

ANNUAL REPORT

CONGRATULATIONS,
GRADUATES!

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Office for Student Success
and Achievement
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

2024-25

ABOUT OSSA

Mission Statement

The University of Georgia's Office for Student Success and Achievement (OSSA) empowers students to achieve success throughout their academic journey.

About

Located in historic Milledge Hall, OSSA is a unit of the Office of Instruction at the University of Georgia.

OSSA is one of 20 units within the Office of Instruction, which supports teaching, advising, and student learning on UGA's main and extended campuses. The Office of Instruction provides essential academic services from recruitment through graduation and supports faculty in teaching and curriculum. Additionally, it partners with OSSA to align academic and co-curricular efforts, fostering holistic student development.



OSSA's work spans five areas, each focused on supporting student growth in unique ways:

1. **Access:** Expands opportunity through UGA's seven federally-funded TRIO programs.
2. **Instruction:** Offers academic success courses that build confidence, college literacy, and lifelong learning skills.
3. **Initiatives:** Fosters student engagement by supporting scholars' programs, first-generation students, and rural students.
4. **Operations:** Manages the day-to-day operations that keep OSSA running smoothly.
5. **Services:** Provides personalized academic support through coaching and peer education.

Together, these teams form one office devoted to student success.



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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear Friend of OSSA,

I am pleased to share our 2024-25 annual report, which highlights the impact of our programs and partnerships. As a unit within the Office of the Vice President for Instruction, OSSA serves as a key initiator and strategic campus partner in advancing UGA's mission, goals, and student success priorities.

At the core of our efforts is a focus on academic well-being, student learning, community building, and leadership development. These areas guide programs that serve both pre-college and college students.

This year reflects our continued commitment to empowering students through innovative programs, individualized support, and collaborative partnerships across campus. Throughout the year, we focused on growth and impact, informed by data and a student-centered approach.

The scope of our work is vast. As a hub for student success, OSSA creates opportunities that strengthen achievement and foster a culture of engagement across the university.

Among our key accomplishments this year:

- Served more than 1,100 middle and high school students through Pre-College TRIO programs, including Upward Bound and Talent Search, and supported 260 college students through TRIO Student Support Services and McNair Scholars, achieving measurable success in college readiness, persistence, and graduation.
- Launched our work plan to build a stronger internal foundation that will deepen impact and scale our efforts.
- Expanded programming for first-generation students, including the induction of 33 new members into Alpha Alpha Alpha, a national honor society for first-generation college students and hosting the largest First-Generation Graduation Celebration to date.
- Provided academic coaching to 691 students through 1,025 appointments, with increased participation from students seeking proactive support.
- Delivered over 20,000 peer tutoring sessions and supported 7,700 students in PLA-assisted courses, strengthening learning across disciplines.
- Offered 43 UNIV courses with record enrollment, equipping students with skills for academic success and lifelong learning.
- Celebrated the ninth anniversary of Bulldog Basics, completing 209 orders to meet essential student basic needs.

These achievements are possible because of the dedication of our staff, faculty, and student employees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cara Winston Simmons". The signature is written in a dark ink on a light background.

Cara Winston Simmons, Ph.D., CFCS

Director, Office for Student Success and Achievement



ACCESS

Access expands opportunity to and within college through UGA's seven federally-funded TRIO programs: Talent Search, Upward Bound Classic (Northeast Georgia and UGA), Upward Bound Math and Science, Student Support Services, Student Support Services STEM-H, and McNair Scholars.

PRE-COLLEGE TRIO PROGRAMS

The University of Georgia's Pre-College TRIO Programs, Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Upward Bound Math and Science, help students in Northeast Georgia prepare for college and beyond. They support middle and high school students who have limited income or would be the first in their families to attend college.

Students benefit from weekly in-school support provided by OSSA's TRIO team. These programs help students to complete high school and continue their education by providing academic, career, and college readiness services, all at no cost to participants or their families.

