



UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL
ARKANSAS™

SERVICE-LEARNING

Service-Learning Annual Report

2019-2020

Letter from the Director

As I reflect back on the past academic year, the tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic looms large in our local, state, national, and global communities. While faculty and students engaged in many service-learning projects that could be easily transitioned online, others had to quickly change plans mid-semester, and all were asked to radically shift our understanding of what it meant to care for one another as we adopted a virtual format for our classes and work.

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, the university welcomed an inaugural cohort of BearsServe Leaders, an AmeriCorps program engaging 16 UCA undergraduate students as quarter-time AmeriCorps service members. These students each pledged to complete 450 service hours with a nonprofit community partner over the course of the academic year, and they remained dedicated to remote service following the shift online, even using their skills to fill new needs through service opportunities such as sewing cloth masks.

In January 2020, UCA was awarded the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification endorsement, becoming one of 361 campuses nationwide to hold this prestigious classification. This recognition is a testament to both UCA's long history of outreach and community engagement work as well as the significant role that community-engaged learning plays in the university's mission today. Based on five years of evidence of the institutionalization of community engagement at UCA, this recognition provided a timely reminder of the role that UCA has to play as an anchor institution when we all come together to face challenges as a community.

As we conclude an academic year marked by the COVID-19 pandemic's challenges to our campus and our communities, I remain hopeful that UCA and our partners will continue to find in one another sources of strength, support, and solidarity.

Yours in Service,



Lesley Graybeal
Director of Service-Learning

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Definition of Service-Learning

Academic service-learning is a course-based teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

Program History and Structure

The University of Central Arkansas Service-Learning Program advances the university's mission to engage with local, national, and global communities by providing central coordination for academic service-learning and co-curricular service opportunities in partnership with community organizations. While many UCA faculty members were using service-learning pedagogy in their classes prior to the creation of a formal program, the Service-Learning Program officially began operations in 2013. The Service-Learning Program is housed in the Division of Outreach & Community Engagement and additionally supported by the Service-Learning Faculty Liaison and the Center for Teaching Excellence.

Project Examples

Service-Learning is often best understood through the use of examples, and UCA faculty have guided their students through many unique and engaging projects in 2019-2020, including:

- **Ashley Phillips, Accounting:** Students prepared taxes for low- and moderate-income households through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program with United Way of Central Arkansas
- **Jeff Young, Art Education:** Students offered hands-on art activities for children at Conway ArtsFest in partnership with Conway Alliance for the Arts
- **Stefanie Sorbet, Elementary, Literacy, and Special Education:** Students conducted a social-emotional literacy activity at Our House shelter's childcare center in Little Rock
- **Kim Eskola, Exercise Science:** Students provided directional assistance and staffed pit stops for the inaugural Big Bear Classic cycling event benefiting student scholarships
- **Duston Morris and Denise Demers, Health Sciences:** Students provided an inclusive health coaching program as part of a unified sports event for Special Olympics Arkansas held on UCA campus
- **Mike Rosenow, History:** Students conducted oral history interviews included in the Library of Congress Veterans History Project
- **Amy Hawkins, Public Relations:** Students created a public relations campaign for the Conway Regional Health System
- **Cristine Busser, Writing:** Teams of students completed technical writing projects such as brochures, manuals, and web materials for nonprofit organizations

By the Numbers: Program Outputs

Community Partners Served	64
Number of Service-Learning Courses	160
Number of Service-Learning Faculty	71
Number of Service-Learning Students	2,636
Number of Academic Programs Represented	33
Number of Colleges Represented	7
Estimated Hours Served	15,200+
Estimated Value of Community Service*	\$311,448

