



TOOLKIT

CAMPUS EXHIBITIONS

IN ADVANCEMENT OF CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Campus Compact

**NATIONAL MUSEUM
AND CENTER FOR
SERVICE**

Welcome

Campus Compact launched the Campus Museums of Service initiative in partnership with the National Museum and Center for Service in 2023.

This open-source Toolkit is the product of our six-member Design Team who convened throughout 2023–2024 and who are committed to sharing exhibitions that tell the stories of our communities and the ways that students, staff, and faculty are engaging meaningfully with them. We hope the Toolkit will be a helpful resource for campuses across our network seeking to advance civic and community engagement in innovative ways.

This Toolkit was part of a larger initiative by the National Museum and Center for Service to establish a physical museum near the National Mall in Washington DC. While they work towards this goal, they partnered with Campus Compact and others to develop three toolkits showcasing how to develop community-based exhibitions. These additional toolkits, one focused on exhibitions with [PK-12 schools](#) and one in partnership with [community organizations](#), can be found on their [website](#).

Toolkit Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Project Team | Case Study 1 |
| Introduction | Case Study 2 |
| Why Create an Exhibition? | Case Study 3 |
| Developing an Exhibition | Case Study 4 |
| • Defining the Exhibition Purpose | Case Study 5 |
| • Collaboration & Funding | Exhibition Planning Worksheet |
| • Creating a Project Timeline | |
| • Creating the Exhibition | |
| • Marketing the Exhibition | |
| • Measuring Impact | |

Project Team



Urkovia Andrews

Assistant Director for Service–Learning, Office of Leadership & Community Engagement, Georgia Southern University



Alexandra Byrum

Campus Compact 2023–2024 Campus Exhibitions Fellow & Project Team Lead
Director of Communications and Community Relations, Bonner Center for Civic Engagement, University of Richmond



Mariam Ismail

Digital Projects Coordinator
Virginia Tech Publishing, Virginia Tech



Gina Lee–Olukoya

Director of Civic Life, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs,
University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign



Leslie Lombre

Director, External Relations, Leo T. McCarthy Center for Public Service and the Common Good, University of San Francisco



Shelley Errington Nicholson

Dean of Students
Greenfield Community College



Ashley Sawyer

Project Coordinator
National Museum and Center for Service



Laura Weaver

Special Project Manager
Campus Compact

Recommended Citation

Byrum, A., Andrews, U., Ismail, M., Lee–Olukoya, G., Lombre, L., Nicholson, S. E., Sawyer, A., & Weaver, L. (2024, October). Campus exhibitions in advancement of civic and community engagement [Online Toolkit]. Campus Compact.

Why Create an Exhibition?

Museums across the world are wrestling with questions of their role in catalyzing public engagement. Likewise, institutions of higher education are committed to preparing students for active citizenship. Exhibitions on campus and collaborations with local museums or community partners can play a pivotal role in meeting our highest aspirations.

Here are a few reasons to create an exhibition centered on civic and community engagement.

★ Exhibitions celebrate, inform, and inspire service and action.

★ Exhibitions amplify stories that need to be told.

★ Exhibitions invite meaningful community-campus dialogue and reflection.

★ Exhibitions provide deep learning through interdisciplinary collaboration, research, and creative thinking.

★ Exhibitions advance key community-campus partnerships.

What is the purpose of your exhibition?

Use the worksheet at the end of this guide with your team to plan your exhibition.

Selected Resources

Benetua, L., Simon, N., & Garcia, S. M. (2018). *Community issue exhibition toolkit*. Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History. <https://c3.santacruzmah.org/toolkit/>

Klobe, T. (2012). *Exhibitions: Concept, planning and design*. AAM Press of the American Association of Museums.

Lord, G. D., & Lord, B. (1999). *The manual of museum planning*. Altamira Press.

McKenna-Cress, P. & Kamien, J. A. (2013). *Creating exhibitions: Collaboration in the planning, development, and design of innovative experiences*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Murawski, M. (2021). *Museums as agents of change: A guide to becoming a changemaker*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Piacente, M. (2022). *Manual of museum exhibitions*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Serrell, B. (2015). *Exhibit labels: An interpretive approach*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Silverman, L. H. (2020). *The social work of museums*. Routledge.

Simon, N. (2016). *The art of relevance*. Museum 2.0. <https://artofrelevance.org>

Smithsonian Exhibits (n.d.). *A guide to exhibit development*. Smithsonian Exhibits. <https://exhibits.si.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Guide-to-Exhibit-Development.pdf>

The J. Paul Getty Museum. (2011). *Complete guide to adult audience interpretive materials: Gallery texts and graphics*. J. Paul Getty Trust. https://www.getty.edu/education/museum_educators/downloads/aaim_quickguide.pdf

Defining the Exhibition Purpose

The first step in planning an exhibition is to articulate your purpose and to identify the main idea you want to communicate to viewers. We recommend defining the exhibition purpose in collaboration with other stakeholders—community partners, staff, faculty, and students.

As you think about your goals, consider possible exhibition content—photographs, objects, text panels, other materials—and how you plan to organize the exhibition.

Key Questions to Consider

What is the purpose of your exhibition?

- What do you want to communicate to viewers about your community?
- What are your goals for the exhibition?

How are you centering civic and community engagement?

- Is your exhibition organized around a key concept, social issue, or historical moment?
- Is your exhibition honoring stories of your community?
- Is your exhibition celebrating service and action?
- Is your exhibition deepening connections between your institution and your community?

Who is your target audience?

- How will your target audience inform your planning (location, content, writing, etc.)?
- How will you ensure that your exhibition speaks to your intended audience?

How does this exhibition align with your organization’s mission, vision, and values?

- How will your institutional or organizational civic and community engagement priorities inform your planning?

“Exhibitions are about meaning: they are intentional creations, planned and installed to express something: ideas, impressions, experience or even just visual access to objects.”

*Gail Dexter Lord and Barry Lord
The Manual of Museum Planning*



Collaboration & Funding

Stakeholders & Venues

Exhibitions are almost always developed in collaboration with other stakeholders. It's important to identify your exhibition committee and/or partners at the beginning of your planning. As administrators or faculty, we should consider many different stakeholders for our exhibition projects.

Students can play many roles in the development of an exhibition, from photographer to designer to curator.

Community partners may be eager to partner with you on an exhibition project to amplify their work, and to connect students, staff, and faculty to engagement opportunities.

When exploring possible venues, it's best to reach out to potential campus partners, local museums, and libraries well in advance. Possible exhibition venues may be a wall in a campus building, at the entrance to a dining hall, the center of the campus library, a formal gallery space, or community partner headquarters. There are many venue options for creating impactful exhibitions.

Funding

Many times you will need to secure funding for your exhibition. This may come through your department budget or grants from organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, or your local community foundation. We recommend reaching out to your institution's office of development or advancement to identify potential funding.

Large teams are often behind major museum exhibition projects.

For campus exhibitions, the team may be smaller, but the work still takes place in these key areas:

Administration: project management, scheduling meetings, ensuring space availability, and funding

Curatorial: exhibition content and writing

Design and Production: design and production of any panels, labels, or other exhibition materials

Installation: installing all exhibition pieces

Programming: connected educational events or resources such as the exhibition opening

Promotion: all marketing and communications

* When created in the context of a community-based learning class, there is an opportunity to engage your students on project teams or to assign work as it best suits the learning goals of your class.

Key Questions to Consider

How will the exhibition be developed in collaboration with community partners?

- How will you connect with campus partners to further the impact of your exhibition?
- If you're working with a community partner to develop the exhibition, how will you ensure that it is a mutually beneficial collaboration?
- Will the exhibition be part of a community-based learning course?

How will the exhibition be funded?

- What are the costs of the exhibition?
- Are there institutional or external grants that you can apply for?

