



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2022 – JUNE 2023



Carl Vinson
Institute of Government
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

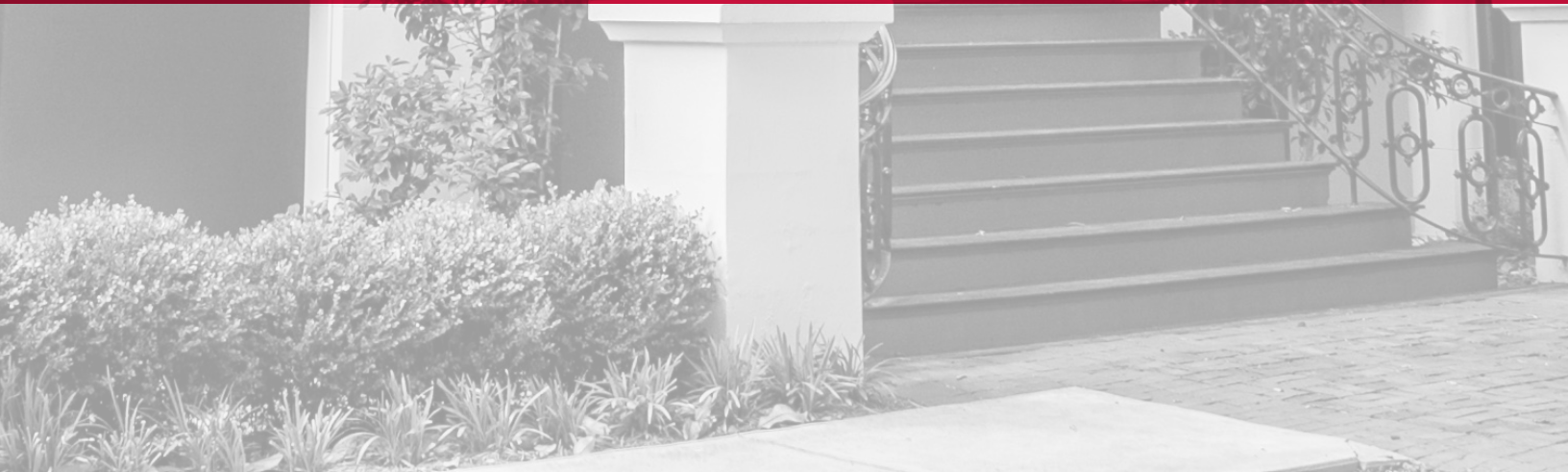


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ABOUT US

At the UGA Institute of Government, we **inform**, **inspire**, and **innovate** so that governments can be more efficient and responsive to citizens, address current and emerging challenges, and serve the public with excellence.

The University of Georgia Carl Vinson Institute of Government is committed to promoting excellence in government through technical assistance, training programs, applied research, evaluation, data and technology solutions. As a Public Service and Outreach unit of the University of Georgia, it shares in the university's overarching public service mission of connecting communities with professional knowledge, expertise, and resources to help improve quality of life.

Effective, efficient, and responsive governance is fundamental to maintaining quality of life. The institute's programs and services strengthen Georgia communities and are integral to UGA's strategic goal of supporting economic development across the state. Faculty and staff regularly partner with academic units across campus to support research and innovation. Graduate and undergraduate students engaged in programs experience relevant, meaningful learning opportunities applicable to real-world situations.

The UGA Institute of Government helps elected officials, professional staff, and appointed board members increase their knowledge and skills to do their jobs—providing them with tools for more informed, data-driven decision-making. Work with internal and external partners is unbiased and nonpartisan, a valued trust built and maintained over the years.

While the Institute of Government's partnerships and influence spans other states and countries, its main role and responsibility is to carry out UGA's land-grant mission throughout the state; thus, most work focuses on the State of Georgia.

In the past year, the collective effort of the UGA Institute of Government has made a difference in countless communities. Examples of the impact of the institute's work are shared throughout this report.