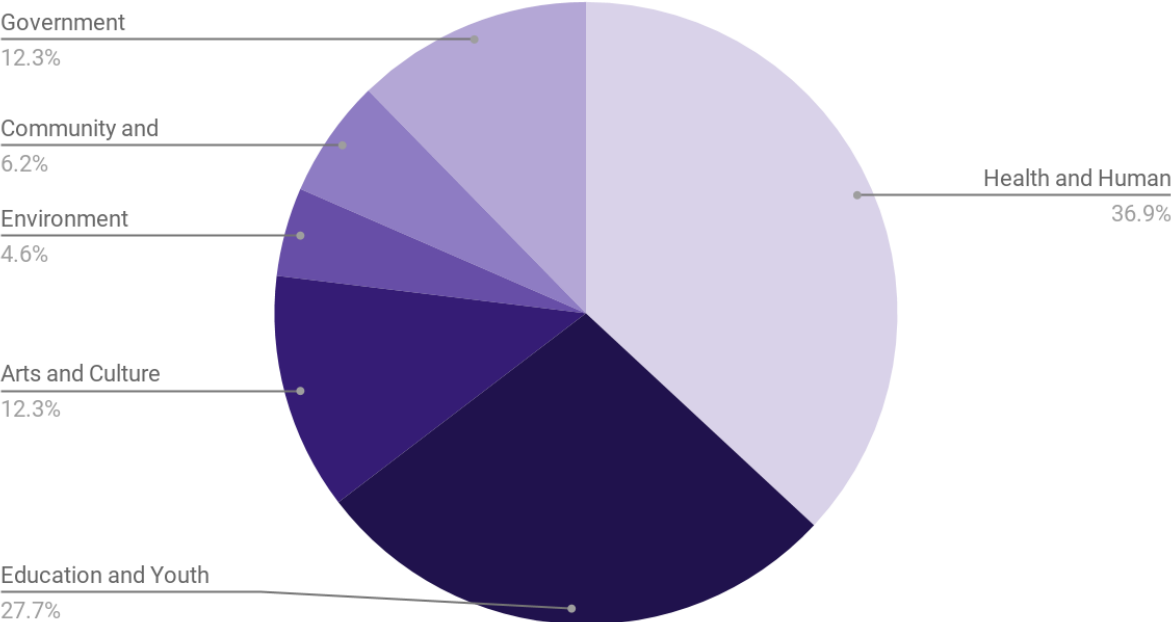
*The value of volunteer service is estimated at \$20.49/hour in the state of Arkansas. Source: Independent Sector, "The Value of Volunteer Time." Available from https://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time

The following year-to-year trends can be observed:

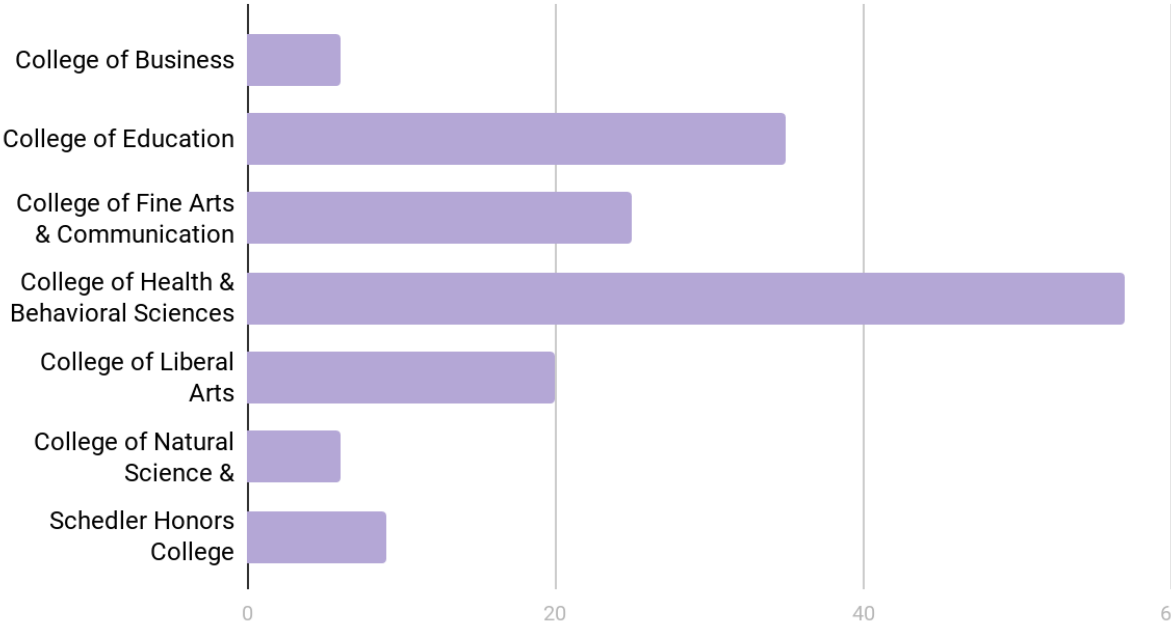
Criterion	2018-2019	2019-2020	% Change
SL Faculty	65	71	+9%
SL Courses	147	160	+9%
SL Students	2,480	2,636	+6%