Creating a Project Timeline

Exhibitions are developed over the course of several months, sometimes a year or more, depending on the scope of your project. Every project has a different timeline, but creating a project plan and schedule is critical.

It's helpful to identify when you hope to open the exhibition and work backwards, ensuring that there is enough time to develop your content and print all of your panels and labels. Depending on the printer you are using, it may take up to three weeks for printing.

Below is a sample timeline for how an exhibition might develop over 10 weeks.

Sample Timeline

| | |
|------------|--|
| Weeks 1-3 | Exhibition proposal and building support |
| Weeks 4-6 | Research and content development |
| Weeks 7-8 | Writing, editing, and design |
| Weeks 9-10 | Exhibition installation and opening |

Weeks 4-6

Research and content development

Weeks 1-3

Exhibition proposal and building support

Weeks 7-8

Writing, editing, and design

Weeks 9-10

Exhibition installation and opening

Key Questions to Consider

When do you hope to open your exhibition?

- Will there be an exhibition opening event?
- Is the exhibition tied to another event, festival, occasion?

Does the project need to be completed within the academic year or a single semester?

- How will your timeline or syllabi support the completion of the project?



Creating the Exhibition

Exhibitions can feature a wide variety of content including art, original or reproduction photographs, archival material, objects, multimedia, books, poems, and interactive displays. They typically include the following components:

- **Exhibition title**
- **Introductory panel with an exhibition description and acknowledgement of the creators**
- **Main exhibition content**

Deciding what to include in an exhibition and wrestling with your many options—Why this photograph and not the other?—is part of what makes this work both stimulating and challenging.

Depending on the scale of your exhibition, you may want to have an **object list** with important details. This spreadsheet can include artist, title, date, source, description, status, community organization/representation, service component, etc. Online catalogs, such as the [Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Online Catalog](#), [Yale Digital Content](#), and the [New York Public Library Digital Collections](#), are excellent sources for pulling historical content.

Section Panels & Labels

Many exhibitions also include section panels and most include labels. Section panels introduce new themes or a set of objects within the exhibition while Labels provide information about each object.

Labels should include:

- **The artist's name** *if available*
- **The artist's nationality, birth year** *optional*
- **Title** (*in bold or italic*) **and year the work was created**
- **Medium used to create the work**
- **Brief description.** *This is where you include any information such as why and how the piece was created or information about the artist.*

The J. Paul Getty Museum's [Complete Guide to Adult Audience Interpretive Materials: Gallery Texts and Graphics](#) offers excellent examples of labels.

Interactive Components

Exhibitions provide opportunity for reflection on some of your communities' most pressing challenges and inequalities.

Including interactivity in the exhibition enables designers to engage viewers. Your exhibition not only serves as a platform for sharing stories and ideas but also vehicle for open dialogue and connecting people of differing perspectives.

Editing

Exhibition text should be edited to ensure accuracy, correct spelling and grammar, and consistent tone. If the exhibition is being developed as part of a community-based learning class, it's particularly important to allow enough time for this step in the syllabi.

✳ Helpful Tools

Check out these helpful tools for creating your exhibition:

- For panels, labels, and other visualizations: [Canva](#), [Adobe Express](#), and [Kumu](#)
- For online exhibitions: [WordPress](#), [Knightlab's Storymap](#), and [Genially](#)
- For integrating sound or video: [Audacity](#) and [DaVinci Resolve](#)

Key Questions to Consider

How are you working with community partners and project team members on the exhibition?

- Are you meeting regularly with collaborators to ensure that everyone's voice is heard and you're all on the same page?

What is the content of your exhibition?

- Will the exhibition be virtual or in person or both?
- Will you include objects, photographs, or other materials?
- How does the exhibition content contribute to the central idea?
- What criteria are you using to select the content for the exhibition? Who has final say?
- What display options are available to you? (i.e. display case, tables, shelves)

What is your exhibition narrative?

- How is your exhibition organized and does each section and major themes all relate to the main idea?
- Do you have a specific target outcome or call to action for the audience?
- Will there be a leaflet, guide, or other distributable material accompanying the exhibition to provide additional context to visitors?
- How does the content reflect diversity and inclusivity?

Will there be an interactive component of your exhibition?

- Do you want to engage your audience in a response or action related to the exhibition?
- What logistical and technical support will be needed for the exhibition setup?
- What platforms or technologies will you use?

Exhibition Costs

Exhibition costs vary widely depending on your content. Carleton College provides two different [examples of exhibition budgets](#) on their [Teaching with Exhibitions website](#).

Small-scale photography display

Consisted of 40 photos with labels. Photos were mounted in the hallway using 3M adhesive tabs.

| | | |
|---|---------|-----------------|
| 8x10 inch photos printed on photo paper | 40 | \$95.00 |
| 3M adhesive tabs | 4 packs | \$12.50 |
| Total | | \$107.50 |

Large-scale photography exhibition with additional programming

Consisted of approximately 20 framed photos with labels. Exhibition was displayed at Gould Library. The opening featured a guest lecturer and expert in the field.

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Frames & plexiglass for mounting photos | \$684.00 |
| Shipping photos to & from international institution | \$400.00 |
| Publicity posters for Exhibition and Opening | \$10.80 |
| Artist honorarium | \$600.00 |
| Guest Lecturer honorarium, travel, accommodations & food | \$2,820.00 |
| Opening reception catered refreshments | \$250.00 |
| Total | \$4,765.00 |

Marketing the Exhibition

Promoting the exhibition through posters, digital flyers, social media, and direct email is an important step in the exhibition process. Many campus communications offices will also support a media release about your exhibition.

Key Questions to Consider

How will you promote the exhibition on campus and beyond?

- Do you have a plan for generating coverage, including a media release and invitations for journalists (student or professional) to write about the exhibition?
- Who can you invite to visit the exhibition, including local schools and community partners?

How will you honor your community in the opening celebration?

How will you engage your campus and greater community in the exhibition throughout the time that it's on view?

- Will you host relevant programming?

Measuring Impact

Thinking about evaluation measures sometimes falls to the bottom of the list, but it's **important to consider with your project team what success will look like for you and for your community partners.**