BY THE NUMBERS

82,713

In-state miles traveled during FY23 to advance our mission

264

Partners

242

Separate, distinct projects



WHERE WE ARE

The UGA Institute of Government reach includes all 159 counties and 538 cities in Georgia, along with numerous government entities outside Georgia. Offices are located in Athens, Gwinnett and Atlanta, with satellite operations in strategic areas including rural communities and along the coast.

OUR EXPERTISE

The UGA Institute of Government directory offers a wide range of experience to suit the diverse needs of the organizations and communities it serves. Expertise ranges from public administration and organizational development to data analysis, environmental planning and custom application design.

The institute's programs and services are designed to work for the betterment of Georgia and its communities based on tested principles that also leave room for innovation. Dedicated, agile faculty and staff identify and address important issues communities face while helping them identify and create the best path forward according to their unique needs and vision.

SIGNATURE EVENTS

The Institute of Government hosts many training programs, conferences, and special events throughout the year. Featured here are signature events representing the institute's commitment to promoting excellence in government.



Innovating Georgia's Workforce Pipeline Conference

November 1-2, 2022

Nearly 300 stakeholders from across industries gathered for the second annual Innovating Georgia's Workforce Pipeline Conference in November. With more than 24 breakout sessions and approximately 70 speakers, the sold-out event was an opportunity to learn about promising practices and emerging ideas to boost the state's workforce. The conference brought together partners in workforce development, education, business, and economic development. The conference also provided networking opportunities among attendees, which included economic developers, Chamber of Commerce leaders and members, K-12 and post-secondary educators, CTAE representatives, and business representatives.



The 33rd Biennial Institute for Georgia Legislators

December 4-6, 2022

A long-recognized tradition on the state political calendar, the 33rd Biennial Institute for Georgia Legislators provided valuable time for learning, networking, and exploring state issues prior to the convening of the General Assembly. New and returning legislators received updates on topics such as transportation, electric mobility, mental health, cybersecurity, workforce needs, and economic development. Faculty members from the UGA Institute of Government moderated sessions with panelists including government agency leaders, elected officials, and business executives from across the state.



Developing Data Analytics Capabilities Conference

April 26-27, 2023

The Georgia Data Innovation Hub hosted the inaugural Developing Data Analytics Capabilities Conference in April. More than 200 professionals from local governments, nonprofits, school systems, and state agencies gathered to focus on developing data analytics capabilities in their respective fields. Attendees learned about current innovations in data analytics, connected with experts in the field, identified their organization's data readiness, and considered next steps for increasing their data analytics capabilities.



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The UGA Institute of Government employs and mentors undergraduate and graduate students in various capacities. Through these efforts, students receive real-world experience while partners benefit from their fresh perspectives. In the past year, the Institute of Government provided **\$802,518 in financial support to more than 100 students representing 16 schools, colleges, and academic units across the university.**

THE PROPEL RURAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM

The institute's newest experiential learning opportunity for students is the PROPEL Rural Scholars program, part of PROPEL (Planning Rural Opportunities for Prosperity and Economic Leadership), a unique initiative helping rural cities and counties develop and implement plans that strengthen their capacity and economic outlook. A \$250,000 gift from the UGA Foundation helped boost PROPEL in its first year, providing seed funding to launch the Rural Scholars program. Nine UGA students successfully completed the program in 2022-23, and applications increased twofold for the 2023-24 school year. The program provides undergraduate students interested in rural Georgia the opportunity to work alongside a Public Service and Outreach mentor and community leaders to find and implement research relevant to communities. The two-semester program equips future leaders with knowledge and experience in economic development, community development, and civic leadership.



My core identity is deeply rooted in rural Georgia, so my aspirations have always been to find a career path that would allow me to improve conditions for rural communities like the ones that raised me. The PROPEL program is a way to plant the seeds for resilience.

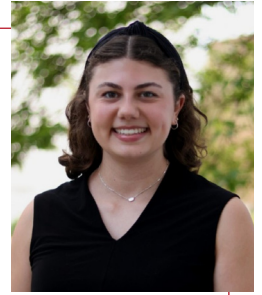
Max White
Atmospheric Science and Economics major

THE VINSON INSTITUTE FELLOWS PROGRAM

The Vinson Institute Fellows Program is an educational opportunity for UGA undergraduate students interested in state and local government. The program allows students to become involved in training, applied research, technical assistance programs, and other projects for state and local governments in Georgia. In the past year, Vinson Fellows explored various issues, including electric vehicle battery recycling, affordable housing challenges, criminal justice, and how the Institute of Government might foster partnerships between local governments and school systems in Georgia.