The Service-Learning Program met and far exceeded its goal of 10% growth in number of courses offered every year for the first five years, starting with 55 courses taught by 29 faculty in 2013-2014. While this exponential growth has slowed, we anticipated that it will continue at a more modest pace as the university focuses its experiential learning efforts across the colleges.

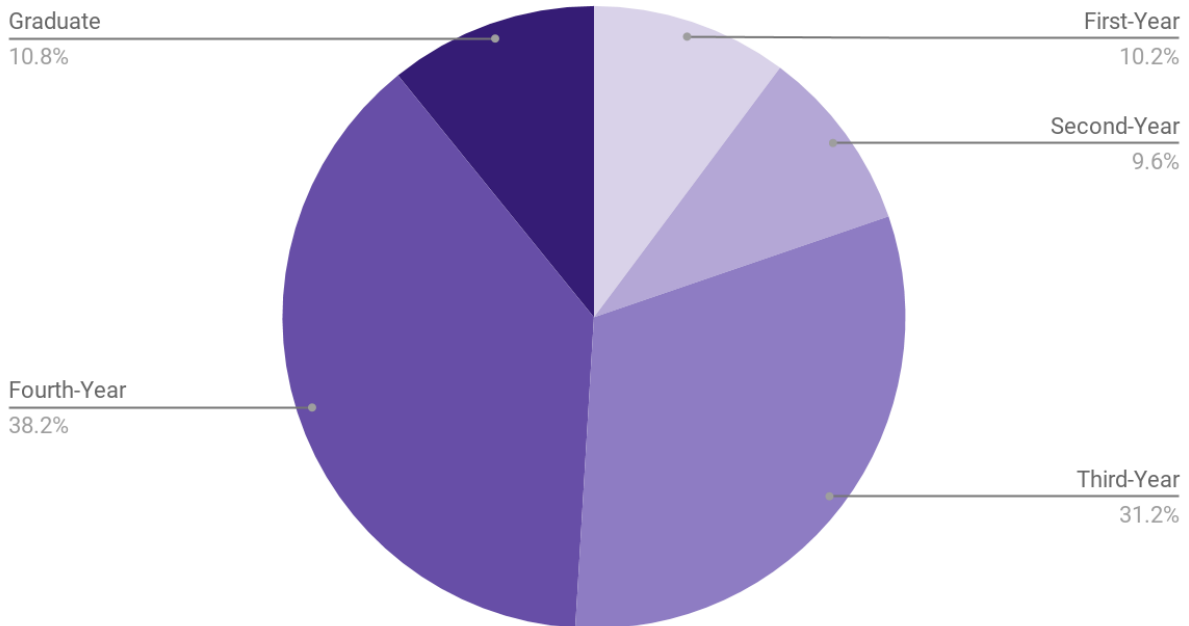
Type of Community Partner Organization



Service-Learning Courses by College



Service-Learning Courses by Level



Student Outcomes

Student learning outcomes are measured in the Service-Learning Assessment Plan through six items (scored on a 5-point scale) included on the end-of-semester course evaluations of courses designated with a service-learning attribute, as well as through faculty assessment of a student learning artifact from their course using a standard rubric. Student data represent 1102 of 2636 students (42%) enrolled in service-learning courses.