Key Achievements

- 1,158 students served in grades 6-12 across Northeast Georgia.
- 97% of TRIO seniors enroll in college after graduation, the majority in four-year institutions, demonstrating the program's lasting impact.
- 100% of TRIO middle school students advance to the next grade level, an indicator of sustained academic engagement.
- Provided weekly in-school support, plus enrichment through guest speakers, college visits, cultural events, and educational trips, expanding students' perspectives and knowledge of possibilities for their future.



COLLEGE TRIO PROGRAMS

The University of Georgia's College TRIO Programs, Ronald E. McNair Scholars, Student Support Services (SSS), and Student Support Services STEM-H, work together to promote student success, persistence, and graduation for first-generation, limited-income, and students with accessibility needs. The programs provide a network of academic, personal, and professional support to help students meet their goals.

Key Achievements

TRIO SSS/H Programs

- Supported a combined 260 students, with waitlists maintained throughout the year.
- Provided a wide range of academic, personal, and professional resources, including priority tutoring and advising, graduate school tours and preparation, leadership development, and more.
- 88% of SSS participants remained in good academic standing this year, showing persistence and progress toward graduating.
- 89% of eligible students have earned a bachelor's degree, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in helping students meet their goals.

McNair Scholars

- Served 25 students through high-impact research and graduate school preparation, giving participants the skills and mentorship needed to pursue advanced degrees.
- Featured an eight-week paid summer research program for students in partnership with UGA faculty, helping students prepare for graduate-level work.
- Scholars presented their work at national conferences and frequently publish their research.
- To date, five of nine McNair alumni have been accepted into Ph.D. programs nationwide.

“Through programs like TRIO and Student Support Services, I found not just academic help, I found opportunity, growth, and community.”

Student feedback

“My education at the University of Georgia has been an empowering experience — and I owe that, in large part, to TRIO.”

Student feedback



INITIATIVES

The Initiatives team supports first-generation and rural students, scholars, and programs like Thrive at Georgia, all designed to promote academic achievement, personal growth, and community among students.

ALL GEORGIA

ALL Georgia supports the success of rural students at UGA, helps them adjust to campus, and makes them aware of the resources available to them.

Key Achievements

- 5,112 rural students have access to resources and programming to support their success at UGA.
- 27 ALL Georgia scholars received personalized academic support and connection to campus resources.
- Eight Rural Student Ambassadors helped engage rural students across campus.
- Launched and grew a new Instagram account (@allga.uga) to better share information with rural students.
- Two Rural Student Ambassadors presented on rural voices at the Student Leadership Conference.
- Eight students completed the Rural Leadership Academy in the spring, gaining important leadership development skills.

Note: During the 2025-26 academic year, the ALL Georgia program transitioned from OSSA to the Office of Academic and Community Engagement.



FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT SUPPORT

The Initiatives team executes programs and events that empower the more than 4,500 first-generation college students at UGA to succeed. In collaboration with other units, these efforts focus on building community, celebrating achievements, and connecting students with the resources they need.

Key Achievements

- Supported 504 first-generation scholarship recipients, providing opportunities for growth and connection.
- Inducted 33 new members into Alpha Alpha Alpha, the honor society for first-generation college students.
- More than 300 students participated in UGA's First-Generation Celebration Week activities.
- Hosted the annual First-Generation Graduation Celebration, which brought together 359 graduates and their supporters to honor their accomplishments.

