by our graduates to prepare students to understand the practical impacts of their disciplines on the world and use their disciplinary knowledge to work with diverse stakeholders to improve it. It also enhances long-held Georgia Tech values and directly responds to Georgia Tech's Strategic Plan, which calls for training students to become leaders in addressing critical global challenges and improving the human condition.

The Center's first year focused on establishing the office, including hiring three staff; honing strategy and approach; spreading awareness among faculty, students, and staff; beginning to develop partnerships with Georgia Tech and off-campus partners; and launching initial courses and programs. Here are some of the highlights from our first year.

La Amistad Project, Spanish Service Learning, Spring 2016

Big Ideas Brainstorming Session, Summer 2016

Spanish Service Learning Class, Spring 2016

Creating a Community of Practice

Much of our work this first year entailed convening conversations—with specific schools or units; across units; and with off-campus partners—to begin developing understandings of how potential partners define "sustainable communities" and what would make them interested in participating in the SLS effort. Our goal is to situate SLS as a community of practice in which faculty, students, staff, and partners share, learn, experiment, and reflect together. This approach builds on research and action demonstrating that the work of creating sustainable communities requires nurturing "culture[s] of adaptation, innovation, and collaboration" (Hiser 2013) that bring together diverse stakeholders to connect theory and practice in the context of a particular place—in this case, Georgia Tech.

SLS Big Ideas, *http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/resources/big-ideas*

Sustainable Communities Big Ideas at Georgia Tech

We used these initial conversations to begin to collaboratively define what "creating sustainable communities" means. The result is an interactive tool housed on the SLS website presenting 50+ ideas, all proposed by faculty and staff, as ideas from their disciplines and work that they believe are important with regard to creating sustainable communities. The ideas are linked to definitions and examples written by the people who proposed them, representing many different fields and perspectives. Developed by SLS graduate student workers, the tree map tool can easily be revised and expanded to incorporate new input; and the website includes a form for more people to submit new ideas. The Big Ideas have proven very popular in helping a broad swath of people see the theme of "creating sustainable communities" as related to their interests and work, including faculty who have affiliated courses with SLS for 2016-17 based on course content related to one or more of these ideas. As we work on creating a new SLS website, the Big Ideas are slated to become one key part of the search function, as we continue efforts to expand our community of practice.

SLS Fellows Programs

To support multidisciplinary collaboration and tie into faculty research interests, SLS developed a model for fellows programs, to be offered in AY16-17. Two programs will focus on themes aligned with National Science Foundation (NSF) initiatives: Food, Energy, Water Systems (Fall) and Smart Cities (Spring). Co-led by faculty from different colleges, these programs will bring together faculty, staff, and graduate students to meet with select community, municipal, and industry partners and explore these themes from different research and practice perspectives. Each fellow will work on an individual objective related to their interests, and the group will also determine and carry out a group project. We also plan to work with the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program in the Center for Academic Enrichment to develop a third program that will bring together graduate and undergraduate student researchers working on different aspects of sustainable communities to explore how their research projects relate to each other and to sustainable communities.

SLS Themes 2016-17

Environmental Justice

Food, Energy, Water Systems

Social Sustainability

Smart Cities

SLS Themes for 2016-17

In response to our call for applications for the fall semester program, we received 48 nominations and applications and accepted 32 people, including faculty and graduate students from all six colleges, 19 schools, and the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI), as well as staff from Campus Services.

Events and Conferences

SLS co-sponsored seven events and conferences that brought together over 400 faculty, staff, students, and partners to examine key issues related to creating sustainable communities. Highlights included a roundtable discussion with Steve Curwood, host of NPR's "Living on Earth," co-sponsored with Southface; the annual Liam's Legacy symposium, featuring City of Cleveland Chief Sustainability Officer Jenita McGowan and founder of the Asset-Based Community Development field Jody Kretzmann; and a panel discussion about the Flint, MI water crisis.

