

2015-2016 Proposal for Appalachian Teaching Project

***Cultivating Community:
Helping Rural Libraries Develop Seed and Story Depositories***

**University of North Georgia
Dr. Bonita Jacobs
President
82 College Circle
Dahlonega, GA 30579**

706-864-1993

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**Rosann Kent
Director, Appalachian Studies Center
University of North Georgia
201 Vickery House
82 College Circle
Dahlonega, GA 30579
rkent@ung.edu**

PROJECT FOCUS

“Cultivating Community: Helping Rural Libraries Develop Seed and Story Repositories” will make local heirloom seeds and the cultural memories of the seed keepers more accessible to Appalachian Georgians.

By partnering with the Chestatee Regional Library, this project will make heirloom seeds more accessible to Appalachian Georgia.

PROJECT DETAILS:

Course Number: GASC 34800

Name: *Appalachian Experience* (Fall, 2015)

Other courses: Because this interdisciplinary research project cannot be accomplished in one semester, faculty mentors will integrate portions of it into the syllabi of selected other courses in UNG’s Minor in Appalachian Studies:

- GASC 3500: *Special topics, Appalachian Storytelling*
- GASC 3500: *Special topics in Appalachian Studies, Saving Appalachian Gardens and Stories* (Summer 2015)
- GASC 3100 *Introduction to Appalachian Studies* (Fall 2015 and Spring 2016)

Instructors: Rosann Kent and Dr. Chris Dockery. Professor Karrie Ann Fadroski, biology instructor, will also provide technical assistance for seed preservation.

Community Partner: [Chestatee Regional Library System](#) covers two Appalachian counties: Dawson (211 sq. mi.) and Lumpkin (284 sq. mi.).

Need:

Like most libraries serving rural communities, Chestatee Regional Library, CRL, has experienced decreased funding and staff, yet is charged with a mission to "offer lifelong learning opportunities, family and local history resources, and recreational materials to everyone in Dawson and Lumpkin Counties."

Likewise, the Appalachian Studies Center has collected almost 150 heirloom seed varieties as part of its Saving Appalachian Garden and Stories (SAGAS), an art-based research program that engages community members. In addition to gathering, growing, and banking heirloom seeds, the SAGAS program bridges the gap between art and science by collecting ethnocultural memories from seedkeepers and then

creating public art installations from the interviews. However, the Center has no consistent distribution mechanism for its seeds, stories, or art.

Finally, to our knowledge, other seed banks and/or seed libraries in north Georgia do not exist. Rural libraries are more than buildings with books. They are community meeting places where stories and information are shared. We believe that this partnership to share seeds and their ethnocultural memories will be of mutual benefit for many.

Number and description of planned meetings with community partner

Faculty mentors began informal discussions with librarians in April 2014.

1. June, 2015. Initial Planning Meeting with faculty mentors and librarians.
2. July 2015. Mentors hold follow up meeting with partners to begin planning publicity campaign.
3. August 2015. Partners introduced to three classes. Students tour both branches of library.
4. September 2015. Students provide program outline to partners and hold rehearsal at each library. Students introduce partner to seed intake form and seed dispensing machine.
5. October 2015. Kick-off is held at both libraries.
6. November 2015: Partner reviews ATP presentations and gives feedback after “dress rehearsal” to partner and public.
7. December 2015. Partner invited to end-of-semester celebration.
8. Jan. 2016. Partnership cycle begins for new spring classes.
9. Feb. 2016. Partner and students develop two programs for two age groups to be presented at two locations.
10. Note: Partners will be contacted throughout the year by students regarding resupply of seed machine, collection of donated seeds and any emerging issues.

Overview of the project, including its central focus

The project provides students an opportunity to engage in ARC’s regional food initiative by piloting a mechanism to distribute heirloom seeds and their ethnocultural memories through regional libraries in Southern Appalachia. Students and community volunteers will build two portable prototypes of seed dispensing machines. They will create packaging as well as a marketing campaign in consultation with the librarians. Students will develop reader’s theater from transcriptions and conversation with seed keeper, culminating in October with a public launch at both locations of the Chestatee Regional Library.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives will serve as the focus for the upcoming year's Plan of Work for the Appalachian Studies Center. Faculty mentors in Appalachian Studies, art, and biology will integrate the following goals/objectives/activities/ in selected courses outlined above.

Project Goals/Objectives embedded in syllabi

1. As a result of their participation in this project, students will be positioned as emerging leaders, scholars, artists and activists who can foster sustainability in the Appalachian Region.
2. Through place-based pedagogy, students will be engaged as active learners, participants, and community researchers.
3. Using qualitative methodologies (e.g. arts based inquiry) students will engage in promoting self-sufficiency through gardening and seed saving in Lumpkin and Dawson counties.
4. Research will address first goal of the ARC strategic plan: increase job opportunities and per capita income as well as support the White House Rural Council initiative on regional food economies. By learning skills such as public speaking, project management, and leadership, students are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow.

Activities embedded in syllabi

1. All students will participate in assigned aspect of the project.
2. All students will contribute at least 20 hours of direct service in maintaining and harvesting heirloom seed demonstration garden and/or creating seed packets.
3. All students will attend at least one of the four planned activities with partner.
4. All students will participate in "dress rehearsal" to partner and community.
5. Selected students will attend ATP conference in Washington and Appalachian Studies Association.
6. All students will participate in academic discussion to include lectures and analysis of assigned readings, which include selections from
 - Bill Best's *Saving Seeds/Preserving Taste: Appalachian Seed Savers*
 - Janise Ray's *The Underground Seed Revolution*

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Develop leadership and civic-capacity among the students engaged in the project
- Provide opportunities for students to experience various parts of the region and the work of the Commission in Washington, D.C
- Contribute to the ARC's initiative on regional food systems and enhance student and community awareness ARC's presence in north Georgia

These outcomes will be demonstrated through

1. All students will serve on at least one leadership team, which is student-selected and governed.
2. All students will participate in formal and informal discussions with partner representative, Tracey Thomaswick. Together with the faculty mentors, they will develop a system to rotate, maintain, and publicize the seed distribution machine.
3. Students will interview selected seedkeepers and create readers theater script based on ethnocultural memories.
4. Students and partners will explore the model of the Cleveland Seed Bank, a partnership with the Cleveland Public Library.
5. Students will promote the partner's seed launch on UNG campus and the Farmers Market.
6. Students will plan and staff the seed launch at the Lumpkin location on Saturday, October 25 and at the Dawson location on Saturday, October 17.
7. In 2016, students will develop programs for Full STEAM Ahead (programming based on science, technology, engineering and math). They will deliver programs for Lumpkin county for elementary students on the 3rd Tuesday and the teen program on the 4th Tuesday from 4 to 5 p.m. Likewise, Dawson holds its elementary programming on the 2nd Tuesday and its Teen program on the 4th Tuesday.
8. Students will exhibit elements of the arts based research from the past three ATP projects (communograph, garden flags, and broadsides) during library events.
9. Students will learn to present and publish their undergraduate research at academic conferences
 - October 2015: Selected students will prepare and submit a poster proposal to the Appalachian Studies Association.
 - Nov. 2015. All students participate in a “dress rehearsal” for the ATP presentation to partner, community, and campus in the Learning Technology Center at UNG.
 - Dec. 2015: Presentation at the ATP Conference in Washington, D.C. 2014 to include powerpoint, poster and debut of seed dispensing machine.
 - March 2015: Selected students will present poster session
 - April 2015: Selected students will present ATP research at UNG's research conference