During my time as a Vinson Fellow, I learned a lot more about the role and importance of local governments. It was a great way for me to better understand the ways that UGA gives back.



Emma Sorckoff
International Affairs and
Elementary Education major

THE GEORGIA LEGISLATIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Each spring, UGA students gain firsthand experience in the lawmaking process through the Georgia Legislative Internship Program (GLIP). Created in the 1970s under the leadership of then Lt. Governor Zell Miller, the paid internship is coordinated by the Georgia General Assembly with assistance from the UGA Institute of Government. In 2023, three students participated in the Georgia legislative process through full-time internships with the General Assembly during the legislative session, which starts on the second Monday of January and typically runs through the end of March.



As an intern in the Senate President Pro Tempore's office during the 2023 Georgia Legislative Session, I was able to experience how much work it takes to pass a bill. It gave me an appreciation for the legislative process and led to a full-time position.

Oswald Hernandez
Political Science major, UGA '23

BY THE NUMBERS

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

16

Schools, colleges
and academic units

68

Undergrads

43

Graduates



INFORM

ENHANCING GOVERNMENT THROUGH TRAINING

The UGA Institute of Government is a trusted partner and resource for government professionals, officials and community leaders seeking quality training programs led by instructors with diverse experience in public affairs, finance and management.

In the past year, more than 19,000 elected and appointed government officials and administrators enrolled in continuing education opportunities offered by the UGA Institute of Government. More than 700 training and education courses provided instruction in advanced financial management, economic development, and leadership.

Programs like the **Public Finance Leadership Academy (PFLA)** helped build workforce talent within the business and accounting divisions of local government. Created in partnership with the Georgia Government Finance Officers Association, the six-month PFLA program combines the latest accounting practices and insight from industry professionals. PFLA expands on the institute's Level I and Level II

Finance Officer Certification programs, which provide foundational knowledge and technical skills critical to the financial management of local government. Seventeen participants from across the state graduated from the program in May 2023.

“We designed this capstone program to address the need for more advanced governmental leadership training for finance professionals across the state. PFLA is all about identifying existing talent to build capacity in the public finance profession for local governments,” said John Hulsey, the Institute of Government faculty member who directs the program.

Established in 2016, the **Certified Public Management®** program develops the effectiveness and professionalism of managers within government agencies. Offered in partnership with the National Consortium of Certified Public Managers, the 300-hour certification program includes 26 in-person training days, monthly cohort meetings, and self-study. Participants complete an individual capstone project addressing challenges their

agencies face as well as a group service-learning project aimed at giving back to their communities. In May 2023, 125 public service professionals graduated from the institute program.

The UGA Institute of Government also maintained its longtime partnerships with the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) and Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG).

In April, more than 600 commissioners, clerks, and other county government officials from across the state attended professional development classes the UGA Institute of Government presented at the Association County Commissioners of Georgia Annual Conference in Savannah. More than 30 county leaders also were recognized for their training through the **Lifelong Learning Academy**, a continuing education curriculum the institute developed in partnership with ACCG. Twenty-eight officials received certification for successfully completing 66 hours of core courses in the academy and five officials received specialty track certifications.

In June, thousands of city leaders benefited from UGA-led training at the GMA Annual Convention. **The Harold F. Holtz Municipal Training Institute** counted 2,233 people attending 46 classes over three days. Topics included public policy development, ethics, emerging technologies and more. The Municipal Training Institute is a partnership between the UGA Institute of Government and GMA.

“The Public Finance Leadership Academy helps you become a stronger leader and understand the employees you are tasked to lead. It gives you resources so when something comes up that you don’t know how to handle, you can reach out to someone who can help you figure it out. It’s just a very valuable tool.”

