

Alexander Grass Scholars Program

Community Partner FAQ

What is the Alexander Grass Scholars Program (AGS), and how does it involve community partners?

Each Spring semester, 20 undergraduates are selected through a competitive process to participate in a project-based learning experience about research in the humanities. Students are introduced to the nuts-and-bolts of humanistic methods like careful reading, historical analysis, contextualization, conceptual analysis, and critical evaluation. They learn to develop research questions, interact with archives, locate, and assess sources, choose research methods, navigate ethical considerations, and practice strategies for communicating about findings.

In UF's Summer A (6-week term beginning mid-May), students are enrolled in a UF course on Foundations of Humanities Research. As a part of this course, they are divided into four groups, each of which explores a publicly engaged topic and produces a research project.

In the Fall term, each student completes an independent research project and participates in a Grass Scholars Research Symposium to publicly present their work.

Community partners, such as local organizations and cultural institutions, are intellectual and physical spaces for exploring the public humanities. CHPS seeks community partners interested in hosting projects for our Grass Scholars. Hosting a project usually involves the use of facilities for on-site student work, as well as use of collections, materials, or other resources associated with student learning and project completion.

What are examples of Grass Scholars projects accomplished with community organizations and cultural institutions?

Previous Grass Scholars cycles included collaborations with these Gainesville community organizations:

A. Quinn Jones Museum and Cultural Center

This project traced the transformation of the A. Quinn Jones house from a private home to a cultural center and museum, exploring its significance in the Fifth Avenue/Pleasant Street neighborhood. Through archival research and oral history interviews, students developed a 15-panel exhibit at the museum with infographics and A/V supplements, showcasing the building's historical importance and community ties.

Matheson History Museum

This project documented AIDS Memorial Quilts from the Gainesville Area AIDS Project archive. Participants delved into the local response to the AIDS epidemic through archival research, exploring group documents, flyers, and newspaper articles. The result was an accessible online exhibit using Wix, incorporating various media forms to bring awareness to this significant chapter in Gainesville's queer history.

Cotton Club Museum and Cultural Center

This project delved into the history and cultural significance of Black Folk Language and its impact on literature, identity, and society. Students explored its evolution and use by Black authors, conducted oral history interviews with community leaders and language experts, and analyzed the language's role in shaping narratives. Through research and fieldwork, participants created an interactive digital exhibit that celebrates the depth, creativity, and validity of this dynamic dialect.

The Hippodrome Theatre

This project explored the world of archival theatre, researching historical posters and articles to uncover the stories of actors, directors, and their careers over the 50-year history of the Hippodrome regional theatre. Students engaged with the intersections of history, performance, and the lasting impact of individuals within the theatre community. The program culminated in a short film tracing the paths of some of these professionals, engaging with a deeper understanding of their contributions, evolving roles, and how their legacies continue to shape contemporary theatre.

What support does the Grass Scholars Program offer to community partners?

Community partners that host a Grass Scholars Project are eligible for **\$500 in funding**. This is meant to compensate for the use of facilities in the case of on-site work on Thursdays and Fridays, and for use of the partner's collections, materials, or other resources associated with student learning and project completion.

CHPS also seeks to support summer **projects that raise awareness about the work of our community partners**: by involving undergraduates in their organizations, enhancing their spaces (as in the case of a physical exhibit), on-line presence (as in the case of a website), or other form of public engagement.

Who can I contact for more information?

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