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AUBURN ACROSS ALABAMA EXPERIENCE

2022-2024



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Auburn Across Alabama Summary

The Auburn Across Alabama Experience, collaboratively led by University Outreach and Alabama Cooperative Extension System immerses faculty, staff and students in communities across the state to provide them with a deeper understanding of community needs and assets and to facilitate sustained relationships that result in impactful outreach and research outcomes. Faculty trips are hosted in the fall with student experience following in the spring. This report provides a summary of the experience outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

Core Objectives

- 1. Enhance Faculty Insight:**
Equip faculty with a deeper understanding of local institutions, issues, and challenges, paving the way for impactful applications of their expertise.
- 2. Understand Student Diversity:**
Help faculty appreciate the diverse backgrounds and experiences students bring to Auburn, enriching the educational experience.
- 3. Foster Interdisciplinary Synergy:**
Encourage collaboration and shared understanding among faculty from various disciplines through collective experiences.
- 4. Strengthening Alumni Relations:**
Build stronger connections between faculty and Auburn alumni through meaningful interactions.

Participants

Year	Total	Faculty	Staff	Students
2022	25	17	8	0
2023	30	26	4	0
2024	48	31	15	2

These percentage increases are consistent. Here is how the changes align:

1. From Year 1 to Year 2: 20% increase
2. From Year 2 to Year 3: 37% increase
3. From Year 1 to Year 3: 92% increase



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AAA 2022

Auburn Across Alabama Experience: Tuskegee, Montgomery, and Selma

Overview

The inaugural Auburn Across Alabama (AAA) Experience included visits to Tuskegee, Montgomery, and Selma, highlighting historical and cultural landmarks while fostering community engagement.

- **Tuskegee:** Participants met with city leaders, the local Chamber of Commerce, and toured the city with the mayor.
- **Montgomery:** The group toured the Legacy Museum, the Hyundai plant, and key areas of the city while meeting with local leaders.
- **Selma:** The visit featured meetings with the mayor, city leaders, and concerned citizens, walking across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, and exploring other historical sites.

Survey Results

Feedback from participants indicated a highly positive reception of the AAA Experience. The following insights were gathered:

- **Highlights:**
 - 83% of participants identified the discussions in Tuskegee, the Legacy Museum, and the Edmund Pettus Bridge walk as standout moments.
- **Areas for Improvement:**
 - Additional time at each location to deepen engagement.
 - More opportunities for small group discussions or breakout sessions to foster collaboration.
 - Community engagement activities that participants can actively contribute to.
 - Follow-up visits to sustain connections and impact.
- **Reflection Reception:** This element provided valuable depth and sparked several new projects.

Outcomes

The AAA Experience catalyzed numerous projects and initiatives, demonstrating the program's impact. Examples include:

- Articles and publications documenting the program's influence and the stories of the visited communities.



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- Collaborative projects between participants and community members.

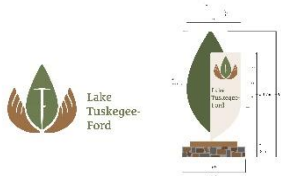
Recommendations for Future Trips

1. **Extend Time at Each Stop:** Allow participants more time to engage with community leaders and explore local landmarks.
2. **Facilitate Collaborative Discussions:** Include structured small group discussions or breakout sessions to encourage idea exchange and partnership development.
3. **Introduce Hands-On Community Activities:** Provide opportunities for participants to engage directly with local communities through service or collaborative projects.
4. **Plan Follow-Up Visits:** Schedule subsequent trips to maintain relationships and measure the impact of initiatives launched during the visit.
5. **Enhance Reflection Opportunities:** Build on the success of the reflection reception by incorporating additional structured reflection moments throughout the trip.

The Auburn Across Alabama Experience has proven to be a meaningful program that fosters connection, learning, and actionable outcomes for both participants and the communities visited. By addressing feedback and implementing suggested improvements, future iterations can deepen the program's impact and sustain long-term engagement.

Projects and Collaborations

- Robert Finkel – Bloody Sunday Research Project
<https://cadc.auburn.edu/sigds-robert-finkel-lends-design-expertise-to-bloody-sunday-research-team/>
- Robert Finkel – Lake Tuskegee-Ford Identity Project
 - Students designed signs for Lake Tuskegee-Ford for their final project.



- Keith Hebert – Revitalizing Selma University
- Keith Hebert – Bloody Sunday, Selma, and the Long Civil Rights Movement
<https://cla.auburn.edu/news/articles/cla-outreach-supports-k12-classrooms/>
- Hollie Cost, Jocelyn Vickers, Chippewa Thomas – Tuskegee Collaborative
- Hollie Cost and Jocelyn Vickers – Selma Project with Rural Studio
- Sid James – Non-Profit Workshops in Tuskegee and Selma



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- **Bernard Hill** – Facilitated a relationship between Montgomery County Commissioner Sankey that led to a Community Planning capstone project in Fall 2024. The class engaged with residents to understand community challenges, observed these issues firsthand, and presented their findings to faculty and local leaders. The project validated citizen concerns and provided affordable solutions to empower the community and assist Commissioner Sankey in advocacy efforts.