Our biggest highlight was the conference that we co-hosted in June with the College of Design and the College of Engineering, in partnership with the Westside Communities Alliance, "Paths to Social Sustainability: Building a Research, Teaching, and Action Agenda for the Southeast." This conference brought together approximately 105 faculty, staff, students, and partners, primarily from Atlanta, to participate in the national, multi-sited conference of the Integrated Network for Social Sustainability (INSS), an NSF Research Coordination Network run out of University of North Carolina at Charlotte that explores the "social" side of sustainability. The conference launched with a half-day site visit to Westside communities to examine the Emerald Corridor, a seven-mile stretch abutting Proctor Creek, as a starting point for thinking about the challenges and opportunities of social sustainability. This visit provided a concrete reference point for more theoretical discussions the next day about community resilience and food-energy-water systems and ensured that community perspectives were strong parts of the conversation. The final part of the conference comprised small group sessions during which participants identified key actions to work on moving forward. Examples of actions identified include exploring the creation of a community-based Institutional Review Board so that university research projects are vetted by the community, and incorporating social sustainability into K-12 sustainability curricula. Our next step is to create a white paper summarizing what an agenda for social sustainability in the Southeast, and particularly Atlanta, might look like and then to support working groups to carry out different parts of the work.

INSS Panel Discussion with Kresge Foundation Program Officer Shamar Bibbins, June 2016

INSS Conference Site Visit, June 2016

Earth Day Thoughts, Spring 2016

Spreading Awareness

To spread program awareness, develop deeper knowledge of different units' interests in SLS, and create tailored collaboration approaches, we engaged in the following three unique outreach strategies.

SLS College Liaisons

To facilitate the goals of building awareness and nurturing collaboration, one liaison was chosen to represent each college. Their job is to share SLS opportunities with colleagues and encourage engagement in SLS. Additionally, each college liaison has been responsible for leading development of a college-tailored strategy for engaging with SLS in 2016-17, to ensure that the work we do together benefits both SLS and key college initiatives. This approach is resulting in diverse strategies, ranging from hiring GTAs to developing experiential education modules to be incorporated into large intro courses, to offering scholarships for students who study abroad on programs with sustainable communities themes, to providing professional development support for advisers to attend conferences to learn how sustainable communities education can benefit students' careers. In 2016-17, we will increase the number of liaisons in the College of Engineering to be able to work more closely on engagement and strategy development with individual schools.

SLS Trainers

Research shows—and everyone knows—that people tend to listen most to people to whom they relate. As such, CSLS developed a train-the-trainers program to train faculty, staff, postdocs, and graduate students to reach out to their sub-communities at Tech in ways that they felt would garner the most interest. The goal has been to encourage colleagues to get involved in SLS' programs—and particularly our Course Design Studio that we offered with the Center for the Enrichment of Teaching and Learning (CETL) in June. Thirteen trainers were selected to work with us from January to December 2016. Several participated in a two-day January workshop at Emory University called "Sustainability Across the Curriculum Leadership Workshop," a nationally recognized program that trains faculty to help their colleagues incorporate sustainability into their courses. Participants then shared key takeaways with the other trainers and worked together to develop short outreach presentations for sub-constituencies, including each of the six colleges, postdocs and graduate students. Trainers paired up or worked with their College liaisons to prepare for, advertise, and run these presentations. The results have included a fully subscribed Course Design Studio (see below) and a group of people across campus who have taken leadership in promoting SLS and facilitating different types of collaboration, such as developing a guidebook for Brittain Fellows on integrating SLS into their English courses and inviting SLS to present to outbound students in the Leadership for Social Good Study Abroad Program run by the Institute for Leadership and Entrepreneurship in Scheller.

SLS Trainers Program, Spring 2016

Three staff trainers are also developing an engagement program for staff interested in working with SLS, based on personal and/or professional interests. Sustainable communities identify and capitalize on all of their members' assets—and staff have much to contribute to, and gain from, SLS. The planning group includes additional staff across campus with interest in SLS involvement. Additionally, three staff will teach GT 1000 courses in the fall. Upcoming goals include consulting with Campus Wellness, Staff Diversity and Inclusion, and Staff Council to plan and convene a brainstorming meeting to determine staff program interests and then developing engagement opportunities. Ideally, an SLS staff engagement program should help staff contribute in new and interesting ways to Georgia Tech—including to student learning—and also provide opportunities for professional development.

Student Liaisons

Our undergraduate student liaisons created campaigns for engaging students in SLS. In addition to selecting SLS giveaways, they created an online quiz, "What kind of sustainability are you?," for Earth Day that drew over 100 people, as well as a Facebook campaign called "Humans of SLS," building on the popular "Humans of New York" project to highlight people's interests in sustainable communities, with one post reaching 1,326 people! Next year, our student liaisons will expand on these campaigns and also help us develop a formal program for partnering with student organizations.