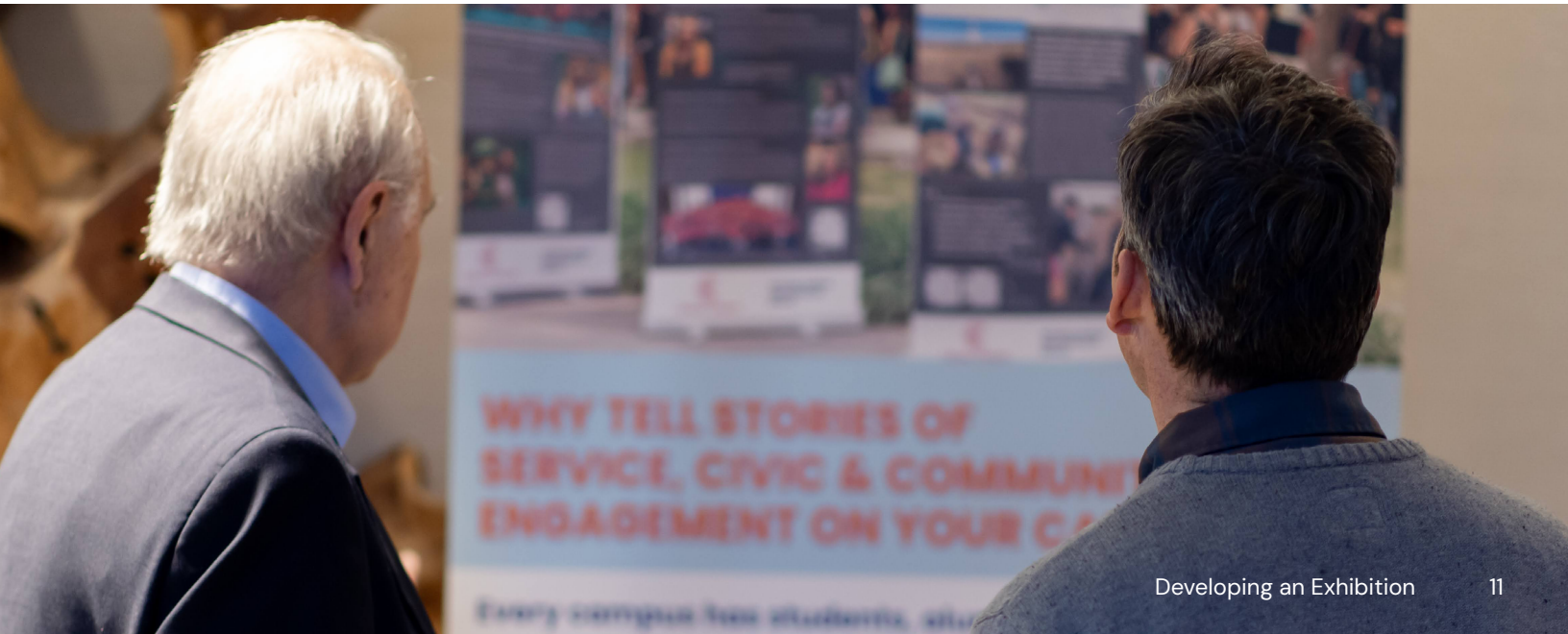
Key Questions to Consider

What metrics will you use to measure the success of your exhibition?

- Will you capture attendance numbers, social media engagement, or audience critiques?
- How will you ensure your project team and community partners are part of the conversation and that you understand what evaluation measures would be most useful to your partners?

Will you collect feedback from visitors through surveys, comment cards, or online forms?

- What are common themes or comments, and how can it inform future exhibitions?





Case Study 1

■ *A Mobile Low-Budget Exhibition Illuminating Stories of Campus Engagement*

Title: *Now is the Moment*

Organizers: Campus Compact, National Museum and Center for Service

Location & Dates: Compact24 National Conference, Denver, Colorado, April 7-10, 2024

Total Budget: \$1,764

Program Team and Partners: Urkovia Andrews, Georgia Southern University; Alexandra Byrum, University of Richmond; Leslie Lombre, University of San Francisco; Shelley Errington Nicholson, Greenfield Community College; Gina Lee-Olukoya, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Laura Weaver, Campus Compact; Ashley Sawyer, National Museum and Center for Service; Sarah Elsey, Colorado College; Danyel Addes, Colorado State University; Elizabeth L. Parmelee and Shayla Bischoff, Metropolitan State University of Denver; Gretchen Minekime, University of Colorado Boulder; and Arianna Pattek and Zach Ward, Serve Colorado

The Spark

In 2023, Campus Compact, in partnership with the National Museum and Center for Service, convened a [Campus Museums of Service Design Team](#) to support the creation of civic and community engagement exhibitions at colleges and universities across the country.

Creating an exhibition for Campus Compact's Compact24 National Conference in Denver, Colorado was an exciting opportunity to present an example for future campus exhibitions and to encourage member institutions to create community-engaged exhibitions.

The theme of the 2024 conference, "**Now Is the Moment,**" was the inspiration or spark for the exhibition. Wanting to tell local stories to enrich the conference experience and root participants in the Colorado region, the Design Team identified several regional universities as potential partners.

The planning team envisioned an exhibition that highlighted the ways campuses are "**meeting the moment**" to encourage conversation and new ideas. Colorado campuses and institutions were first invited to share stories of direct service, community-engaged learning and research, voter engagement, policy and governance, social entrepreneurship, environmental stewardship, and partnerships with indigenous communities.

Community Context

Each year, the Campus Compact national conference welcomes hundreds of attendees from across the country from diverse institutions and roles. With this in mind, the planning team discussed the importance of terms—service versus civic and community engagement, their specific interpretations within higher education, and the evolution of their utilization. Ultimately, the planning team agreed to use the language of civic and community engagement when framing the exhibition.

The conference was to be held at the Hilton Denver City Center. The exhibition was not provided a designated space, but would be in the public gathering spaces for the conference. This location drove many of the design decisions. Ideas for interactive projects and larger installations were discussed, but in the end, a more portable exhibition display was chosen given the space parameters and the opportunity for each Project Team member to reuse their piece following the conference.

Exhibition Purpose

The Design Team identified four key goals:

- Amplify civic and community engagement stories from institutions and agencies across the country, especially in Colorado where the conference was being held
- Highlight different pathways of public service and community engagement
- Create community and a sense of collective action
- Provide inspiration for other campus exhibitions

Budget Details

| Item | Quantity | Unit Cost | Total Cost |
|--|----------|-----------|-------------------|
| Retractable banners (sample) | 12 | \$120.00 | \$1,440.00 |
| Exhibition introduction panels | 2 | \$57.00 | \$114.00 |
| Postcards | 500 | | \$210.00 |
| Total | | | \$1,764.00 |

Exhibition Content & Design

Many Colorado colleges and universities jumped at the opportunity to participate. Additionally, the planning team reached out to Serve Colorado—the state’s commission on community service—and invited them to participate in the exhibition. Planning team members also showcased ways their institutions are partnering with community organizations to address locally identified concerns through engagement.

Each institution or agency was featured on a vertical, free-standing banner which included 1 to 2 examples of how they were “meeting the moment” with accompanying photographs and a QR code for further information.

Exhibition partners filled out an online form to share initial content for the exhibition, then Project Team members followed up with any questions, suggested edits, and panel drafts. Examples included a wide range of topics including voter registration, K-12 collaborations, and environmental research.

In order to achieve the goal of leveraging the exhibition for community-building and conversation, the planning team wanted to ensure that there was an interactive element of the exhibition. Many ideas were discussed from community art projects to maps. With space constraints, a digital platform was chosen. An [interactive Padlet](#) provided attendees an opportunity to share their own stories of how they are “meeting the moment.” Entries were plotted on the larger digital map.

* Banner Templates



Marketing

Postcards promoted the exhibition and the larger project at tables throughout the conference.

A Campus Exhibitions Workshop was also offered for conference participants to engage in dialogue about the exhibition and future projects.



Impact

One of the biggest advantages of creating a portable exhibition with pull-up banners was that each institution or agency could take their banner(s) home. This created opportunities for impact beyond the conference.

Conference attendees were seen engaging with the panels throughout the conference, but also walking by them. Both the constrained hallway spaces where the banners were installed and the fullness of the conference schedule impacted the success of the banners.

“Thank you for the wonderful panels! They are currently up in our office and we’re discussing bringing them with us to another conference in Minneapolis next week because they are just so amazing. We are so grateful for the partnership to create them!”