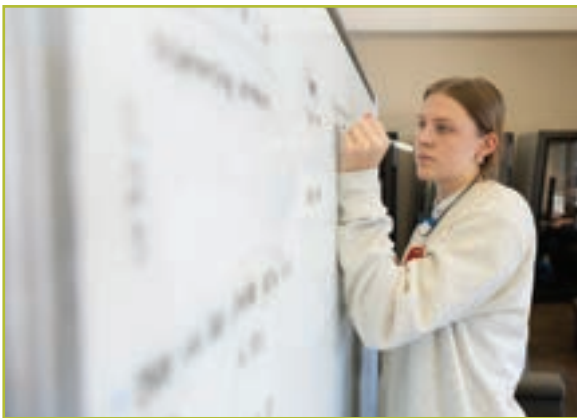


SCHOLAR PROGRAMS

OSSA supports the academic development and achievement of multiple scholar programs, including 1 Generation at a Time, ALL Georgia, Coca-Cola First-Generation, Correll, Cousins, Georgia Commitment, Kellogg, REACH, and Stamper. The Initiatives team provides academic coaching, programming, and community-building events to help scholars succeed in college.

Key Achievements

- Supported 904 students who received more than \$4.5 million in scholarship awards that helped make their education more affordable.
- 92 scholars participated in Scholar Success Day, helping them to meet people on campus and introducing them to essential resources.
- 10 Coca-Cola First-Generation scholars earned their degrees this year, reflecting the strength of the support and community in the program.
- Hosted a series of signature events, from workshops to social activities, designed to foster belonging, enhance academic success, and connect scholars.



THRIVE AT GEORGIA

In its 26th year, Thrive at Georgia was reimagined as a weeklong, invitation-only program for named scholars.

The 2025 program brought together 14 incoming UGA students for a fully funded summer experience focused on building community and college readiness. Through a mix of classroom sessions, campus exploration, and personal development activities, participants learned how to navigate UGA, connect with campus resources, and begin their first year with confidence.



In partnership with University Transitions in Student Affairs, the program combined elements of Dawg Camp with classroom and applied learning experiences.

Key Achievements

- 14 students from scholarship programs, including Georgia Commitment, Coca-Cola First-Generation, and CAES Rural Scholars, took part in the weeklong experience.
- Offered a comprehensive schedule that blended academic skill-building, financial literacy, wellness, service-learning, and professional development.
- Provided hands-on learning and campus exploration, including tours of Sanford Stadium, visits to the Career Center and art museum, and service projects at local community sites.

“ My participation in this group helped me meet and understand this amazing group of people! We all, in our own way, got out of our shell and talked and laughed with everyone here together. I feel more confident and happier after Thrive! Best experience ever! ”

Thrive participant feedback



INSTRUCTION

Instruction serves students through a variety of UNIV courses that promote academic success, active learning, literacy, and supplemental instruction.

UNIV COURSES

OSSA offers academic success courses, all with the prefix UNIV, that help build academic confidence, college literacy, and lifelong learning skills. UNIV courses build skills that lead to success in college and beyond. Courses are engaging, active-learning environments focused on the applications of skills and content.

Key Achievements

- 981 students enrolled in UNIV courses during Fall 2024, the largest single semester enrollment ever.
- 800 students completed UNIV courses in Spring 2025, showing strong engagement throughout the semester.
- Offered 43 individual courses, covering topics from active learning to peer education.
- Faculty members Dr. Garrison Bickerstaff, Dr. Nicholas Colvard, and Dr. Julie Glenn were all nominated for the 2025 Transfer Advocate Award. The award is an accolade from the UGA Office of Transfer Services recognizing faculty and staff members who have contributed to the success of transfer students at UGA.
- Dr. Nicholas Colvard was named an Office of Faculty Affairs Aspire Fellow. This program builds on the success and strengths of mid-career or senior faculty to complete a signature project that will extend their impact.



You didn't just teach; you listened. Every assignment, every little note of commentary — it all felt personal, like you saw us as individuals instead of names on a roster... You've left a mark, not just on my semester, but on how I'll carry this experience forward.



Student feedback for Dr. Julie Glenn



OPERATIONS

Operations supports the day-to-day functions of OSSA, including finance, HR, IT, communications, and outreach. Operations also includes Bulldog Basics, which provides toiletry and personal care items to UGA students at no cost.