"I have been able to utilize my coursework and extracurricular involvements to fuel my passion for sustainability. In one of my courses I studied how race, poverty, and other socioeconomic dynamics have shaped the educational opportunities in economically distressed urban communities. We helped strengthen the pipeline from secondary to postsecondary education creating a more sustainable community."

Humans of SLS Campaign

Zion Thomas,
Computer Science Major

Samyukta Sherugar,
MS-HCI Graduate Student

"I moved from Computer Science to HCI to being involved with development-related projects. It's been interesting to see how my perception of the world and the concept of sustainability has changed with time. I'm glad I'm getting to work with outreach workers who are striving for the wellbeing of those living with HIV/AIDS in India. They're working against a lot of stigma and misinformation and their conviction is amazing."

Humans of SLS Campaign

Launching SLS Courses

Spring semester launched not only our Center, but our first courses, including two foundations courses—Sustainable Community & Systems and Sustainable Community Principles—developed by interdisciplinary faculty teams, led by QEP co-architects Ellen Zegura (Computer Science) and Beril Toktay (Scheller College of Business). We also launched our Public Service Pathway program, supporting 11 courses and two projects, engaging 250 students across five colleges. Thanks to a generous grant from the Commerce Club Foundation of Atlanta, we provided course development and implementation grants ranging from $500 to $2500 to support experiential learning related to public service and sustainable communities.

SLS Foundations Course, Spring 2016

Additionally, we developed criteria for affiliating courses with SLS and introduced a process for requesting course affiliation. This has resulted in a docket of over 70 affiliated courses for 2016-17, across all colleges and levels, including undergraduate and graduate courses. We also held our first Course Design Studio with CETL, bringing together 26 faculty and instructors from all six colleges plus four other units to learn how to integrate sustainable communities content and experiential learning into their courses. The initial sustainable communities workshop was planned and facilitated by SLS staff with our Trainers. Held at the Atlanta Community Food Bank. it included a partners' panel featuring on- and off-campus partners as well as a Food Bank tour. Participants attended four more CETL course design workshops and received additional mentoring throughout from SLS trainers. Next year, they will come together once each semester for a reunion gathering to share how things are going and continue to learn from each other.

"This course has helped my understanding of cities… and how Urban areas across the world face complex and rapidly evolving challenges. I've learned how to identify what changes are needed to transform our cities into livable environments… what it takes to shape a city that inspires and engages citizens, and what it takes for governments and the public and private sectors to work together."

LMC Exchange Student in SLS sponsored course
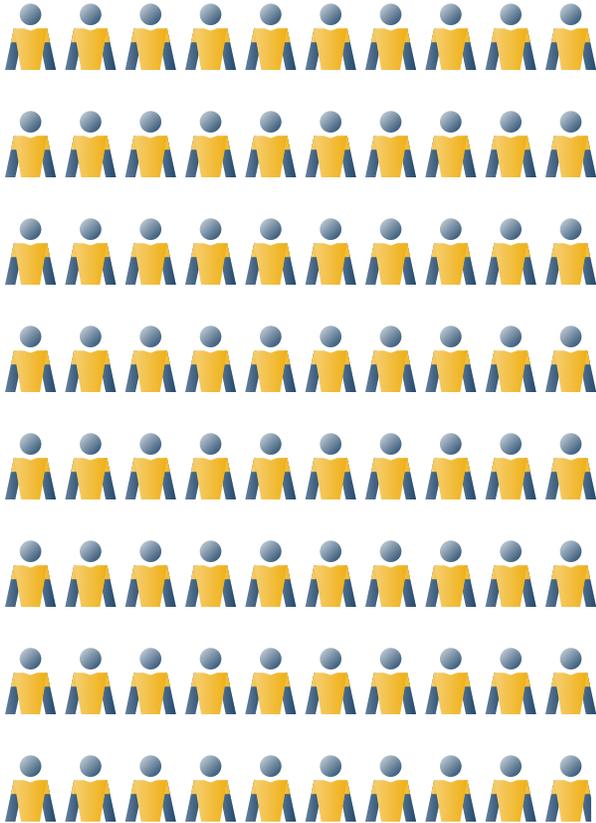
7

Students Reached 2015-2016 (409 Total)