Arianna Pattek, Director of External Affairs, Serve Colorado

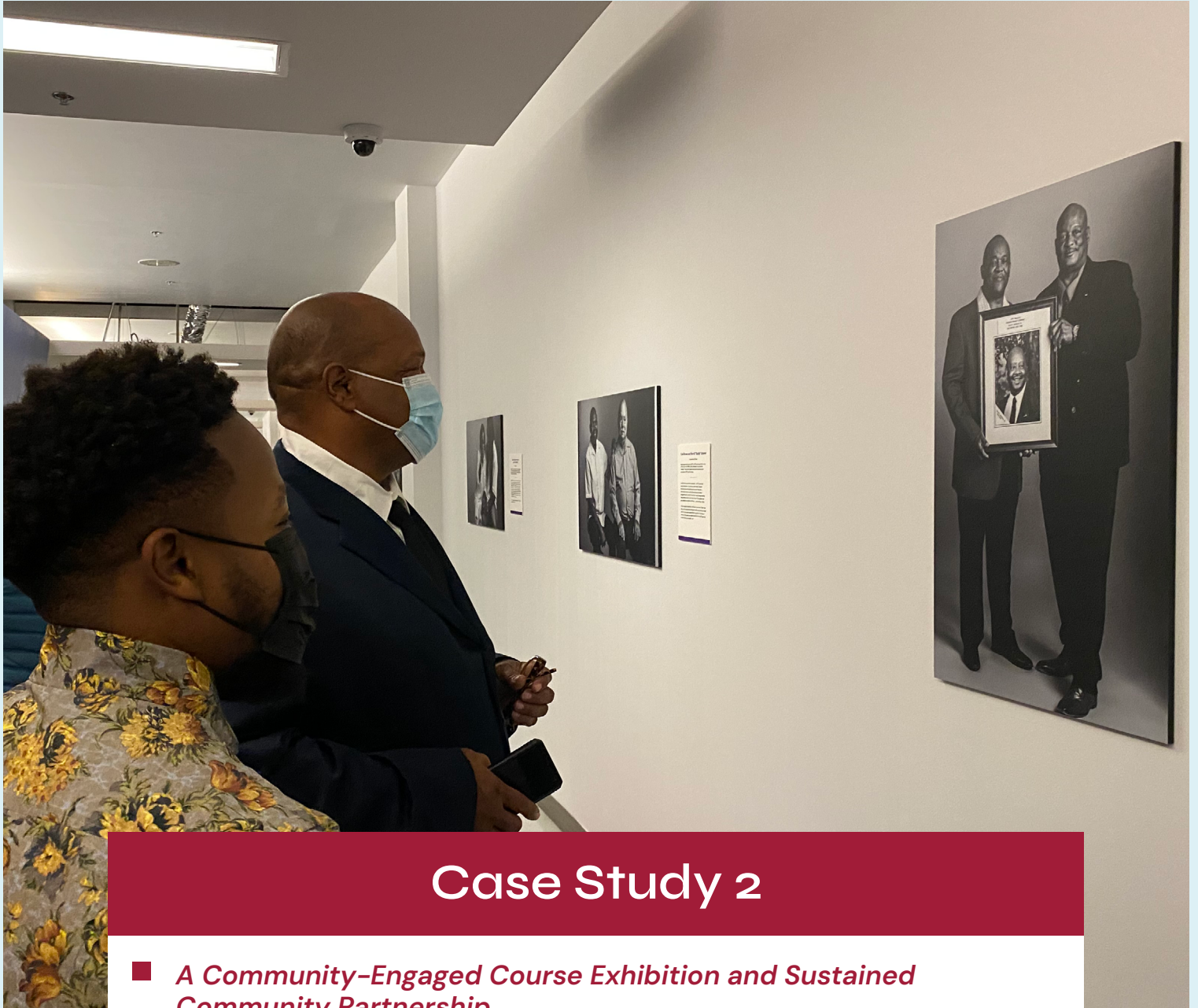
Lessons Learned

During the Campus Exhibitions Workshop, attendees discussed the banners. Attendees enjoyed the opportunity to read about different initiatives at other institutions, but a few participants suggested an approach with less text—a display that was more visual.

An example that embraced this philosophy is the installation *Double Happiness* by associate professor of studio art Amy Chan at the University of Virginia’s Shannon Library. In this project, which utilized a participatory design process, the installation evolved

from a collaboration between students, librarians, and the artist to increase Asian and Asian American cultural representation in the University spaces. *Double Happiness* is a series of phrases and their translation on vibrantly colored panels.





Case Study 2

■ *A Community-Engaged Course Exhibition and Sustained Community Partnership*

Title: *Through It All: Families Moving Richmond*

Organizers: University of Richmond and GRTC Transit Company

Location & Dates: GRTC Transit Company headquarters and [Fight for Knowledge website](#), November 2021 to present

Total Budget: \$1,764

Project Team and Partners: Ashley Mason and Carrie Rose Pace, GRTC Transit Company; Laura Browder, Patricia Herrera, and Alexandra Byrum, University of Richmond; Alex Fulton, web developer; Public Transportation in the Time of Two Pandemics students; Tania del Carmen Fernández, photographer; Stephen Duggins, University of Richmond Museums

The Spark

The ongoing collaboration between GRTC Transit System and the University of Richmond, as well as a shared energy around telling the stories of public transportation and the opportunity to engage students in an exciting community-based learning class, were the motivations for this exhibition.

Prior to this project, the GRTC Transit Company and the University of Richmond partnered on two other exhibitions:

- [*Driving Richmond: Stories and Portraits of GRTC Bus Drivers*](#), an exhibition for the 2013 RVA Street Festival curated by University of Richmond professor Laura Browder
- [*RIDE: Public Transit in Richmond Since 1888*](#), a 2015 exhibition at GRTC's new headquarters that was curated by Laura Browder and Alexandra Byrum's Busing in America students with GRTC operator Bruce Korusek

In 2020, GRTC's Carrie Rose Pace reached out to Browder and Byrum again to explore the opportunity to install a new exhibition, setting in motion plans for *Through It All: Families Moving Richmond*.

Community Context

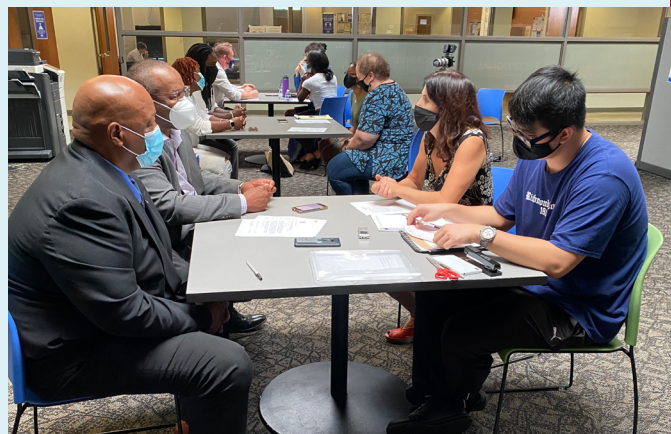
Since 1860, Richmond has been a leading force in public transportation. The first American city to put electric transit on the streets, Richmond connects community members across Greater Richmond every day through the tireless work and dedication of GRTC employees.

The University of Richmond's campus is in a leafy suburb of Richmond. Today, students can take the bus from campus for free, but they don't always take advantage of this opportunity. Community-based learning classes like Public Transportation in the Time of Two Pandemics, from which this exhibition emerged, are critical for deepening learning and for generating high impact off-campus experiences.

Exhibition Purpose

Although the exhibition purposes weren't written down in advance of its opening, many goals for the project emerged from multiple meetings between GRTC staff and UR faculty, including:

- Refreshing the exhibition at GRTC headquarters
- Celebrating and honoring GRTC staff
- Providing UR students a rich, community-based learning opportunity
- Continuing to build on the oral history archive of bus operators in Richmond



Budget Details

| Item | Quantity | Unit Cost | Total Cost |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------|
| Di-bond ACM box panels at 36"x24" | 16 | \$193.20 | \$3,091 |
| Exhibition text panels | 16 | \$13.20 | \$211.20 |
| Total | | | \$3,302.20 |

The exhibition was partially funded by a grant from Virginia Humanities.