Marsha Klecan
FINANCE DIRECTOR, CITY OF ST. MARYS



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

John Hulsey
Public Service Associate
*Governmental Training,
Education, and Development*

UGA Institute of Government faculty John Hulsey was honored with a 2023 Walter Barnard Hill Award for Distinguished Achievement in Public Service and Outreach in April. The Hill Award recognizes faculty and service professionals for their outstanding contributions to the improvement of the quality of life in Georgia. Hulsey, who leads the Public Finance Leadership Academy, is known for his ability to relate complicated financial practices in an accessible way. PFLA training equips Georgia’s leaders with both the technical and leadership skills needed to be successful in public finance.

BY THE NUMBERS



3,951 individual participants received training across **4** divisions



7,315 enrollees participated in **464** traditional classroom training courses



5,405 people attended **22** non-certificate program conferences



2,256 enrollees participated in **104** distance-learning courses



662 participants took part in **56** retreats



INSPIRE

BUILDING COMMUNITIES WITH VISION

The UGA Institute of Government is committed to empowering citizens and governments by providing innovative resources and tools that build stronger communities, inspire economic success, and improve quality of life.

In its 10th year, the **Renaissance Strategic Visioning and Planning Process (RSVP)** continued to impact communities across the state. The unique strategic planning process developed by the Institute of Government helps re-envision downtowns, invigorate citizen involvement, and jumpstart economic development. The program is a partnership between the UGA Institute of Government, the Georgia Municipal Association, and the Georgia Cities Foundation, with additional support from the Lyndhurst Foundation.

Gainesville is one of the **Renaissance Strategic Visioning and Planning Process (RSVP)** program's shining stars. With \$318 million in private investment in downtown and the Midland area in just the last five years, the city

is capitalizing on a strategic vision and plan developed with support from the UGA Institute of Government in 2013.

In June, the area received \$4.4 million in funding from the governor's office to support projects in "A Vision for the Athens Street and 129 South Corridors," another community-driven plan focused on increasing greenspace and connectivity released in 2022 by the UGA Institute of Government.

The city of Gainesville and Hall County will receive \$2.2 million each, part of an overall package of more than \$225 million for 142 projects across the state, to improve neighborhood assets like parks, recreation facilities, and sidewalks in communities



HOME GROWN TALENT

Gainesville native Leigh Elkins plays an active role in city's renaissance

Watching her hometown progress and plan for the future is exciting for Leigh Elkins, Institute of Government faculty.

“Both professionally and personally, it’s been fun to see how the community has grown, how much more it offers, and that I’ve had some role in the process,” she said.

The city’s activated downtown space continues to radiate outward, connecting new neighborhoods via trails and a greenway, serving as a model for 21st century economic and community development.

“Gainesville has seen tremendous growth over the past 30 or 40 years, and they haven’t been afraid of it. They’ve recognized that to be ready for growth you have to have a plan so you can shape it into what’s most appropriate for your community,” she said.

Elkins credits her parents—now retired but still active volunteers—with inspiring her work.

“Both of my parents truly modeled what it was like to serve others; I think that’s probably why I ended up in public service,” she said.

A commitment to people and places like Gainesville continues to motivate her.

“We owe it to Georgia,” she said of UGA’s land-grant status. “It also takes everything that happens at the university out into the state in an approachable and meaningful way. We should be figuring out solutions for our communities to help them thrive.”

disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Leaders credit the RSVP process with creating a “roadmap” driven by community buy-in and public investment to allow for such economic development.

“The visuals that they created for what could be in our downtown really help sell it to the community, whether it’s redevelopment or green space or streetscaping,” said Rusty Ligon, community and economic development director.



COMMUNITY BRANDING

Since 2018, the UGA Institute of Government’s Community Branding services have transformed communities across Georgia. As an economic development asset, strategic branding helps communities enhance their image and better position themselves in a competitive environment.

“While it’s not a quick fix, smart branding enhances what a community is trying to achieve, whether it’s tourism, economic development, or attracting more people to downtown and local events. It’s really fun to see how much people love their communities, and branding brings that out,” said Kaitlin Messich, the Institute of Government faculty member who leads the community branding team.