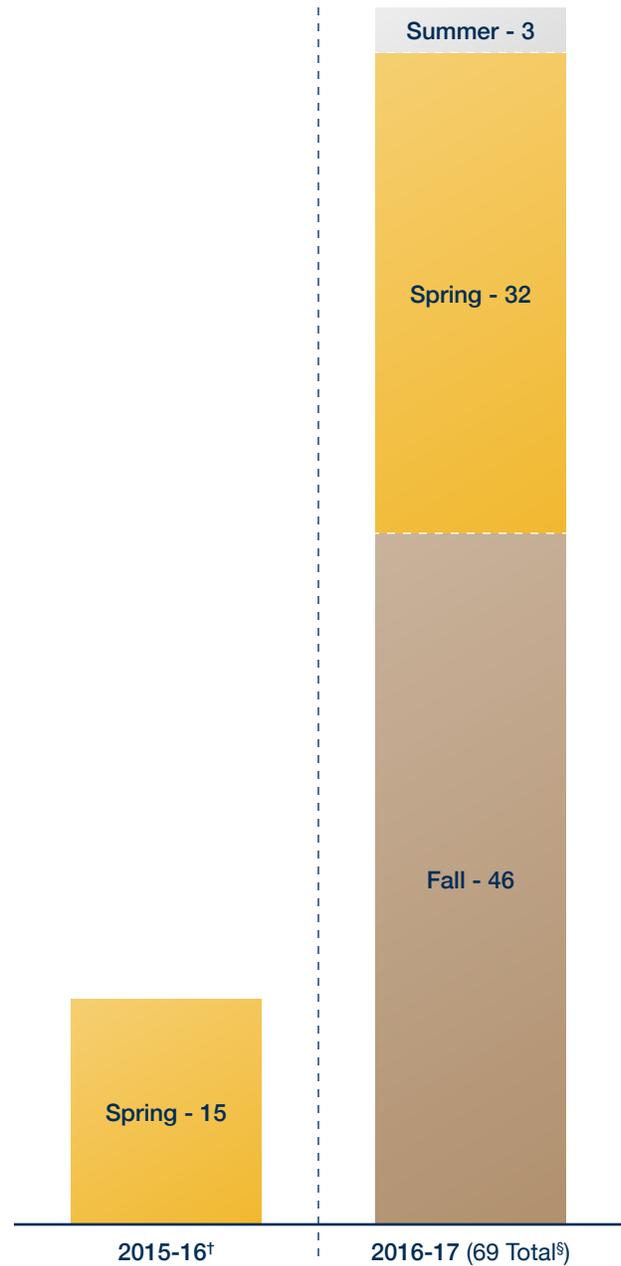Courses/Projects (279)

Events (130)

 = x50 Students

Students Reached 2016-17 (3974 Total* Estimated Enrollment/Participation)

Courses and Projects Only

*This number is as of July 1, 2016 and is expected to increase.

Number of Courses & Projects* Offered

Summer - 3

Spring - 32

Fall - 46

Spring - 15

2015-16†   2016-17 (69 Total§)

*A project is defined as a co-curricular opportunity that addresses the theme of "creating sustainable communities" and is related to research, a staff sponsored opportunity, or a student organization sponsored opportunity. Projects do not have a link or affiliation witha course. Total projects (included in the above number): 5

†Public Service Pathway courses funded partially through a grant from the Commerce Club Foundation of Atlanta

§Adds up to more than 69 because some courses and projects span two semesters. This number is as of July 1, 2016 and is expected to increase.

Download this report and find further information at http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/annual-report-2016

Developing Partnerships

Finally, we began the important process of developing key partnerships for community engagement and experiential learning, connecting classroom instruction with hands-on experience in real-world community settings. Internally, we worked closely with the other community-facing offices, including Westside Communities Alliance, Office of Government and Community Relations, Office of Student Engagement, and CEISMC, and with offices engaged in making Tech itself a sustainable community - Facilities Management, Campus Sustainability, Capital Planning & Space Management, Institute Diversity, Excel (Expanding Career, Education and Leadership Opportunities), and Student Diversity, to begin developing materials, processes, and opportunities for expanding and deepening their relationships with faculty and courses. Outside Tech, we began engaging with key community and municipal partners, discussing what meaningful and just partnerships look like to them and how their work relates to sustainable community development. We sponsored programs to facilitate informal conversations between faculty and partners, to identify ways to work together. All of this provides a foundation for developing formal partnership training and relationship-building processes and structures moving forward.

Atlanta Beltline Inc.