Exhibition Content & Design

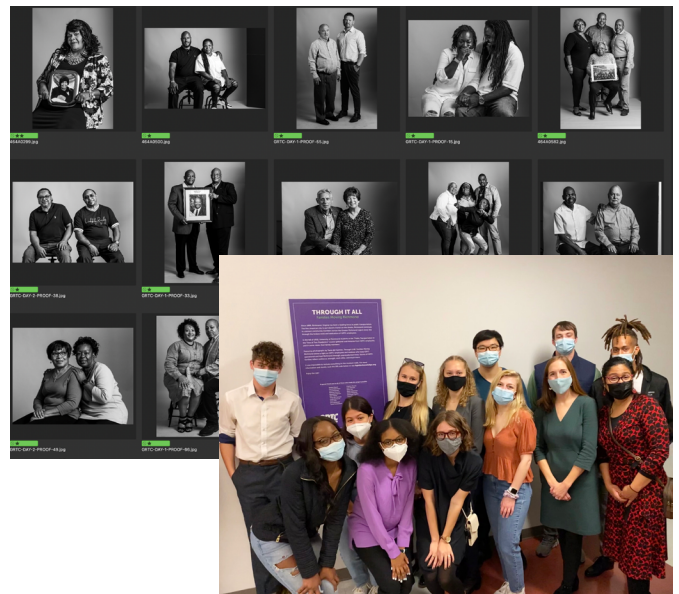
History Harvests, where students conducted oral histories and invited object donations, was an important part of curating the 2015 exhibition *RIDE: Public Transit in Richmond Since 1888* and would be a central piece of this project.

Students in Laura Browder and Patricia Herrera's Public Transportation in the Time of Two Pandemics course collected oral histories from GRTC operators, mechanics, and relatives. To promote the [History Harvests](#), project organizers created an event flyer and Ashley Mason of GRTC invited participants and scheduled interviews. Excerpts from these oral histories were central to the exhibition. At the History Harvests, photographer Tania del Carmen Fernández took portraits of families to be included in the exhibition.

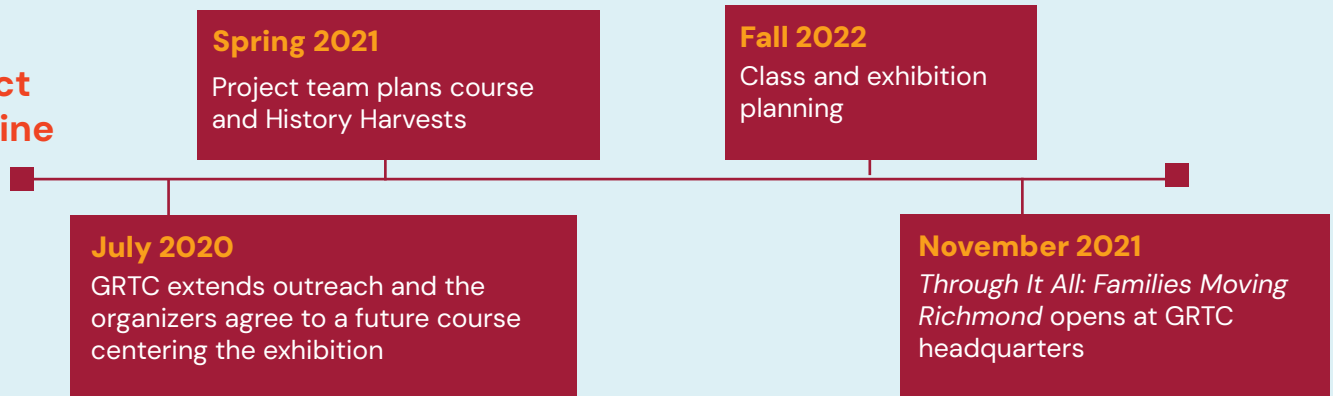
The class was then divided into three working groups: a curatorial team, an online exhibition team, and a dramaturgical team which worked with associate professor of dance Alicia Díaz and the University Dancers to help them prepare for a spring performance inspired by the project. Throughout the semester, there were a series of activities that guided the students to better understand public transit in Richmond, the process of creating a museum or online exhibition, and a historically-based dance performance.

The exhibition for GRTC headquarters emerged from working group sessions focused on curatorial decisions, exhibition design and writing,

exhibition materials, and publicity. Feedback from GRTC staff was emphasized throughout the process. The exhibition centered around the chosen family of GRTC Transit Company, a theme that the GRTC staff presented as a possibility in initial meetings prior to the start of the semester. The online exhibition team had the opportunity to explore other themes: race, family, pandemic, technology, history, and time. Their work is still publicly accessible online at fightforknowledge.org/through-it-all.



Project Timeline



Marketing

An invitation to the exhibition opening was sent to the GRTC and University communities, as well as local partners. A [press release](#) was sent by University Communications.

“My biggest takeaway is the importance of public transit to the health of a community . . . once you jump in, you see that there are layers upon layers of issues but also stories of joy within . . . the GRTC.”

Liam Keenan, '24



Impact

In addition to the student learning, the exhibition received positive feedback from the GRTC community and [local press](#). The dance work *Through It All* was performed by University Dancers at their 37th Annual Concert: MOVE! and dedicated to the GRTC trailblazers of public transportation in Richmond, Virginia. Other classes continued to engage with GRTC operators and families in subsequent semesters.

Lessons Learned

Curating an exhibition within the space of a semester is never easy due to the time constraints, but well worth the effort. The project team experienced pandemic-related challenges in the delivery of the panels, but the exhibition opened on time to honor and uplift the inspiring stories of GRTC operators and families. Nearly three years later, the exhibition remains on view.

“The collaboration (story mapping), and ultimately the exhibit, cemented the rich family history of GRTC. For me, the concept of family took on a deeper meaning as I learned how the GRTC family connections were forged through love, respect, and equally as important, a sense of duty to the agency.”

Ashley Mason, GRTC



Case Study 3

■ A Multi-Year Project with a Permanent Exhibition, Website, and Companion Booklet

Title: *Celebrating Simms: The Story of the Lucy F. Simms School*

Organizer: James Madison University

Location & Dates: Harrisonburg, Virginia, Fall 2015–ongoing

Total Budget: \$36,450*

**reflective of current printing only*

Project Team and Partners: Mollie Godfrey and Seán McCarthy, James Madison University; Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center; Harrisonburg and Rockingham County school systems; Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project

Visit the [Celebrating Simms website](#) for a full list of past and current contributors.

The Spark

The idea behind the Celebrating Simms project was sparked in the spring of 2015 as professor Mollie Godfrey and Robin Lyttle, the founder of the [Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project](#), collaborated for an African American Literature and Historical Recovery class project. The students in the class were sent off to engage with the community by researching and writing biographies for local African American soldiers who fought for the Union in the Civil War. After this project, the pair began to brainstorm other ways of getting JMU students involved in recovering local African American history and came up with the idea of doing a small, temporary exhibition on the topic of the Lucy F. Simms School. Mollie was connected with Seán McCarthy, who had extensive experience working on similar community engagement projects.

Community Context

Born enslaved in 1856, Lucy F. Simms received her degree from Virginia's Hampton Institute and eventually settled in Harrisonburg. Having taught over 1,800 students from three generations of families, the Lucy F. Simms School was built soon after her death to honor her legacy and served African-American students from across Rockingham County and beyond between 1938 and 1965. The original exhibition, which spans 150 years of history, tells the story of the school from the perspective of it as the heart of local community life.

Exhibition Purpose

Celebrating Simms: The Story of The Lucy F. Simms School is a large, permanent exhibition, website, and companion booklet that celebrates the history and role of education among the African American community in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Several community members had previously researched and written on the topic, and there was a strong desire within the community to see this work celebrated, expanded upon, and given a visible and accessible place in the wider Harrisonburg community. *Celebrating Simms* aimed to give voice to and build upon this work, foregrounding local African American voices and needs in both the design of the project and the shape and placement of the exhibition's narrative. In this effort, the project aligned with the methodology of the counter-story by privileging nonacademic voices to tell their own story rather than imposing one upon them. The project also raised important considerations about the practical difficulties of building trust between predominantly white institutions and historically black communities, and the relationship between this process of trust-building and the kinds of stories we tell together.