The assessment plan set a target outcome of 85% of students responding with the top two ratings (“more than half the time” and “almost always”) to all six items.

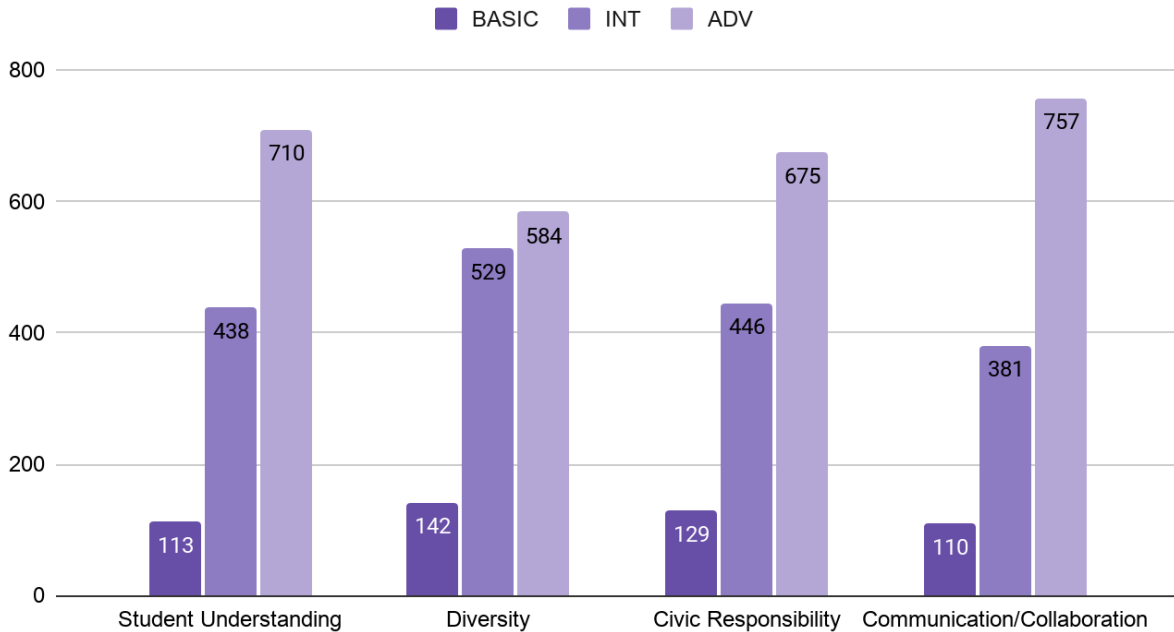
Course Evaluation Item	Mean Score	Top Two Ratings
The service-learning experience helped me achieve course objectives.	4.61	87%
The service-learning portion of this course helped me learn to work well with others to achieve common goals.	4.66	89%
The service-learning portion of this course helped me understand and appreciate local, national, and/or global diversity.	4.57	85%

The service-learning portion of this course helped me understand how this academic discipline can serve the needs of the community/nation/world.	4.62	87%
The service-learning portion of this course helped me understand my role as an engaged and informed citizen.	4.63	87%
The service-learning portion of this course helped me understand the importance of UCA's responsibility to help address the needs of the community/nation/world.	4.59	86%

Faculty assessment with the service-learning rubric from represented outcomes for 1181 of 2636 students (45%) enrolled in service-learning courses. Faculty assessed their service-learning students' learning outcomes in four areas using the rubric below.