BULLDOG BASICS

Bulldog Basics is a campus-wide initiative that provides free toiletry and personal care items to UGA students. By providing these necessities, Bulldog Basics supports student well-being and helps promote academic success.

Key Achievements

- Participated in Financial Literacy and BeWellUGA Week, supporting student education around financial wellness.
- Partnered with New Student Orientation to receive donations from incoming students and their supporters.
- Celebrated our anniversary in March, marking nine years of service to UGA students.
- Participated in the Spirit of Homecoming donation drive, an annual initiative where UGA Homecoming collected items from event participants to benefit Bulldog Basics.
- Completed 209 orders, providing needed items to UGA students.
- Student staff worked 175 hours filling orders and supporting Bulldog Basics behind-the-scenes.
- Provided high-demand items including toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, and diapers.



Bulldog Basics helped me a lot. It's a good source to provide basic items to people who need them.

Student feedback



As a graduate student and mother, I felt Bulldog Basics diapers helped me a lot for my daughter. I wish to help later to give back to the community.

Student feedback



COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Communications and Outreach includes public relations, marketing, development, and employee engagement. The focus for this area is strengthening awareness of OSSA across campus, promoting the office's events and initiatives, and building relationships among faculty and staff as well as with campus partners.

Communications and Outreach welcomes students during New Student Orientation, promotes OSSA's services and resources, creates digital content, and supports events.



Key Achievements

- Tabled at 29 New Student Orientations, introducing first-year and transfer students to OSSA's resources and services.
- Facilitated more than 70 OSSA presentations, increasing awareness of OSSA's services to students, faculty, and staff.
- Increased the number of LinkedIn followers by 66%, strengthening engagement with students and campus partners.
- Participated in University-wide giving events including Beat Week and Dawg Day of Giving to raise funds for OSSA programs.





SERVICES

Services works to strengthen student learning on campus through personalized academic support, including peer education, academic coaching, and Achieve Atlanta.

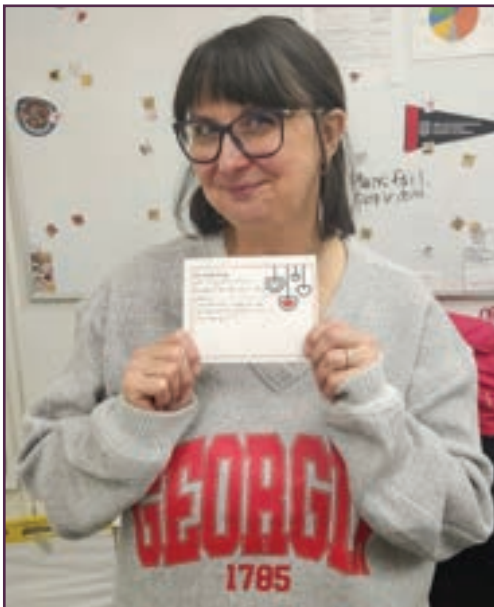
ACADEMIC COACHING

Academic Coaching helps undergraduate students strengthen the skills, habits, and mindset that lead to success in college and beyond. Through one-on-one conversations, coaches guide students in assessing where they are, clarifying where they want to be, and creating action steps to meet their goals.

This personalized approach encourages students to engage intellectually, leverage curiosity, and explore creative solutions to their challenges.

Key Achievements

- Reached more students through targeted outreach to those on Early Alert status and recent transfer students, increasing the number of appointments.
- Saw a significant increase in student-initiated participation, reflecting growing demand for academic coaching services.
- Held 1,025 coaching appointments and supported 691 unique students throughout the year.
- 75 UGA staff members completed the Foundational Academic Coaching Training, expanding the network of professionals available to support student needs.
- Participants in the training reported positive feedback, noting improvements in how they work with students.



ACHIEVE ATLANTA

Achieve Atlanta is a scholarship program that increases access to higher education while maintaining student support throughout college. Through a partnership between UGA and Achieve Atlanta, students have access to academic coaching, programming, and community building.

Key Achievements

- Launched Peer Mentor program to offer increased student support.
- Hosted the first-ever Kickoff and Senior Sendoff Events, helping to build community among scholars.
- Partnered with UGA Admissions to support Atlanta Public Schools Day, inspiring future college students.
- Supported 51 Achieve Atlanta scholars throughout the year, offering programming and access to learning support.
- 100% of scholars remained in good academic standing at the university.



“UGA’s partnership with Achieve Atlanta has created nothing short of a second Atlanta home on UGA’s campus. The guidance, programs, and mentorship Achieve Atlanta provides has allowed Atlanta students to build community and connect with people who share similar experiences. This partnership has reshaped my perception of what it means to be a Georgia Bulldog. Not to change yourself, but it’s a safe space that acknowledges and appreciates where you come from.”

Achieve Atlanta scholar feedback



PEER LEARNING ASSISTANTS

The Peer Learning Assistants (PLA) program helps make UGA classrooms more engaging and interactive. PLAs work alongside faculty to bring active learning strategies into undergraduate courses, giving students more opportunities to participate and connect with the material.

This allows instructors to apply evidence-based teaching approaches, leading to stronger student engagement and better course performance, especially in large or challenging classes.

Key Achievements

- Supported instruction in 30+ academic disciplines, from STEM to the humanities and professional fields.
- Employed 320 PLAs who supported 115 course sections throughout the year.
- More than 7,700 students enrolled in PLA-supported courses.
- Partnered with 37 faculty members during the academic year, strengthening active learning and student engagement in their classrooms.
- Launched a Lead PLA one-on-one mentoring initiative to provide personalized academic and professional support.
- 195 new PLAs completed UNIV 1204: Preparing for Peer Learning and earned College Reading and Learning Association certifications, enhancing the quality and consistency of peer-led instruction.



“ The PLA in my class was incredibly helpful and kind. They made the course material approachable, and I always felt comfortable asking questions without feeling intimidated. ”
Student feedback

“ My PLA provided clear explanations and encouraged us with additional study tools like practice guides and resources, which made preparing for exams much more manageable. ”
Student feedback

PEER TUTORING

Peer Tutoring helps UGA students strengthen their understanding of course material and build confidence in their studies.

Undergraduate students can meet with a Peer Tutor to review concepts, ask questions, and develop effective study strategies. Tutoring is available both in person and online, through one-on-one sessions or group study pods, making academic support accessible wherever students learn best.

Key Achievements

- Held 20,963 tutoring sessions, helping thousands of students strengthen their academic performance.
- Offered tutoring for an average of 366 courses each semester, ensuring access to support across subjects.
- More than 140 trained tutors facilitated sessions each semester, creating a strong network of peer educators dedicated to student success.
- Fall 2024 marked a record semester, with the highest number of tutoring visits and students served.



“ Tutoring sessions not only helped me understand challenging concepts but also guided my study habits. My tutor shared strategies, practice problems, and tips that made me feel prepared and supported throughout the semester. ”

Student feedback

“ My tutor was very patient and made sure I understood each step before moving on. They never made me feel rushed or embarrassed to ask questions, which made learning much easier. ”

Student feedback



LOOKING AHEAD

In the year ahead, OSSA remains focused on growth, innovation, and strengthening student success.

In 2025–26, OSSA will relocate the Presentation Collaboratory, an innovative space, to the new Creative Engagement Wing of the Miller Learning Center, where it will provide students with public speaking and communication support.

Thrive at Georgia continues to evolve to create an even more welcoming and supportive experience for incoming scholars who are eager to start their journey at UGA.

OSSA's internal work plan will guide work in 2025-26 and assist with decision-making, assessment, and prioritizing new opportunities. These efforts help the unit continue to provide the best programs and services to support student success.

Thank you for reading OSSA's annual report and celebrating the accomplishments and growth of 2024-25. Visit ossa.uga.edu or follow us on social media for the latest.



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