Godfrey, M., & McCarthy, S. (2017). Celebrating Simms: Complicating the "Single Story" in community-engagement projects. *Public*, 4(2). <https://public.imaginingamerica.org/journalcontent/2017/4/2/227/index.html>

Budget Details*

| Item | Quantity | Unit Cost | Total Cost |
|--|----------|-----------|-----------------|
| Printing large panels, 2 runs | 34 | \$130 | \$8,840 |
| Printing small panels, 1 run | 25 | \$40 | \$1,000 |
| Fairfax exhibit | 7 | \$130 | \$910 |
| Graphic Design | | | \$1,500 |
| Printing booklets (750) | 3 | \$1,400 | \$4,200 |
| Paid graduate student labor, events, equipment, incidentals | | | \$20,000 |
| Thousands of hours of labor from Harrisonburg community members, K-12 teachers and students, James Madison University faculty, students, and library professionals | | | In-kind |
| Total | | | \$36,450 |

*reflective of current printing only

Exhibition Content & Design

The *Celebrating Simms* exhibition and companion website officially launched on April 25, 2016. In its early stages, this project was supposed to be a temporary installation of no more than thirty panels of text and photographs. Over the course of the year, it grew to become fifty-nine panels on permanent display in the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center in Harrisonburg, Virginia, as well as a book, website, and another version of the exhibition on display at Harrisonburg High School. In hindsight, it's not surprising that the project grew from its humble beginnings. The story of the Lucy F. Simms School, the peerless educator that gave the school its name, and the story of African American education in Rockingham County represent a rich collective history that deserves and needs to be celebrated.

The project consists of:

- **Physical exhibitions**, including *Celebrating Simms* in the [Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center](#), Harrisonburg High School, and all the high schools in surrounding Rockingham County (audiovisual versions available in Spanish and Arabic); an exhibition celebrating Simms teacher Mary Awkard Fairfax in the [Simms Continuing Education Center](#); and a mobile exhibition that has toured numerous local municipal libraries and schools in the region
- **A website** with materials related to the physical exhibitions, including: an [interactive timeline](#) and [map](#); a [digital archive](#) of hundreds of photographs and other historical artifacts; [oral histories](#) with former Simms students and teachers; [educational resources](#) that can be used by K-12 teachers; and video clips of interviews with teachers and students who attended the school, courtesy of Billo Harper
- **A companion booklet** that contains the images and text of the original *Celebrating Simms* exhibition
- **Oral histories** conducted by current high school students from Spotswood and Turner Ashby high schools in Rockingham County as part of their 2022-2023 African American History elective coursework

Marketing

The project has received media attention and has been discussed in several conference presentations, academic articles, reviews, and interviews. Details available [here](#).

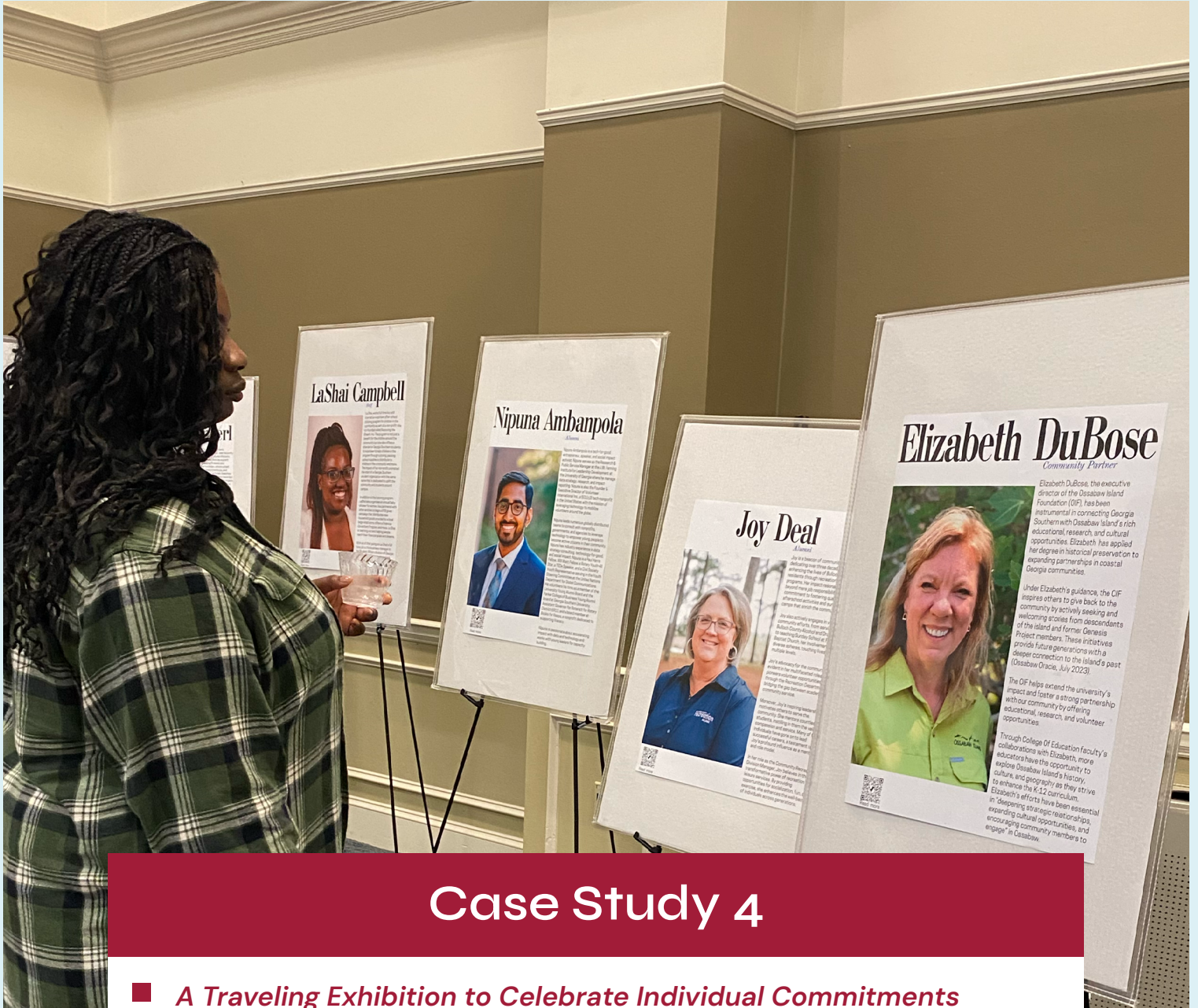


Impact

Combined, the Harrisonburg High School and traveling exhibitions have reached over 14,000 regional library visitors, 6,000 high school students, 2,000 middle school students, and 19,500 James Madison University students. The website has 10,000+ unique visitors. *Celebrating Simms* has been a recipient of multiple university and regional grants, local and national awards, and extensive coverage in the local press.

Lessons Learned

- Always center community voices and the stories they want to tell.
- Make the project sustainable by creating exciting learning and professionalization opportunities for students.
- Funding for regional historical recovery projects is hard to come by, so finding creative ways to keep such projects going (classes, internships, student research, or a variety of small grants) is a must.



Case Study 4

■ A Traveling Exhibition to Celebrate Individual Commitments to Service

Title: *Campus Museum of Service*

Organizer: Georgia Southern University

Location & Dates: Georgia Southern University's Statesboro and Savannah campuses and the University's City Campus located in downtown Statesboro, Georgia, April–September annually and continually online via the University's Division of Student Affairs Leadership and Community Engagement website

Total Budget: \$500–1,000 annually

Project Team and Partners: Office of Leadership and Community Engagement, including the assistant director for service–learning; Serve 912 coordinator; leadership and community engagement coordinator; and graduate assistants

The Spark

Campus Compact and the National Museum and Center for Service's summer 2022 announcement focused on Campus Museums of Service on college and university campuses inspired this exhibition. At the time, the project team was already looking for creative ways to recognize individual commitments of service.