Goal	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
Student Understanding: Understand how this academic discipline can serve the needs or address the issues of the community/ nation/world	Students understand service-learning but are unable to articulate discipline specific connections	Students demonstrate awareness of how discipline-based knowledge can impact social needs/issues	Students analyze and evaluate how disciplinary expertise can impact the social needs/issues
Diversity: Appreciate cultural and community diversity	Students articulate one's own cultural and/or community values and assumptions	Students compare cultural and/or community values across a range of contexts	Students respond to complex questions with answers that reflect multiple cultural and/or community perspectives
Civic Responsibility: Value their role as engaged and informed citizens	Students identify community/national/ international issues or needs	Students recognize their responsibility and research their role in addressing issues or needs	Students take responsible and informed action to address an issue or need
Communication, Collaboration and Community: Demonstrate the ability to work with others toward shared goals	Students understand the need to work collaboratively with peers and/or community/national/ international partners to address issues/needs	Students work collaboratively with peers and/or various partners to address issues/needs	Students work collaboratively with peers and/or various partners to produce positive outcomes to address issues/needs

Faculty Rubric Data



Faculty Outcomes

Faculty outcomes are measured in the Service-Learning Assessment Plan through eight Likert-type items and four open-ended questions in an end-of-semester evaluation of their participation in the service-learning experience. Faculty evaluation data represent 30 of 71 faculty members (42%) teaching service-learning courses in 2019-2020.

The assessment plan set a target outcome of 85% of faculty responding that they agree or strongly agree that they were satisfied with the Faculty Fellows Program and that they were satisfied with the overall support they received to develop and launch a service-learning course.

Faculty Evaluation Item	Mean Score	Agree / Strongly Agree
Students in the service-learning course benefited academically.	4.6	93%
After completing the service-learning course, students had a stronger sense of civic responsibility and community collaboration.	4.43	87%
Students in the service-learning course had an increased awareness of diversity, of various cultures, and of racial and class background.	4.52	100%

Students who participated in the service-learning course will say it was a beneficial experience and were satisfied with the service project overall.	4.57	90%
As a faculty member, I was strongly satisfied with the information I received in the Faculty Fellows Program.	4.72	94%
As a faculty member, I was strongly satisfied with the support from Outreach & Community Engagement and the Service-Learning Program Coordinator.	4.81	96%
As a faculty member, I was strongly satisfied with the overall support I received to develop and launch my service-learning course.	4.88	95%
I plan to continue offering service-learning courses in the future.	4.93	93%

When asked **what made them interested in teaching a service-learning course**, faculty respondents cited factors including

- Providing practical, hands-on, experiential learning opportunities for students
- Fostering civic responsibility for students
- Preparing students for future careers
- A “natural fit” for one’s discipline or course
- Supporting a community partner or community members
- Creating a sense of belonging in the community for students
- Expanding pedagogically

When asked **what aspects of the service-learning project worked particularly well in the course**, respondents cited elements such as

- Community partners coming to class to present their needs
- Strong relationships and positive communication with community partners
- Collaborative assignments and activities for students
- Student leadership in the project
- Exposure to diversity and interaction between students and community members
- Applications of course content to a community setting

When asked **what aspects of the course needed improvement**, faculty identified issues such as

- Communication with community partners
- Maintaining student motivation and excitement (especially during the pandemic)
- Clearly connecting service activities to academic content of the course
- Organization of logistical details such as background checks
- Clarification of expectations for students

- Prompting thoughtful, critical reflection
- Ensuring appropriate level of student involvement for partners

When asked **what additional support is needed from their college or department, the Center for Teaching Excellence, or Outreach & Community Engagement**, respondents offered the following suggestions:

- Support measuring student impacts for scholarship of teaching and learning
- Additional funding for service-learning courses
- More efficient trainings for students working with minors

Community Partner Outcomes

Community partner outcomes are measured in the Service-Learning Assessment Plan through eleven Likert-type items and four open-ended questions in an end-of-semester evaluation of their participation in the service-learning experience. Community partner evaluation data represent 19 of 64 organizations (30%) partnering with service-learning courses in 2019-2020.

