

UWG CENTERS & LABS REPORT

HIGHLIGHTS FROM FISCAL YEAR 2025



UNIVERSITY OF
WEST GEORGIA



UWG CULTURE LAB

The UWG Culture Lab—funded entirely through private community partnerships—promotes dynamic collaborations between campus and community, forging shared space and projects that help to broaden minds, beautify the built environment, and inspire new ways of being. Those collaborations take many forms, including the Other Night School, a vibrant community lecture series (featuring faculty from across the university and beyond, and valued at over \$15,000 annually), four different Blackwell Prizes (each worth \$15,000 annually), an endowed visiting-artist series (a \$40,000 endowment), various public-art initiatives (one of which landed on the front page of *The New York Times*), and multiple gallery spaces, most importantly The Vault Gallery in Newnan. In addition, we manage a series of publications aimed at disseminating UWG culture and excellence across campus and into the communities we serve. In fiscal year 2025, the Culture Lab also began to branch into international territory, offering curated, educational missions and experiences in central Italy. All of these efforts align with the lab’s dedication to building and maintaining a unified university culture, both on campus and indeed far away. We define “culture” in the most expansive and inclusive sense, seeking to illustrate and exhibit the power of creativity in all its forms.





THOMAS B. MURPHY CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Guided by its mission to prepare citizens for a lifetime of responsibility and effective engagement in civic and democratic life, the Murphy Center remains a vital, non-partisan hub for civic education, public dialogue, and community collaboration.

This year, the Center advanced its strategic priorities by:

- Expanding civic education and engagement through dynamic programming and student leadership development.
- Promoting public awareness of pressing political and social issues through lectures, forums, and community partnerships.
- Fostering professional growth and career readiness through mentorship and experiential learning.
- Supporting liberal arts research that serves the public good and informs public policy.

The Center's signature initiatives—the Murphy Center Distinguished Lecture Series and the LeadershipUWG/Murphy Fellows Program—have achieved remarkable success. The lecture series hosted six public events featuring prominent speakers such as Dr. Keith Gaddie and Dr. Jocelyn Evans, who explored the intersection of public art, architecture, history, and democracy; Lynne Riley, President of the Georgia Student Finance Commission; and Steve Anthony, former Chief of Staff to Speaker Murphy. These events attracted strong attendance from students and community members. In March 2025, the Center co-hosted a landmark event with the University of Georgia and Georgia Tech, featuring former Governors Roy Barnes and Nathan Deal in a dialogue on political civility and public service. Attended by over 100 guests and highlighted in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, this event exemplified the Center's commitment to bipartisan dialogue and civic leadership.

The LeadershipUWG/Murphy Fellows Program was redesigned this year to span two semesters, resulting in a threefold increase in participation. Eighteen students engaged in leadership workshops, met with public officials and nonprofit leaders, and participated in a transformative visit to the Georgia Capitol. These experiences are preparing a new generation of civic-minded professionals and community leaders.

Whether students seek to lead, faculty pursue community-based research, or community partners wish to collaborate, the Murphy Center provides a platform for impactful work and shared purpose. Its work continues to honor the legacy of Speaker Murphy and other civic leaders by fostering a more informed, engaged, and just society.



BIOLOGICAL AND FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY LABORATORY



The BAFAL promotes student success through a blend of classroom instruction, experiential learning, and community outreach. Students have opportunities to develop, lead, and evaluate workshops for their peers, design research projects, and participate in campus and community events. These activities foster the development of technical skills, social and professional competencies, and a deeper understanding of anthropology and forensic science within an interdisciplinary environment.

In FY25, BAFAL expanded its curricular offerings to include new Cornerstone courses such as “Why We Have to Die” and “Monkeying Around,” along with a new lab for Introduction to Biological Anthropology tailored for science majors seeking Core Impacts credits focused on human identity. Overall, nine classes utilized the lab space, representing a significant component of the Anthropology curriculum.



Student-led workshops, facilitated by a student researcher, Lauren Finch, covered topics including Human Evolution and Forensic Science, targeting early-year students to enhance experiential learning opportunities. The lab also maintained its community engagement through events like Palaeofeast—an annual campus cookout featuring pre-agricultural ingredients—and outreach initiatives supporting elementary STEM programs and local Science Fairs.

