

GCSU surpasses 1M service hours by student volunteers

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Students take part in GCSU Gives Day volunteer efforts in August.

Georgia College & State University this week earned the 2026 Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement, a national certification that rewards the cumulative impacts of thousands of service hours logged annually by Georgia College students.

With nearly 100% of Georgia College students participating in community service during their time on campus, civic involvement remains core to GCSU's mission. One signature program, GCSU Gives Day, is an annual event started in 2018 that introduces first-year students to service by partnering with nonprofits across Milledgeville and Baldwin County. In 2024, GCSU Gives Day provided an economic impact of \$120,000 in donated labor by more than 1,600 first-year students.

Over the past 25 years, The Office of Community Engagement and Belonging has facilitated 25,000 volunteers, contributing 1.1 million hours of service with a \$26 million impact.

"This Carnegie classification reflects the dedication Georgia College has to a culture of serving our community," said Dr. Dan Nadler, Georgia College vice president for Student Life and interim dean of students. "Our students give their time and talents to hundreds of organizations, and our faculty lead co-curricular projects for learning outside the classroom with nonprofits and local businesses."

With over 200 student organizations on campus, GCSU cultivates leadership development while addressing critical community needs. Service organizations span diverse causes including GC Miracle, which has raised over \$1 million for Georgia's Beverly Knight Olson Children's Hospital, and Best Buddies, which fosters friendships with individuals with disabilities.

"Our colleges and universities ... build prosperity in rural, urban and suburban communities nationwide," said Timothy F.C. Knowles, president of The Carnegie Foundation. "We celebrate each of these institutions, particularly their dedication to partnering with their neighbors — fostering civic engagement, building useable knowledge and catalyzing real world learning experiences for students."

The national announcement came today from The American Council on Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. According to Carnegie, GCSU is one of 277 institutions nationwide, both public and private, recognized for this honor.

Paying It Forward

According to GCSU Director of Community Engagement Ashley Copeland, community-based engaged learning courses generate over 10,000 documented service hours annually by Georgia College students.

Dr. Mengyao Xu, assistant professor in the Department of Communication, recently arranged for her senior capstone students to collaborate with local elementary schools on a battery recycling campaign called "Battery Hero."

The team of five seniors enlisted Copeland's help, along with the GCSU Office of Sustainability, and in its initial campaign saved over 27 pounds of used batteries from going into landfills. Dr. Kristina Brooks, superintendent of Baldwin County Schools, asked Dr. Xu to expand the recycling project across the school district.