The assessment plan set a target outcome of 85% of community partners responding that they agree or strongly agree that service-learning students added value to the programs/services they provide and that they would be interested in hosting service-learning students in the future.

Community Partner Evaluation Item	Mean Score	Agree/ Strongly Agree
The Service-Learning students added value to the programs/services we provide.	4.58	100%
The Service-Learning experience allowed us to build organizational capacity.	4.47	89%
The Service-Learning students' work was high quality.	4.33	90%
Materials that Service-Learning students prepared for our organization will be used in the future.	4.25	86%
The students' Service-Learning experience was properly designed to serve our clients.	4.61	100%
Communication between our organization and UCA faculty and students was positive.	4.74	100%
Service-Learning students were prepared to serve our organization.	4.52	100%

Our organization is interested in hosting Service-Learning students in the future.	4.83	100%
Working with Service-Learning students was a positive experience.	4.79	100%
We felt prepared to work with Service-Learning students.	4.74	95%
Working with the Director of Service-Learning was a positive experience.	4.95	100%

When asked **what could be improved for future service-learning experiences**, community partner respondents suggested

- Setting clear expectations for students and partners in advance of the project, including written project guidelines for students
- Creating more opportunities to engage with students at all levels, from first-year to more advanced in their majors
- Providing additional support for students logging service hours
- Expanding additional opportunities for students to engage with partners, such as co-curricular service

When asked about **negative experiences with service-learning students**, community partners offered constructive feedback that included

- Challenges communicating directly with students when needed
- Challenges balancing students' schedules, especially when engaging with a group of students
- Lack of engagement or interest from some students
- Disruptions due to COVID-19

When asked about **positive experiences with service-learning students**, community partners provided the following responses

- High level of student and faculty enthusiasm and engagement
- Follow-through of students after interruptions due to the pandemic
- Guidance and leadership of faculty
- Continued relationship with and engagement from students following the course
- Professionalism of students
- Positive relationships built between students and community members

Finally, when asked how, *beyond service learning*, UCA can help community partners accomplish their mission, respondents identified the need for

- Greater awareness among all departments of nonprofit organizations and their work

- Open networking events for faculty, students, and nonprofit leaders
- Monthly volunteer days highlighting a community partner agency

Faculty Development and Support

UCA's **Service-Learning Faculty Fellows** summer seminar for 2020 was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Service-Learning Faculty were invited to participate in the **Service-Learning Community Partner Summit** in October 2019 and a workshop on **teaching civic engagement across disciplines** January 2020.

Service-Learning Seed Grants of up to \$250 each were awarded to ten faculty members in 2019-2020 to cover costs associated with service-learning projects.

Faculty Member	Course	Project Expense
Cristine Busser	Technical Writing	Printing and binding for technical writing projects
Sonya Fritz	Literature for Middle Grades	Copies of books nominated for Charlie May Simon Book Award for partner agency
Alejandro Gonzalez Landeros	La Frontera (Border Literature)	Travel to border town to work with relief organizations
Kristy Jamerson	Mental Health	Card-making and other supplies for service day
Monica Lieblong	Resource Management / Family and Consumer Sciences Methods	Food for partner recognition and student presentation event
Amanda Martin	From Galileo to Gandhi: World History II	Gardening supplies and seeds
Peter Mehl	Contemporary Moral Problems	Copies of books for Head Start centers
Lydia Sartain	Nutrition Service Administration	Supplies for themed meal project for senior center
Lisa Skultety	Number Systems: Integers	Supplies for math night games and activities

Lavona Traywick	Doctoral Seminar I	DJ for event for children with special needs
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Recognition of Service-Learning