The director, Dr. Corey Maggiano, was recognized by the Interdisciplinary Studies program for his impactful work with students across campus. The laboratory’s ongoing community involvement and dedication to hands-on learning continue to reinforce its role as a hub for curiosity, skill development, and interdisciplinary exploration in social and biological sciences.



UWG EARLY LEARNING CENTER

The FY25 was an exciting year for the Early Learning Center at UWG. The Center provided educational experiences for 35 PreK students through hands-on learning, field trips, guest readers, STEM activities, music, physical education, and cooking. A major enhancement was the creation of a new sensory learning wall—an initiative inspired by Melanie Brooks and Dr. Laura Smith, brought to life by Professor Ryan Lamfers and students from the UWG Art Atelier. The sensory wall as an inviting space that encourages exploration and engagement, not just visual appeal. It was also integrated into classroom instruction, enhancing various academic activities.

Another highlight was the dedication of the Discovery Classroom—named in honor of Tom and Pasty Upchurch, esteemed UWG alumni and longtime supporters of education. This STEM-focused classroom is designed to foster exploration, creativity, and learning and will have a lasting impact on early education at UWG.

INNOVATIONS LAB

The College of Education's Innovations Lab and Mobile Innovations Lab at UWG exemplify the university's commitment to student success, technological innovation, and community engagement. These labs serve as dynamic spaces for training, exploration, and experimentation with emerging technologies.

Over the past year, the campus-based Innovations Lab welcomed more than 1,800 visitors, including students, faculty, staff, local educators, and K–12 students. The Lab integrated the Apple Vision Pro into its offerings and began collaborative research on spatial computing, partnering with faculty and educators on innovative applications for teaching and learning.



Meanwhile, the Mobile Innovations Lab continued its outreach by delivering hands-on technology experiences directly to schools, libraries, summer camps, and educational events across the region. Over 2,000 K–12 students and 140 educators participated in activities, with increased engagement of student volunteers who gained valuable field experience using emerging educational technologies.

As both labs grow and evolve, they remain firmly dedicated to fostering collaboration, supporting educational innovation, and bridging the gap between technology and teaching, empowering students, educators, and communities alike.



CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE WELLNESS

The University of West Georgia's Center for Integrative Wellness (CIW) made significant advances in FY25, expanding its impact through innovative programming, strategic partnerships, and a focus on holistic student well-being. The CIW strengthened its operations, increased student engagement, and elevated regional visibility.

A key milestone was securing the Center's first-ever grants, totaling \$168,362, which supported mental health initiatives, trauma-informed training, and basic needs programs. Overall revenue reached \$196,587—a 13-fold increase from FY24—driven by new services, collaborations, and the Mobile Wellness Unit.

Student support remained central to the Center's efforts. It employed student assistants, hosted internships, and facilitated over 600 graduate-level wellness coaching sessions through a partnership with the MS in Integrative Wellness program. The Center also delivered wellness presentations, biometric screenings, and high-impact trainings such as CPR, Mental Health First Aid, and suicide prevention. New trauma-informed offerings, including Connections Matter and Becoming a More Resilient Parent, were provided free of charge through grant support. Over 1,800 students, employees, and community members participated in CIW programs.

Off-campus, the Mobile Wellness Unit extended access to health services across West Georgia, conducting screenings and providing education at underserved community events through a contract with Cobb & Douglas Public Health. Programs like LatinX WELL and Resilient WEST addressed regional health disparities and delivered family-centered outreach.

The Basic Needs Center expanded its services with funding from the EMBARK grant, tripling its inventory of resources to support students facing food and housing insecurity. Additionally, the "Wolves Don't Waste" program recovered and redistributed over 2,300 meals, advancing sustainability and food equity on campus.