Atlanta Community Food Bank

Building Green Initiative

Campus Sustainability

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

City of Atlanta Office of Sustainability

Commerce Club Atlanta

Emerald Corridor Foundation

EPA Region IV Office of Environmental Justice & Sustainability

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta

Georgia Conservancy

Gujarat State Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (India) HomeAid Atlanta

HomeAid Atlanta

Invest Atlanta Partnership for Southern Equity

Proctor Creek Stewardship Council

Southface

Truly Living Well Center for Urban Agriculture

US Green Building Council-Georgia (USGBC)

Westside Communities Alliance

Sample of Partners from Spring/Summer 2016 SLS Courses and Programs

Staff Highlights

Dr. Jennifer Hirsch, inaugural Director, joined the Center for Serve-Learn-Sustain in August 2015 to launch and direct implementation of the Serve-Learn-Sustain Quality Enhancement Plan. As an applied cultural anthropologist, she specializes in community sustainability, cultural diversity, experiential education, visual anthropology, and network building. She is recognized nationally for fostering grassroots participation in sustainability and climate action efforts at the institutional, city, and regional levels, through her work as an independent contractor and as the Urban Anthropology Director at The Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. With an extensive background in higher education administration, Jennifer is responsible for setting the Center's strategic direction, in collaboration with key stakeholders on and off campus, and building relationships with networks in Atlanta and beyond to learn from and share out best practices in sustainability and community engagement. Jennifer earned her PhD in cultural anthropology from Duke University and her bachelor's degree in American culture from Northwestern University. One of Jennifer's biggest accomplishments during her first academic year was hiring three new staff...

Dr. Christian Braneon, Assistant Director, Service-Learning and Partnerships, Dr. Christian Braneon, Assistant Director, Service-Learning and Partnerships, will join the Center full-time in October. He earned BS, MS, and PhD degrees in Civil Engineering from Georgia Tech. Christian also earned a BS in Applied Physics from Morehouse College. Joining us from the EPA's Office of Environmental Justice and Sustainability, his work builds on a long commitment to engaging diverse communities as they address environmental challenges. Recently, he served as Co-Director of EPA's inaugural Environmental Justice Academy for community leaders and also led regional community engagement efforts associated with the Clean Power Plan in four states. As Assistant Director, Christian will develop and oversee the process of incorporating service learning and community engagement into courses and co-curricular programs across campus, and establish systems for partnering with nonprofit, industry, and government organizations in ways that are mutually beneficial for partners and the Georgia Tech community.

Kristina G. Chatfield, Program Manager, joined the Center in December 2015, after helping prepare for its launch as a consultant and Tech Temp since August 2014. She is responsible for implementing the programmatic efforts of the Center, including establishing and overseeing administrative processes related to curriculum development and integration, hiring and supervising student workers, and establishing and implementing partnership programs with student organizations. Kristina earned her BA in Psychology from the University of Virginia.

Jamie Jones, Sr. Administrative Professional, joined CSLS in October 2015 after working for the past ten years in the Department of Housing. Jamie is the friendly face of the office and specializes in providing outstanding service and hospitality to our partners, both on campus and off. She also manages the office, coordinates meetings and events, processes financial transactions, and works closely with the Program Manager on budget administration. Jamie earned her BA in Communications and Journalism and her MA in Humanities and Liberal Studies from Grambling State University.

A big "thank you" to **_Dr. Alice Favero_** for her supervision and direction of our GRAs during the Spring 2016 semester. Dr. Favero, a visiting Assistant Professor in the School of Public Policy, played an integral part in developing case studies and conducting faculty research interviews related to the development of the sustainable communities Big Ideas.

Lubi Dimitrova
Architecture
(Masters)

Alex Gothard
MBA

Michelle Henriques
Civil and
Environmental
Engineering

Shuli Liu
Human Computer
Interaction
(Masters)

Ambar Johnson
History, Technology
and Society

Yonatan Weinberg
History, Technology
and Society

Mengmeng Liu
Civil and
Environmental
Engineering (Ph.D.)

James Field
Human Computer
Interaction
(Masters)

Student Liasons and Graduate Research Assistants

CSLS hired eight student workers, including three undergraduates, two graduate student designers, and three graduate research assistants (GRAs). The undergraduate student workers helped increase the social media presence of the Center, developed student engagement opportunities, and assisted with events and administrative work. The GRAs researched and developed case studies featuring faculty and partners engaged in sustainable communities research and practice and designed and implemented the "BIG IDEAS" interactive tool. Crucial to our first year successes, we plan to continue hiring students on a regular basis.

Learn more:

www.serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu

Subscribe to our email list:

www.contact.gatech.edu/sls/subscribe

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