The UCA Service-Learning Program has hosted a Service-Learning Awards event each year since the program's inception. This year, a recognition ceremony was cancelled due to COVID-19, but we were pleased to continue the tradition of annual recognition with the following awards:

- **Sidney Hunt**, Leadership in Service-Learning
- **Grace Zimmerman**, Spirit of Humanity
- **John Singel**, Exceptional Achievement in Service-Learning
- **Dr. Debra Burris**, Peter J. Mehl Service-Learning Faculty of the Year
- **Community Action Program for Central Arkansas**, Community Partner of the Year

The Service-Learning Program additionally nominated one student for a national award through Campus Compact:

- **Greta Hacker**, Newman Civic Fellows Award

Additionally, UCA received national recognition in January 2020 when we were awarded the **Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement**, a six-year recognition that will be renewed in 2026. UCA became one of 361 campuses nationwide to hold this prestigious classification recognizing the university's high-quality community collaborations. This elective classification recognizes a broad range of community-engaged learning and reciprocal partnerships, including service-learning, co-curricular service, civic engagement, and community-engaged research.

Events and Programs

The Service-Learning Program supported our campus and community partners by hosting or collaborating on the following events in 2019-2020:

- **Community Partner Summit** attended by nonprofit community partners, UCA faculty, and Hendrix faculty with sessions on social entrepreneurship, multi-partner service-learning projects, and a partner networking session
- **Poverty Simulations** delivered in collaboration with the UCA Center for Community and Economic Development for the Community Development Institute, UCA's Minority Mentorship Program, UCA University Training, Conway Area Leadership Institute, Conway Area Youth Leadership Institute, and the Delta Leadership Institute
- **Nonprofit Workshop Series** in partnership with United Way of Central Arkansas, including five workshops on the topics of constructive conflict, communication, marketing, time prioritization, and volunteer management

- **Board Development Working Series** in partnership with the Arkansas Community Foundation / Faulkner County, covering Board Member Basics, Grantwriting, and Strategic Doing

Co-Curricular Service

In 2019-2020, the Service-Learning Program collaborated with the Office of Student Life to promote and track co-curricular community service (community service opportunities not associated with an academic course) using the new GivePulse platform.

- **584** students recorded a total of **13,658 service hours** in GivePulse from August 2019 to May 2020, representing a value of \$279,852 to the communities they served
- **139 students** were recognized at the Student Involvement Awards for completing the Bears Serve Challenge (logging 30 hours of community service in one year)
- **41 students** received a community service graduation cord (logging at least 100 hours of community service during their time at UCA)

Through our inaugural cohort of BearsServe Leaders, UCA's AmeriCorps program,

- **16** students participated in the program as quarter-time AmeriCorps members, serving a total of **over 4700 hours** with community partner host sites
- Through EngageAR, AmeriCorps awarded **\$52,908** to UCA students in living allowances, and BearsServe Leaders gained access to an additional education award averaging **\$1300 per student** from the Corporation for National and Community Service (\$20,900 total)
- BearsServe Leaders organized and participated in national service days, including a 9/11 Day of Service cleaning up flood damage at Cadron Settlement Park and an MLK Day of Service cleaning and sanitizing the Conway Ministry Center winter warming station

Civic Engagement

The Service-Learning Program provides support for UCA's Vote Everywhere program, part of a national network of campuses committed to voter education and engagement. In 2019-2020, UCA received a Silver Seal from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge for student voter participation in the 2018 midterm election and launched a Civic Action Coordination Committee for ongoing collaboration around civic engagement initiatives.

The Vote Everywhere team partnered with other campus and community organizations on the following actions:

- Voter registration at SOAR sessions, Move-In Day, and a mass voter registration drive on National Voter Registration Day
- 2020 Census outreach efforts on campus and in Faulkner County, including a virtual Census Innovation Lab event and Census LibGuide created by Torreyson Library