Last fall, Messich helped Vidalia—world-renowned as the Sweet Onion City—launch a new identity to encompass several city departments, the convention and visitor’s bureau, the downtown association, and its annual festival. The community chose a trio of onions hand-drawn by Kelsey Broich, a creative design specialist at the institute, to lend visual identity across departments and events.

The resulting brand gave Vidalia a new look that evokes the region’s soil, traditions, and Southern hospitality. It also stirred community pride in what makes their city so “sweet,” according to Mayor Doug Roper.

“Folks here are excited about it, and I think there’s a great market for our merchandise outside of our community as well. The sky’s the limit on how much we can get out there across the country,” he said.



SPOTLIGHT

THE GEORGIA WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE CENTER

The Georgia Workforce and Economic Resilience Center launched in 2023. It serves as a central hub for technical assistance, training, and research to support leaders as they tackle important community and state issues. The center extends the Institute of Government's mission to inform, inspire and innovate so that governments can be more efficient and responsive to their citizens, address current and emerging challenges and serve the public with excellence. The center also enhances UGA's ability to quickly adapt to the changing needs of the state, its local governments and communities by connecting them with the resources necessary for success. An example of this is the Georgia Workforce Planning Guide. Developed and launched in partnership with Georgia Power, the guide was created using lessons learned from several successful workforce development initiatives around the state and offers a data-driven process that is designed to be led by community members and focused on finding attainable solutions.

Ongoing work on the **River Valley Community Compatible Development Plan** included significant engagement with the U.S. Army installation Fort Moore (formerly known as Fort Benning) and surrounding communities. The plan encompasses six rural counties adjacent to the installation: Marion, Chattahoochee, Stewart, Taylor, Talbot, and Russell, Alabama.

As part of the process, Institute of Government faculty helped reconstitute the Marion County Development Authority, a critical step in revitalizing the city of Buena Vista, the county seat. The team also crafted designs that downtown Buena Vista used to apply for \$2 million from a voter-approved T-SPLOST package on downtown infrastructure.



“It’s tremendous to have access to the UGA Institute of Government’s depth of knowledge, innovative thinking, and guidance in conversation. It provides a fresh perspective that makes us stronger.”

KERI ORVIN
BAXLEY CITY MANAGER

Launched in 2022 with a U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development grant, with additional support from the UGA Foundation, the **PROPEL (Planning Rural Opportunities for Prosperity and Economic Leadership)** program is making a difference in rural communities throughout the state. The program empowers rural Georgia decision-makers as they develop strategies for economic development and long-term economic resilience.

Appling County is one PROPEL community that made significant strides working through the program in the past year. Downtown Baxley, the county seat, received a Rural Zone Designation, which aids in economic development. Renovated buildings and beautification projects have helped attract new business. Keri Orvin, city manager of Baxley, credited PROPEL with helping connect many functions that impact the community—from downtown development to community outreach.

“It’s tremendous to have access to the UGA Institute of Government’s depth of knowledge, innovative thinking, and guidance in conversation. It provides a fresh perspective that makes us stronger,” she said.





INNOVATE

ADDRESSING CRITICAL CHALLENGES THROUGH INNOVATION

The past year saw several developments that showcase the UGA Institute of Government's leading role in developing tools and technology services that help government leaders and professionals make more informed decisions.

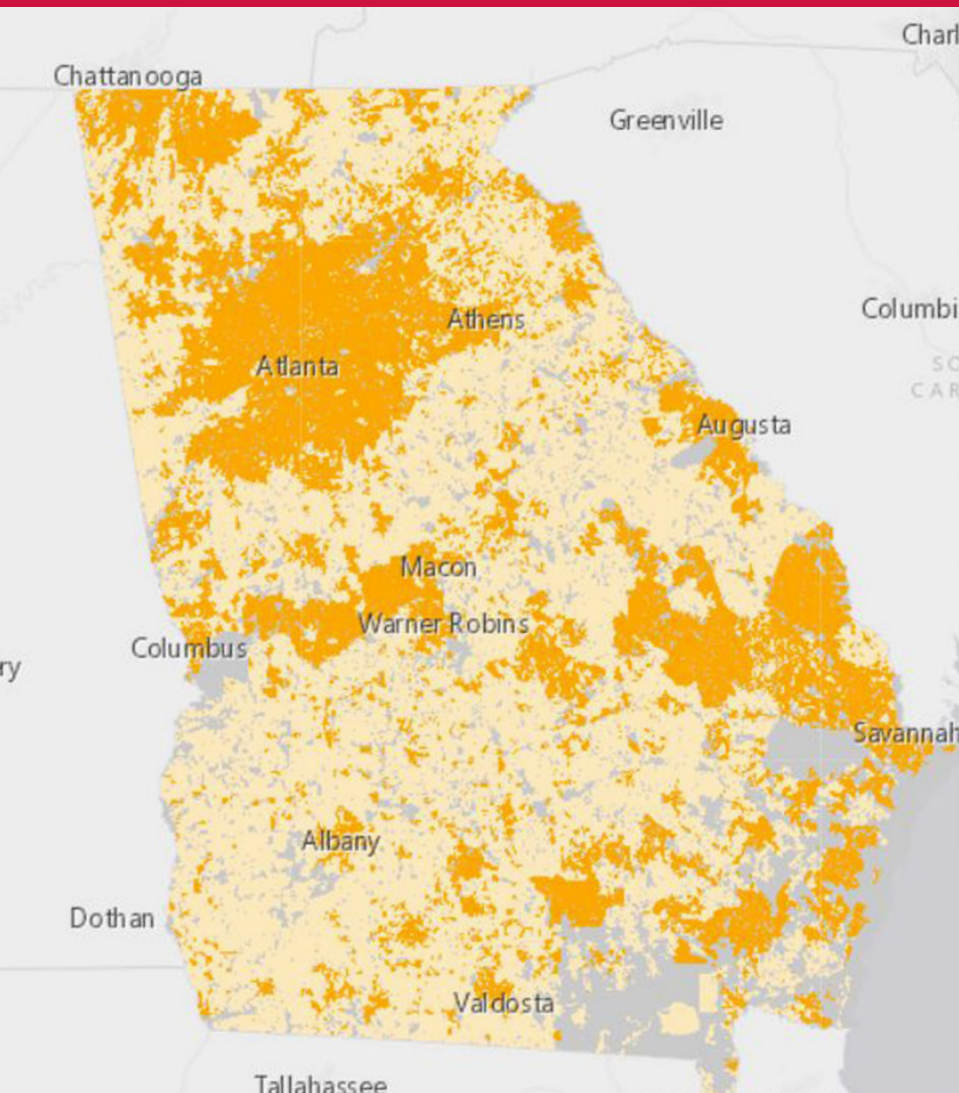
Communities across Georgia continue to benefit from the **Georgia Broadband Map**. Released in 2020, the map is considered the national gold standard for its accuracy in identifying populations in Georgia unserved by high-speed internet. Commissioned by the State of Georgia Broadband Initiative, the groundbreaking map tracked the availability of connectivity down to the street address level, meaning more communities could apply for both public and private funds to develop broadband.

The application helped the Gilmer Pickens Joint Development Authority obtain nearly \$21.4 million in ARPA grants to build out service to almost half of about 10,000 unserved locations in the two counties. More broadband expansion funding is in place through additional federal grants from the FCC and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The FCC's Rural Development Opportunity Fund has awarded \$326 million

to bring broadband service to nearly 180,000 unserved locations in rural Georgia communities.

Beyond broadband, the UGA Institute of Government's **Geographic Information Systems (GIS)** services also provide custom application development, cybersecurity awareness, and data analysis and visualization services.

The launch of the **Georgia Data Innovation Hub** in the fall of 2022 recognized the university's ongoing commitment to data analysis and visualization. The Georgia Data Innovation Hub convenes, trains, and provides technical assistance to raise the capabilities of government employees doing data analytics, data visualization, and predictive analytics.



“The map was extremely valuable because it allowed us to know that we had a pretty clean application,” said Jason Smith, chief operating officer at the Ellijay Telephone Company. Engineers at the broadband provider used the Georgia Broadband Map to verify locations in the field and build applications to provide more connectivity to the community.