ANTONIO J. WARING, JR. CENTER FOR PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY

Fiscal Year 25 was a momentous year for the Antonio J. Waring, Jr. Archaeological Laboratory, and the culmination of the year, as well as years of hard work and dedication, was the evolution of the Waring Laboratory into the Antonio J. Waring, Jr. Center for Public Archaeology (Waring Center). This elevation was the result of a targeted public archaeology approach over the past several years that focused on increasing participation in community engagement events and increasing the number of meaningful engagements with community members. This evolution brings with it not only a name change, but a much more targeted focus along with a new mission statement and overarching goals. The mission statement for the new Waring Center is:

The Antonio J. Waring, Jr. Center for Public Archaeology is dedicated to promoting and facilitating the preservation, academic study, and public knowledge of Georgia's archaeological heritage through research and community engagement.

The new Waring Center is a research and outreach center focused on the interdisciplinary study of human culture through time and bringing that study to the broader communities that UWG serves. The Center approaches its mission by focusing work on achieving two overarching goals: 1) to engage with communities at the local, regional, and state levels to promote the preservation and public knowledge of Georgia's archaeological heritage; and 2) to facilitate the preservation and academic study of the archaeological record of Georgia and the broader Southeastern United States.

This year, the Waring Center completed 39 curation projects, leading to the generation of \$87,572.62 in revenue, exceeding the fiscal year revenue projections (\$63,425.00) by 38%. The collections in these projects are associated with more than 100 archaeological sites throughout the State of Georgia.

The Waring Center excelled in the area of community engagement, hosting or participating in 47 community-engaged events in FY25. These events provided Waring personnel with the opportunity to engage with over 5,100 community members throughout the year. This year also saw a new partnership with Carrollton City High School that allowed the collaborative development of long-term educational programming using archaeology to supplement a series of lessons in Environmental Science classes.

FY25 saw the continuation of a strong research program at the Waring Center, and UWG students were the central focus of this program. Projects ranged from experimental archaeology research on pottery and shark tooth tools to field-based data collection projects. These projects led a number of presentations at professional conferences, including five posters and two papers, all co-authored with students. The newest long-term project involves a collaborative effort with the Fair Oaks Foundation in Evinston, FL to conduct research on the Fair Oaks property, which is located adjacent to San Buenaventura de Potano, an early 17th Century Spanish Mission Site. In June 2025, Waring Director and UWG Students recovered evidence that the mission occupation and the associated Potano occupation extended onto the Fair Oaks property, launching a long-term project to study the components of that occupation.



STONE CENTER FOR FAMILY BUSINESS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND INNOVATION

In FY25, the Stone Center expanded its mission by broadening programs that support student entrepreneurship, family-owned enterprises, and regional collaboration. The Center hosted strategic events, launched academic initiatives, and strengthened community partnerships.

A notable event was the visit of Diane Elliott, founder of Catalyst 4, who served as the Center's Social Entrepreneur in Residence. Her engagement included class sessions, campus presentations, and serving as a judge for the Wolf Den Pitch Competition. Her expertise in reentry and workforce development enriched discussions on social entrepreneurship and sustainable impact.

In July 2024, the Center hosted its inaugural Family Business Retreat, bringing regional businesses together to discuss leadership, sustainability, and growth. Future retreats will feature new topics such as conflict resolution, AI adoption, and governance for family enterprises, reaffirming the Center's commitment to relevant and actionable programming.

The Center also launched two community series: Coffee & Conversation, in partnership with the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce, and the virtual Family Business Roundtable, both designed to facilitate ongoing dialogue among business leaders.

On campus, the Center introduced the inaugural Start-Up Boot Camp in Fall 2024, engaging 16 students from diverse disciplines in a 10-week entrepreneurial experience. The top ideas competed in the Wolf Den Pitch Competition, with Kelsey Carter winning first place. Moving forward, participation in the boot camp will include the new Design Thinking course, inspired by the Center's successful workshop series, launching in Fall 2025.



Additionally, the Center's Social Entrepreneurship Pathway—developed with Interdisciplinary Studies—provides students an academic pathway to develop solutions to social issues through real-world fieldwork, equipping graduates to lead in nonprofit, community, and advocacy sectors. This initiative aligns with the Center's broader goal of embedding an entrepreneurial mindset across all areas of education at UWG.