Community Context

Service has been a thread in the University culture for years. The Georgia Southern mission statement begins with "...our learner-centered culture prepares us to think, lead, teach, **and serve**" and ends with "Our success is measured by the **global impact** of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni." The Campus Museum of Service was a natural way to recognize those who contribute within and beyond the classroom walls.

Exhibition Purpose

The purpose of this exhibition is to recognize and celebrate service. This form of recognition allows us to elevate the simultaneous impact of our various communities while advancing our commitments to service. Those recognized in this manner must be affiliated with Georgia Southern as either a student, faculty/staff member, alumni, or community partner. This aligns with our University pillar of community engagement.

Exhibition Content

In April 2023, the University recognized 10 individuals in conjunction with a National Volunteer Month event. The Project Team determined that recognizing 10 individuals each year would help to preserve the longevity of this initiative. In addition to recognition at a reception, individuals receive a custom plate created by a local artist acknowledging them as a Campus Museum of Service honoree that features their name and the year. Posters recognizing each honoree are hung in public spaces and posted on the University's Division of Student Affairs Leadership and Community Engagement website.

Budget Details

| Item | Quantity | Unit Cost | Total Cost |
|---|----------|-----------|-----------------|
| Honoree posters 18"x24" | 10 | \$25.00 | \$250.00 |
| Acknowledgement gifts | 10 | \$36.00 | \$360.00 |
| Honoree Stickers | 500 | | \$5.00 |
| Honoree congratulations cards | | | In-Kind |
| Reception (contribution to larger budget) | | | \$100.00 |
| Total | | | \$715.00 |

Marketing

Seeking nominations:

A call for nominations is distributed via listservs and newsletters. The branded communication encourages self nominations and nominations of others.

Announcement of honorees:

Honorees are recognized on the Division of Student Affairs Leadership and Community Engagement website and social media; shared with University Marketing and Communications for inclusion in the University-wide newsletter; and submitted to local newspapers.

Impact

We enjoy reading how the various nominees are serving their community and its impact on the University. We feel fortunate to be able to share many of these untold stories, at least untold on a larger scale. The larger impact remains to be seen; however, the interest in this initiative from the first to the second year is a great indication that others are also interested in how we are advancing our respective communities.

The honorees are always grateful to be included in this exhibition and are pleasantly surprised when they see their posters and receive their honoree plate. Watching honorees take pictures of themselves and/or with their support system while standing next to their poster never gets old.

Lessons Learned

There is currently discussion as to whether or not we should have the option to honor community partner organizations as opposed to one member of that organization.

There was some hesitation from individuals during the first year of the initiative. That has since changed. Acknowledging each recipient with a one of a kind University-themed plate has helped draw attention to the Campus Museum of Service as the honorees display this recognition with pride both on campus and in their respective communities.





Case Study 5

■ *A Student-Driven Exhibition Honoring and Inspiring Future Mentors*

Title: *The Faces of Mentoring*

Organizer: University of Richmond

Location & Dates: University of Richmond Downtown, April 5–August 23, 2019

Total Budget: \$833.44

Project Team and Partners: Nicole Benites Roemer, '21, Bonner Scholar and curator; Casey Murano, '21, and Suraya Souidi, '22, art facilitators; Alexandra Byrum, Bonner Center for Civic Engagement; Virginia Mentoring Partnership (now MentorVA); Higher Achievement; Ladies of Focus; University of Richmond Scholars' Latino Initiative; Youth Life Foundation of Richmond

The Spark

Nicole Benites Roemer, a Bonner Scholar serving at Virginia Mentoring Partnership, approached the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) staff in hopes of curating an exhibition for their University of Richmond Downtown gallery to celebrate mentors in Richmond and inspire others to become involved. The CCE eagerly agreed.

“I have mentored and been mentored throughout my college career, and I truly believe it can change someone’s life. I wanted to combine my passion for art and civic engagement in a way that would foster connection within our community, while providing a platform that would inspire others to become engaged as well.”

Nicole Benites Roemer

Community Context

The Virginia Mentoring Partnership and other national organizations have published strong data about the need for more mentors and the impact of mentoring on youth. Some of these statistics were included in the exhibition, including

- 1 in 3 children do not have a mentor
- In Virginia, 150,000 young people are in need of positive developmental relationships with caring adults.
- In the City of Richmond, more than 10,000 students still need a mentor.

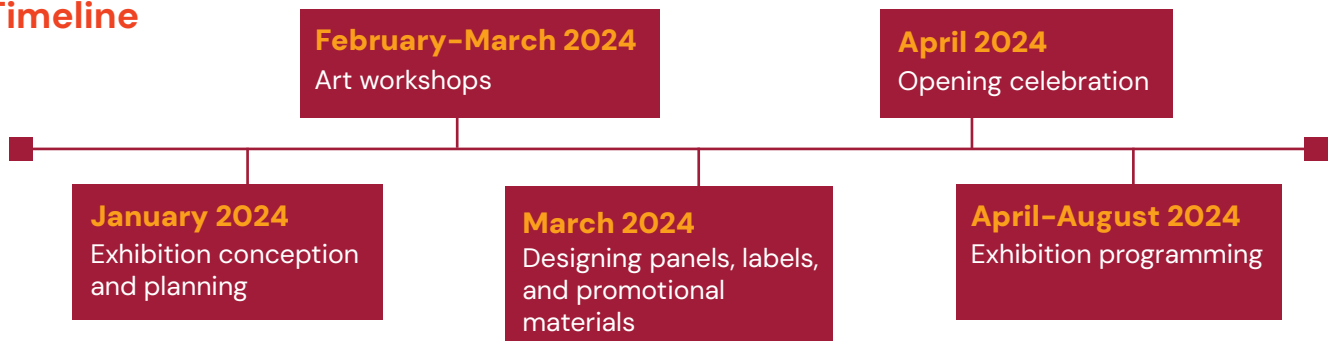
Exhibition Purpose

The project team wanted to achieve several things through the exhibition:

- Celebrate the multiple mentoring programs across Richmond
- Deepen relationships between mentors and mentees through collaborative artmaking
- Inspire others to commit to a mentoring

The exhibition also provided the students on the project team with a deep learning experience.

Project Timeline



Budget Details

| Item | Quantity | Unit Cost | Total Cost |
|------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------------|
| Information Panels, 16" x 20" each | 8 | \$50.67 | \$405.36 |
| Intro Panel | 1 | \$150.08 | \$150.08 |
| 4x6 Frames | 52 | \$78 | \$78 |
| Art Supplies | | | \$200.00 |
| Total | | | \$833.44 |

Exhibition Content & Design

Nicole Benites Roemer, as well Casey Murano and Suraya Souidi, facilitated art workshops at multiple mentoring programs where participants created **blind contour drawings**. Artists traced the contours of their subject's face without lifting their pen or looking at their paper. Mentors and mentees then reinterpreted these lines and transformed them into **expressions of their mentoring relationship**.

These works of art were hung in the exhibition next to portraits by Nicole Benites Roemer of each mentoring pair.

The exhibition also included introductory panels about each mentoring organization: Virginia Mentoring Partnership (now MentorVA), Higher Achievement, Ladies of Focus, University of Richmond Scholars' Latino Initiative, and Youth Life Foundation of Richmond.

The hallway leading into the exhibition space included panels with statistics about mentoring and candid photographs of the mentoring programs.

Nicole Benites Roemer worked closely with Alexandra Byrum to conceptualize the project, order materials, design the panels and labels, and install the exhibition.



THE FACES OF MENTORING

Virginia Mentoring Partnership's mission is to partner with youth mentoring programs to help grow their impact, because high quality mentoring transforms lives and strengthens Virginia communities.

From January to March 2019, Virginia Mentoring Partnership collaborated with Richmond program partners Higher Achievement, Ladies of Focus, the University of Richmond Scholars' Latino Initiative, and Youth Life Foundation of Richmond to facilitate art projects with their mentors and mentees. During these workshops, participants created blind contour drawings, a basic skill building exercise where artists trace the contours of their subject's face without lifting their pen or looking at their paper. Through this exercise, mentors and mentees studied each other's faces and created authentic drawings without feeling any pressure to create a "perfect" portrait. Mentors and mentees then reinterpreted these lines and transformed them into expressions of their mentoring relationships.

These are the faces of mentoring.

This exhibition was envisioned and curated by Nicole Benites, '19, a Bonner Scholar who has been interning at Virginia Mentoring Partnership for four years. Casey Murano, '21, and Suraya Souidi, '22, were art facilitators at the workshops.

The exhibition was made possible with support from UR Downtown and the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement.

Young people with mentors are more likely to achieve academic success.

- They are:
- **52%** less likely than peers to skip a day of school.
 - **155%** more likely to enroll in college.



Marketing

In addition to promotion through posters, newsletters, social media, and direct email, marketing included a media release sent by University Communications and an announcement to the Virginia Mentoring Partnership community.

Impact

- The exhibition raised awareness about mentoring opportunities and needs.
- Mentors and mentees had the opportunity to see their art on the wall of a gallery.
- The exhibition continued to be an inspiring backdrop for many events in the University of Richmond Downtown space during its run, including weekly summer workshops by the Next Move Program.
- MENTOR Virginia's AmeriCorps VISTAs visited the exhibition during their orientation.

Lessons Learned

Art and exhibitions bring people together and inspire joy and action.

The students also reflected about the high time commitment of exhibition projects. In addition to their time investment in the art workshops, they dedicated time to designing panels, labels, and promotional materials, as well as the exhibition installation.



Additional Examples for Inspiration

Coloradans and Our Shared Environment in Times of Challenge and Change Art Exhibition

Institution: University of Colorado Boulder

Location & Dates: multiple locations, 2023–24

Summary: University of Colorado Boulder climate scientists and Colorado artists collaborated to create artworks that tell the story of how Coloradans are experiencing interrelated challenges of fires, drought, and water and air quality in their communities. The work of these Colorado Art Science Environment (CASE) Fellows was initially featured at the Colorado State Capitol then toured the state.



Creative Justice

Institution: Emory University

Location & Dates: Woodruff Library, March 17–May 13, 2023

Summary: The Arts and Social Justice Fellows Program was envisioned as an opportunity for faculty members to work alongside partnered ASJ fellows to embed creative projects reflecting on social inequities into existing courses. This exhibition highlights the collaborations between those ASJ fellows and faculty with students at Oxford College.

Makes Me Wanna Holla

Institution: University of Chicago

Location & Dates: Logan Center for the Arts, July 7–September 10, 2023

Summary: The exhibition explores the injustices of the carceral system through the voices and art of those who have experienced them firsthand. The exhibition culminates a yearlong “Artist for the People” Practitioner fellowship for Daniel Jones and artist Dorothy Burge, co-hosted by UChicago’s Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture (CSRPC) and the Pozen Center Human Rights Lab.



Voices from Richmond's Hidden Epidemic

Institution: University of Richmond

Location & Dates: The Valentine, January 23, 2020–May 31, 2021

Summary: Featuring oral histories collected by professors Laura Browder and Patricia Herrera and portraits by Michael Simon, this exhibition offers a nuanced look at the HIV/AIDS crisis through the stories of survivors, caregivers, activists and health care workers. A highlight of the exhibition is a series of cascading books created by women in an HIV support group at St. Paul's Baptist Church, in collaboration with University of Richmond students.

CAMPUS EXHIBITIONS

IN ADVANCEMENT OF CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We can create exhibitions that inspire meaningful civic action, deepen understanding of our communities and complex and interconnected social issues, and provide new opportunities for collaboration and learning. We hope these questions are helpful starting point in your planning.

Defining the Exhibition Purpose

What is the purpose of your exhibition?

- What do you want to communicate to viewers about your community?
- What are your goals for the exhibition?

How are you centering civic and community engagement?

- Is your exhibition organized around a key concept, social issue, or historical moment?
- Is your exhibition honoring stories of your community?
- Is your exhibition celebrating service and action?
- Is your exhibition deepening connections between your institution and your community?

Who is your target audience?

- How will your target audience inform your planning (location, content, writing, etc.)?
- How will you ensure that your exhibition speaks to your intended audience?

How does this exhibition align with your organization's mission, vision, and values?

- How will your institutional or organizational civic and community engagement priorities inform your planning?



Collaboration & Funding

How will the exhibition be developed in collaboration with community partners?

- How will you connect with campus partners to further the impact of your exhibition?
- If you're working with a community partner to develop the exhibition, how will you ensure that it is a mutually beneficial collaboration?
- Will the exhibition be part of a community-based learning course?

How will the exhibition be funded?

- What are the costs of the exhibition?
- Are there institutional or external grants that you can apply for?

Creating a Project Timeline

When do you hope to open your exhibition?

- Will there be an exhibition opening event?
- Is the exhibition tied to another event, festival, occasion?

Does the project need to be completed within the academic year or a single semester?

- How will your timeline or syllabi support the completion of the project?

Creating the Exhibition

How are you working with community partners and project team members on the exhibition?

- Are you meeting regularly with collaborators to ensure that everyone's voice is heard and you're all on the same page?

What is the content of your exhibition?

- Will the exhibition be virtual or in person or both?
- Will you include objects, photographs, or other materials?
- How does the exhibition content contribute to the central idea?
- What criteria are you using to select the content for the exhibition? Who has final say?
- What display options are available to you? (i.e. display case, tables, shelves)

What is your exhibition narrative?

- How is your exhibition organized and does each section and major themes all relate to the main idea?
- Do you have a specific target outcome or call to action for the audience?
- Will there be a leaflet, guide, or other distributable material accompanying the exhibition to provide additional context to visitors?
- How does the content reflect diversity and inclusivity?

Will there be an interactive component of your exhibition?

- Do you want to engage your audience in a response or action related to the exhibition?
- What logistical and technical support will be needed for the exhibition setup?
- What platforms or technologies will you use?

Marketing the Exhibition

How will you promote the exhibition on campus and beyond?

- Do you have a plan for generating coverage, including a media release and invitations for journalists (student or professional) to write about the exhibition?
- Who can you invite to visit the exhibition, including local schools and community partners?

How will you honor your community in the opening celebration?

How will you engage your campus and greater community in the exhibition throughout the time that it's on view?

- Will you host relevant programming?

Measuring Impact

What metrics will you use to measure the success of your exhibition?

- Will you capture attendance numbers, social media engagement, or audience critiques?
- How will you ensure your project team and community partners are part of the conversation and that you understand what evaluation measures would be most useful to your partners?

Will you collect feedback from visitors through surveys, comment cards, or online forms?

- What are common themes or comments, and how can it inform future exhibitions?

NATIONAL MUSEUM AND CENTER FOR SERVICE

About NMCFS

The National Museum and Center for Service is a national organization developing a truly national museum and center dedicated to honoring and inspiring service in ALL its forms.



Campus Compact

Campus Compact
89 South Street, Suite 603
Boston, MA 02210

compact.org

Copyright © 2024, all rights reserved

About Campus Compact

Campus Compact is a national coalition of colleges and universities committed to advancing the public purposes of higher education.