In the past year, the hub hosted four webinars with 387 attendees on topics such as data analysis and data visualization for local governments, business intelligence tools, and Georgia’s changing demographics. In April, the first **Developing Data Analytics Capabilities Conference** was held in Athens. The event brought together more than 200 attendees from 70 organizations to learn about current innovations in data analytics, connect with experts, and identify their organization’s data readiness. The hub’s work continued with the launch of the **Data Analysis and Decision Making for Government Certificate** program in fall 2023.



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

James Byars

Manager
Data Analysis
and Visualization

James Byars received the 2023 UGA Public Service and Outreach Staff Award. During his eight years with the Institute of Government, Byars has gained a reputation as an in-house data whiz. In addition to providing annual population projections for the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget, Byars and his team played a significant role in creating the data set that led to the creation of Georgia Degrees Pay, a web-based tool comparing enrollment, cost, and student success data for 26 of Georgia’s public colleges and universities.

Whether it’s working on a project for the Department of Family and Child Services, creating a data set on student success rates, or tinkering with app design, Byars understands the power data has in people’s lives.

“It would be naive to believe that a model or a machine could solve all the world’s problems, but it can be used as a tool to help people. And I’m glad to be in service of that goal,” he said.

GIVING TO EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNMENT

“The success of Georgia’s rural communities is critical to the prosperity of the entire state. We saw that giving today’s UGA students the chance to engage with rural community leaders was a powerful opportunity that we wanted to strongly support as a priority of the board.”

NEAL J. QUIRK

former chair of the UGA Foundation Board of Trustees, whose investment launched the PROPEL Rural Scholars program



We are grateful for the support of our work to help improve state and local government. Donations to the Institute of Government sustain priority programs such as:

- ▶ **PROPEL (Planning Rural Opportunities for Prosperity and Economic Leadership)** empowers rural Georgia decision-makers by helping communities develop strategies for economic development and long-term economic resilience.
- ▶ The **PROPEL Rural Scholars** program allows students interested in rural Georgia the opportunity to work alongside a Public Service and Outreach mentor and community leaders. The two-semester program teaches students about economic development, community development, and civic leadership.
- ▶ UGA **CyberArch** is addressing the challenges of cybersecurity for Georgia communities and businesses by building awareness about cybersecurity threats and strengthening preparation and response. Student interns work with organizations to conduct cybersecurity risk reviews and issue reports with recommendations to enhance the organization’s cybersecurity posture.
- ▶ The Institute of Government assists local communities in implementing **e-mobility** and electric vehicle infrastructure by providing expertise in planning for key areas such as public safety, emergency responder training, charging infrastructure, and fleet electrification.
- ▶ **The Georgia Data Innovation Hub** convenes, trains, and provides technical assistance to raise the capabilities of government employees performing data analytics, data visualization, and predictive analytics.
- ▶ **The Georgia Workforce and Economic Resilience Center** highlights UGA’s commitment to serving and empowering local and state leaders as they plan for the future of a prosperous Georgia. The center serves as a central hub for technical assistance, training, and research to support leaders as they seek to tackle important community and state issues.

CONNECT WITH US

Over the past year, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government has remained steadfast in our commitment to inform, inspire, and innovate so that governments can be more efficient and responsive to their citizens, address current and emerging challenges, and serve the public with excellence. We promote excellence in government through a wide variety of programs and services, including technical assistance, professional training, applied research, and technology solutions. Your support helps us work extensively with governments across Georgia and beyond to develop the knowledge and skills that elected officials, professional staff, and appointed board members need to manage effectively in the 21st century. We are grateful to serve Georgia.



GOVERNMENT MATTERS

The Institute of Government has launched an electronic newsletter, Government Matters. Government Matters offers a view of our current public service and outreach activities, along with special initiatives and partnerships.

Sign up via
<https://cviog.uga.edu/publications/e-newsletter.html>



GIVE

We invite you to give to Excellence in Government and become a partner in serving the governments that serve the people of Georgia in so many essential ways. Your one-time gift or annual gifts of any amount will be used to support the work of the Institute of Government to improve state and local government.

Donate now:
<https://cviog.uga.edu/give.html>



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