Auburn Across Alabama Student Experience

Overview

Students traveled to Montgomery as part of the Auburn Across Alabama initiative. During the visit, they toured the new Whitewater Park, Hyundai, Co-Lab, and Alley Station. While 15 students initially signed up for the trip, 10 participated.

Survey Results

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Students particularly enjoyed the Hyundai tour and Whitewater Park. They also appreciated engaging with the presenters and listening to the history of downtown Montgomery. The city's growth and development were of particular interest to them.



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AAA 2023

AAA 2nd Year Trip Recap

We traveled through Chambers and Lee Counties, visiting several impactful sites, including:

- **Circle of Care** in Lanett, AL
- **Eastside Elementary School** in Lafayette, AL
- A demonstration of the **On-Med Station** in Lafayette, AL
- Meetings with local representatives
- **O-Grows** in Opelika, AL
- A **Loachapoka tour**

Survey Results

Overall, participants enjoyed the experience, giving it an average rating of **3.38 out of 4.00**. Notable participant comments included:

- "More time to talk to community members."
- "Loved seeing how Auburn has impacted Chambers County."
- "We love O-Grows."



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- "I love the diversity of each site that we visited."

Outcomes

The reflection reception for this AAA trip was highly attended. With many partners located close to Auburn University, they were able to join the event and share valuable insights on future collaboration opportunities.

Projects and Collaborations

- Jocelyn Vickers – Assisted Inspire Academy with food pantry
- Joshua Sahib – has reached out to schools and other institutions surrounding the area to invite them to the College of Business Pitch Competition
- Martina McGhee – providing interns to some of the schools in Chambers County
- Chandana Mitra – Heat Illness Awareness Initiative in Lafayette, AL

[Heat illness awareness initiative comes to LaFayette - Valley Times-News](#) | [Valley Times-News](#)





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AAA 2nd-Year Student Experience

Overview

AAA's second-year students participated in an educational trip to Chambers County, where they visited Inspire Academy, Eastside Elementary School, and the Rural Health Center that houses the On-Med Station. The trip offered valuable hands-on experiences and insights into community-driven initiatives.

Highlights of the Visit

- **Inspire Academy:**
 - Students witnessed preparations for a soapbox derby event.
 - They observed the design and construction of derby cars and event awards.
 - The academy's farm and food pantry were also toured, showcasing sustainable community efforts.
- **Eastside Elementary School:**
 - Students were warmly welcomed by the elementary schoolchildren.
 - They toured classrooms and labs, providing a firsthand look at the school's learning environment.
- **Rural Health Center & On-Med Station:**
 - The visit included a tour of the center and its On-Med Station.
 - Students engaged with virtual nurses and observed operations within the facility.
 - Nursing and audiology interns were present, offering insights into their roles and the center's impact on the community.

Participation

- A total of 12 students participated in this enriching experience.

Anecdotal Results

- Students expressed significant admiration for the projects at Inspire Academy. Graduate students commented on the advanced nature of the designs, stating that even with higher education, they would find similar projects challenging.
- Students showed great interest in learning more about the On-Med Station and its community benefits.



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Outcomes and Next Steps

- As a result of the positive experience, Student Involvement has proposed a collaborative trip to the Black Belt region on March 1, 2025.
- A more formal data collection process will be established to measure impact and outcomes.



AAA 3rd Year Experience

The 2024 AAA experience focused on the Black Belt region of Alabama. The towns we toured included Selma, Boligee, Greensboro, and Newbern, AL.



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Based on collective campus interests we chose to revisit Selma to recap the developments and hear how Auburn University has impacted the area since our last tour. From Selma, we traveled to Boligee, AL, to visit the OnMed CareStation. Our next stop was Project Horseshoe Farm in Greensboro, where we also had the opportunity to meet with the CEO of Hale County Hospital.

The students interning at Project Horseshoe Farm particularly piqued our interest. These interns, hailing from across the United States, come to work in rural Alabama on minimal income. This level of commitment and resourcefulness is something students from Alabama may not typically envision for themselves.

Our final stop was Auburn University's Rural Studio in Newbern. Experiencing firsthand the projects they've completed over the years and hearing about the students' experiences was truly inspiring. The opportunity to design and build something that directly benefits others is undoubtedly life-changing.

Survey Results

The overall rating for this experience was exceptionally high. Participants thoroughly enjoyed the trip, even though it was a long day. Some of the feedback included:

- "Amazing! Loved brainstorming with others to find ways to impact the community."
- A desire to have heard from a school administrator in Selma.
- Interest in incorporating other disciplines, such as Agriculture and Forestry.
- Appreciation for exchanging ideas with others.
- "I met so many new faculty and staff that I didn't know before."

Outcomes

- Rural Studio will be engaging with multiple disciplines on campus for collaborative projects.
- Participants were able to visit places they likely wouldn't have explored on their own.
- Students were included in this year's trip and appreciated the opportunity to listen to and learn from faculty and staff.



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Conclusion

Auburn Across Alabama has grown into a cherished tradition at Auburn University. In collaboration with Alabama Extension Services and University Outreach, we have elevated the experience year after year. Some faculty and staff have participated every year, and the conversation now centers on what's next.

We are eager to continue building on this momentum. Future possibilities include exploring Mobile, Huntsville, or delving deeper into the Black Belt region. Our next experience will take this tradition to new heights—a memorable overnight journey to the Gulf Coast.