University Benefits

A key to the success of the Archway Partnership is the direct link that it provides for faculty and students on campus to be active in communities across the state of Georgia. Since Archway's inception in 2005, over 600 students have participated in projects in each of Archway communities. This process allows faculty members to provide expert insight and gives students real-world experiences outside the classroom.

Through their involvement, students are able to gain real world experiences which are made possible only outside of a classroom setting, enhancing their overall academic experience.

A College of Environment & Design graduate student says his assistantship has provided him with “invaluable and practical experience assisting communities across the state.” He adds, “Each community has a distinct vision for their environment and I have the opportunity to work collaboratively with communities to bridge their vision into implementation.”

For one student in the Lamar Dodd School of Art, a photography project in a community gave her the experiences to not only grow in her trade but as an individual and professional artist. “As someone who is a little shy, this experience helped me to learn to interact with people who I have never met before. It helped me to become a more independent person and to really expand my horizons and get out into the field and take pictures.”

It is through these types of experiences that the Archway Partnership helps to fulfill the University of Georgia's land grant mission of teaching, research and service.
Background

As an institution dedicated to teaching, research and public service excellence, the University of Georgia aspired to enhance connectivity between the university and the state’s communities to address critical community identified needs. Building on a nearly century-long pursuit of its outreach mission, the university sought to expand and simplify access to higher education resources to cities and counties throughout Georgia.

In 2005, the Archway Partnership was born. An exciting initiative of Public Service & Outreach and Cooperative Extension “portal” counties through which communities gain the wealth of faculty and student expertise, who, in turn, gain practical experience outside of the classroom. Collaborative projects are tailored to address priority issues uniquely identified by each community.

Locally Driven

Archway Model

The Archway Partnership process begins with the development of an Executive Committee of community leaders who guide the process and commit financial resources to the partnership. Community leaders from local governments, businesses, hospitals and health authorities, school boards, chambers of commerce, development authorities, local higher education institutions and technical colleges all sit on the local Executive Committees.

Those members help create the Steering Committee of other community stakeholders willing to commit time and energy to developing and prioritizing community issues. Interested residents are recruited for Issue Work Groups, chaired by Steering Committee members, focused on developing strategies to resolve specific issues. Community stakeholders and Archway sign a partnership agreement for sustained participation in community problem solving. This helps ensure long-term commitment to implementing strategies developed by these groups.

The highly collaborative equal partnership established through the communities and the Archway Partnership has been held up as a national model for the interaction of higher education and communities. The attributes most often cited include: community-driven priorities, a safe-haven mechanism for community dialogue, a bottoms-up approach, building community and campus capacity and enhancing teaching and research while addressing real world priority issues.

Community Benefits

At the start-up of a new Archway community, a process of community listening sessions help to establish a list of community-based priority areas which set the work plan for each partnership.

The Archway Professional (AP) works with their community to help link them back to the appropriate higher education resource. While the set of priorities vary between each location, there are a few themes which tend to appear across multiple Archway locations. These areas of focus may include, but are not limited to:

- Leadership Development
- Economic Development and Tourism Initiatives
- Planning for Growth
- Public Education
- Health Care Needs

The relationship between the communities and an institute of higher education provides access to resources which address local issues, and enhances community development.