In February 2025, Gary Schoeniger, founder of the Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative, was invited to discuss his book, *The Entrepreneurial Mindset Advantage*. His keynote and faculty discussions underscored the importance of cultivating entrepreneurial thinking across disciplines. Consequently, the Center plans to implement campus-wide training programs aimed at fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among all students, regardless of their major.



SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The UGA Small Business Development Center at UWG had a highly productive FY2025 and continues to build momentum for FY26. Highlights include providing small business consulting that assisted in 20 new business starts and helped clients secure over \$12.1 million in capital. The Center currently maintains more than \$12 million in underwriting at local banks, with all projected closings expected in FY26.

The Center also demonstrated strengths in continuing education. In September 2024, Area Director W. Troy Vollenweider presented his commercial loan class at the national America's Small Business Development Centers Conference in Atlanta. The session aimed to empower other business consultants to assist clients with the loan process. The impact of this presentation facilitated a collaboration with Clemson University's SBDC team to expand their access to capital model, which has since been adopted across multiple centers in South Carolina. All centers are expected to complete training on this model by November 2025.





CENTER FOR PUBLIC HISTORY

Founded in 2000, the Center for Public History has played a vital role in research, professional development, and community engagement within public history. It supports both graduate and undergraduate programs, enhancing students' engagement with regional history and preparing them for careers in public humanities, museums, arts, and nonprofits.

In FY25, the Center supported four graduate research assistants and numerous undergraduate projects, including the West Georgia Textile Trail. Its alumni hold prominent positions at institutions such as the Atlanta History Center, the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, and the Newnan/Coweta Historical Society.

Key partnerships include collaborations with the National Park Service, the Atlanta History Center, and regional museums and historical associations like the Georgia Museums Association and Georgia Humanities. Notable initiatives include the Local History Project, led by graduate research assistant Camden Robinson, and the Sacred Harp Project, directed by graduate assistant Alan Valdes. The Center also established new cooperative agreements with regional organizations, including the West Georgia Military Museum in Tallapoosa and the Newnan Main Street program.

A significant milestone was the successful launch of the UWG Summer Institute in Museum Studies and Public History in summer 2025, welcoming regional professionals and students for advanced training. These projects and partnerships provide students with valuable experiential learning opportunities, fostering career readiness and strengthening regional historical and cultural initiatives.





TANNER HEALTH SCHOOL OF NURSING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CENTERS

The Experiential Learning Centers in the Tanner Health School of Nursing at UWG are state-of-the-art laboratories located on both the Carrollton and Newnan campuses. These advanced facilities feature high-fidelity manikins in simulation suites, an updated skills lab, medication dispensing machines, immersive virtual reality (VR) technology, and AI-driven tools—providing students with realistic, hands-on clinical experiences in a safe and supportive environment.

Designed to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and clinical practice, the Centers give students multiple opportunities to build essential nursing competencies in a controlled setting that promotes skill development and confidence.

In the skills lab, students learn and refine foundational nursing techniques using upgraded manikins and task trainers. Repeated, structured practice helps reinforce critical psychomotor skills and supports clinical readiness. Mastery of these core skills is vital, as it directly translates to safe, effective patient care in real-world healthcare settings.

Beyond foundational skills, the Centers include advanced simulation suites that immerse students in complex clinical scenarios using high-fidelity manikins and VR technology. These simulations encourage students to apply theoretical knowledge, think critically, and make clinical decisions in real time.

A recent addition to the Centers is an AI-powered communication system that allows students to interact verbally with low-fidelity manikins. These voice-enabled training tools respond consistently to student questions, helping develop assessment and communication skills without the need for faculty role-play. This innovation not only enhances realism but also enables faculty to focus on observation and feedback—reducing cognitive load and improving the quality of instruction.

By integrating hands-on skills training with simulation and emerging technologies, the ELCs support a comprehensive, learner-centered approach to clinical competency development. Students gain timely feedback, demonstrate proficiency, and build confidence before entering real clinical environments.

The Experiential Learning Centers reflect the School of Nursing's mission to prepare practice-ready graduates who can deliver high-quality, patient-centered care from day one. Through a blend of structured skills development and immersive simulation, UWG nursing students acquire the technical ability, clinical judgment, and professional readiness needed to thrive in today's complex healthcare landscape.



UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA