



AN ACADEMICS AFIELD TOOLKIT

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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To retrieve “R3 For College Students: A Practitioner’s Guide & Academics Afield Toolkit” in its entirety, visit gwf.org/r3toolkit.





WHY IMPLEMENT ACADEMICS AFIELD

WHY IMPLEMENT ACADEMICS AFIELD

Introduction

Academics Afield is a college learn-to-hunt program that developed as part of the National R3 Movement. It was spear-headed by the Georgia Wildlife Federation with support from the Georgia R3 Initiative (GA DNR-WRD, GWF, NWTF, GA SCI, DU). Program funding has been primarily provided by the WSFR program of the USFWS and NSSF. In North America, the majority of wildlife conservation dollars are funded by hunters, anglers, and target shooters. Hunting participation has been declining since the 1980s highlighting the need to increase and diversify the number of active hunters. R3 strives to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters, anglers, and target shooters. Academics Afield is an R3 Mentoring Model designed off of the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model: provide trial opportunities to interested members of a specific target audience, address pertinent barriers, and provide pathways for next steps.

Objectives

- Engage individuals from non-traditional backgrounds in hunting and shooting sports
- Provide knowledge and skills to a curious and receptive audience
- Establish social support structures for long term participation

These objectives complemented the goals of the University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forestry which wanted to train future wildlife professionals in hunting to be more familiar with traditional North American Wildlife Management. With extensive support from faculty and leadership at the university and strong partnerships with Georgia Wildlife Federation and the Georgia R3 Initiative, the first Academics Afield program officially launched in 2019 at the University of Georgia. Universities hosting programs provide experiential learning opportunities and possibly certifications for their students.

Outcomes

Academics Afield Program Evaluation revealed that participants:

- Were more diverse than traditional hunters (57% female and 29% minority)
- Were newly recruited to hunting as 75% had never participated prior
- No longer reported lack of knowledge/skills as a barrier to hunting after participation (87% pre-program to 16% post-program)
- No longer reported lack of a partner as a barrier to hunting after participation (94% pre-program to 45% post-program)
- Purchased licenses the following year (47% of a sample of 66 participants in GA)

Additional details and more conclusions can be reviewed in the previous section of this Toolkit "College Focused R3: A Practitioner's Guide" found at gwf.org/R3Toolkit. If you are interested in implementing an Academics Afield program, please coordinate with Georgia Wildlife Federation – education@gwf.org.



Establishing the Academics Afield program at UGA was an obvious win for our wildlife students. Hunters are foundational to many research techniques wildlife biologists utilize on a regular basis. More significant than the skill development though, is the new perspective Academics Afield students gain regarding a segment of conservation stakeholders. Offering this program to our wildlife students helps them better prepare for future careers in natural resources. I recommend this program for students of any school of study because of its rigorous curriculum and significant skill development.

Dr. Steve Wrigley, 13th Chancellor of the University System of Georgia

WHY IMPLEMENT ACADEMICS AFIELD

Building Community

Academics Afield is more than a learn-to-hunt workshop. It aims to create a collegiate hunting community providing social support networks. Programs recruit diverse college-aged hunters and also retains and reactivate established hunters by engaging experienced students as peer-coaches who may have abandoned the activity after leaving their hometown for college. Wild game culinary socials after hunts enable organic conversation, sprouting friendships and connecting new participants to existing resources. Depending on the level of engagement from coaches, Academics Afield may positively influence the existing hunting community by improving conservation literacy, providing mentoring training, and encouraging positive interactions with the non-hunting community.

Results of Academics Afield evaluation efforts support the idea that college students have great potential as a target audience for R3 workshops. They are congregated, explorative, and have broad social networks. Academics Afield participants leave the program with more knowledge, skills, and confidence to engage in hunting and the shooting sports. Evaluations also demonstrate positive changes in hunting-related beliefs, attitudes, and behavior.

Fundamentals of Academics Afield

1. Educate new and existing hunters on conservation history and hunting's role in the North American Model of Wildlife Management
2. Implement program evaluations for a data-driven program design
3. Host 3-4 hunting workshops a year with each workshop offering species biology education, firearm training, a one-on-one mentored hunt, and a wild game culinary social
4. Coordinate via a student intern with peer coaches enhancing immediate social support network
5. Integrate students to support structures and available resources for post program participation

Fostering Reverence

Academics Afield ensures its alumni are not merely participants but stewards for conservation and positive representatives of the hunting community. This is achieved with a curriculum that emphasizes a hunter's role in conservation, inspires gratitude for wildlife and wild places, encourages ethical practices, and stresses respect for hunters and non-hunters alike. In the words of Aldo Leopold, "When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."



GROUNDWORK

Preparing for an Academics Afield Program

PREPARATION

Introduction

The decision to launch a learn to hunt program should not be taken lightly. There are many moving pieces to a model like Academics Afield. However, with thoughtful planning and ample preparation, participants can make great memories and you can grow your program to achieve the maximum number of desired outcomes. Please consider the following subjects as introductions to the preparatory exercises necessary for complete program implementation. Thought has been put into the order of the subjects, but many should be worked on concurrently. Additional information, example templates, and potential structures can be found in the associated Appendices.

Setting up Academics Afield

We encourage a three-legged support structure to ensure the success of the Academics Afield program: an academic institution to efficiently reach students; the state wildlife agency to improve access to resources and land; and a non-governmental wildlife organization to improve efficiencies and reduce potential red-tape barriers. The importance of working with a university with leadership passionate about the opportunity for their students cannot be understated. Universities with Natural Resource degrees of study have high potential. Identify a Faculty Advisor who agrees to assist the student intern in recruitment and logistics. It is easiest for a non-governmental organization to hire the student intern and provide programming assistance, but the University can as well. The state wildlife agency can provide potential instructors/coaches, access, equipment, and opportunities for funding. By working with multiple partners, you can leverage existing experience, infrastructure, and connections to bring effective programming to non-traditional audiences. Refer to the appendices for example partnership documents.

PREPARATION

Evaluation and Tracking Efforts

Evaluation and tracking are essential to the success and improvement of Academics Afield. Several tools have been provided to aid these efforts.

The program was designed for the non-traditional audience. Thus, students with little or no hunting experience will benefit most from participation. To aid selection of program participants an “Applicant Screening Questionnaire” template has been provided in the appendix. It can be utilized as an application for interested students. The program must then collect pre-participation data of selected participants to measure demographics and establish a baseline of hunting experience, confidence, and conservation knowledge. Refer to the template “Pre-program Survey” for this purpose. Results of the Pre-Program Survey can prepare program practitioners to better address participant needs. When distributing program materials, keep in mind the students tend to be more responsive to text messages as opposed to emails.

After programming, a Post-Program Survey should be implemented to compare change in behavior and attitude of participants due to participation. Refer to the template “Post-program Survey.” A Post - program Survey should also be implemented so practitioners can improve programming based off of feedback from participants. The degree of change can be a measure of program success. We recommend use of a QR code at the conclusion of the event for participants to complete surveys before departure.

Another measure of success, can be participation in hunting through time. This can be assessed via a “Follow-up Survey” or examination of license buying behavior. Refer to the template “Follow-Up Survey”. The second method requires state wildlife agency record access and the birthdates or DNR Customer Identification Numbers of your program alumni. Even if you don’t have access to agency records, be sure to collect this data from your participants as it may be valuable for future national Academics Afield evaluations.

PREPARATION

Finances

Academics Afield was designed to be run by students, for students. This supports development of a hunting community within the student body and reduces staffing costs. The student staff consists of a student intern and volunteer student coaches. The student intern should be paid to ensure consistency and reliability. Here is an example of typical costs (\$13/hour at ~5 hours/week at 12 weeks/semester = \$780). Weekly hourly totals vary depending on workshop design. Student interns can be paid hourly with travel costs reimbursed or by stipend. Management and oversight of intern in some capacity will be required. Volunteer student coach participation may be incentivized with hunting opportunities, fun social events (wild game culinary social), and other non-monetary means.

Equipment and supplies to set up a program must be acquired. Many state wildlife agencies or R3 practitioners have firearm sets that can be rented for programming. You may also consider purchasing firearms for your program. A set of twelve shotguns with interchangeable barrels (smooth bore and rifled w/scope) is a great option. This enables pursuit of small game, upland or migratory bird, and deer at short range. Ideally all firearms will be the same to reduce complexity of instruction and student use. We recommend the 20-gauge pump action Mossberg 500 combo (model 5047). Expect an initial cost of approximately \$7,000 for the shotguns and supporting equipment. If possible, identify a local dealer who is willing to support community organizations and offer discounts. After original purchase, program supplies can be maintained with approximately \$500 a semester. It is advised for the non-governmental organization to hold and distribute funds for convenience. If necessary, a Memorandum of Agreement should be used to hold all partners accountable to their commitments. Refer to the appendices for an example memorandum.

Species and Equipment Considerations

When designing your Academics Afield program, consider your participants ability to replicate the hunt after the program concludes. Selecting species that are accessible and equipment that is attainable will aid post program replication. For example, dove and squirrel are relatively easy to find, harvest, process, and prepare in the kitchen. Also, the equipment required to pursue these species is limited and affordable. Duck and deer require additional gear, knowledge, and land access, but with a little extra support they are also excellent species for an Academics Afield program.

PREPARATION

Academics Afield Coordinator (Student Intern)

The student intern is the backbone of an Academics Afield program. They organize and implement most aspects of the program with limited supervision. Ideal candidates will have experience in hunting and shooting, an understanding of teaching and sales/marketing, and excellent communication skills. A candidate that also has established relationships within the natural resources programs at the university can be beneficial.

The student intern will market to and recruit non-traditional student participants and experienced student coaches. They will also organize workshops each semester by working with partners to provide an educational training, firearm training, guided hunt experience, and wild-game meal per workshop. Throughout the workshops the student intern will administer evaluation tools (surveys, questionnaires, etc.) to track program success. Finally, they'll draft a summary blog, video, or social media campaign for outreach after each workshop.

Inevitably the student intern will need to resign from the role due to changing circumstances (academic responsibilities, graduation, etc.). When this happens, recruiting a replacement from the pool of existing student coaches can be very efficient. We recommend the new intern shadow outgoing intern as part of their training. This ensures continuity between interns and reliable programming for participants.



PREPARATION

Workshop Design

The objective is to host 3-4 hunting workshops a year. Refer to the “Program Styles & Schedules” document in the appendix for more details.

Each workshop consists of:

- History of conservation
- Species biology and hunting strategy
- Ethics and safety
- Firearm training
- Mentored hunt
- Wild game culinary social

A workshop is broken down into multiple events. The history of conservation, species biology, hunting strategy, ethics, and safety is often provided over a 1.5-hour classroom education. Firearm training is required for participation in the hunt. The student intern is encouraged to become a certified Range Safety Officer or Certified Shooting Sports Coach to safely run this event. Adequate instruction and safety measures taken are situation specific. Then a mentored hunt with student coaches and a wild game culinary social concludes the workshop. Preparations should be made in advance to have an already deceased animal so students can see the field breakdown and potential cooking methods in the event the mentored hunt does not result in a harvest. The wild game culinary social is simply a meal with a game meat component, discussing preparation of game meat, conversations, reflections, questions, and laughter. The appendix features more information on processing venison.

PREPARATION

Student Coach Recruitment and Training

The Academics Afield Coordinator recruits student coaches via networking and word of mouth. Coaches are students that have hunting experience and are willing to volunteer their time to teach new people. Coaches are invited to participate in all aspects of the workshop. Although not always achievable, this ensures consistency between trainings and hunts. Program practitioners and/or the student intern should meet with the coaches separately to discuss safety, ethics, and sensitivity toward event participants from different backgrounds. Refer to the “Coach Recruitment & Training” document in the appendix for more details. Some programs may choose to supplement their student coaches with professionals or volunteers from the conservation or firearm community such as Hunter Education Instructors, Wildlife Officers, Biologists, Range Safety Officers etc. It is important to have enough experienced hunters engaged to properly guide new participants.

Insurance and Liability/Media Releases

Acquiring liability insurance can be a hurdle for programs. Short-term limited policy coverage can be utilized, but it is typically not cost-effective. If your organization does not have liability insurance for programming, it is recommended you partner with another organization who can cover the event. Traditional “hook and bullet” wildlife conservation organizations may have coverage already (Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, National Wild Turkey Federation, National Deer Association, First Hunt Foundation etc.), state agencies often have coverage if they are hosting programming on public land and state statutes often cover private landowners when offering hunting opportunities paid or unpaid. This may or may not be relevant or adequate for your specific needs.

In addition, participants should sign a liability and media release waiver. The media release is important so that imagery from your program can be used for reporting and future marketing. Post-event press releases and posts that feature photos of diverse participants having fun are very helpful for future recruitment. An example waiver is available in the appendix.

PREPARATION

Participant Recruitment

The Academics Afield Coordinator (student intern) and Faculty Advisor should work together on recruiting participants. Refer to the appendices for flyers, FAQs, registration tools etc.

Most common methods include:

- Speak at student chapter meetings for on-campus groups (e.g., The Wildlife Society)
- With professor permission, advertise the program to students during the first couple minutes of class
- Email flyers via university listservs
- Approach groups of people in halls, cafeterias, classes to tell them about the program
- Set up booths at extracurricular recruitment events
- Professors may offer extra credit for participation
- Professors may want to establish course credit
- Advertise on social media via geofencing technology
- Partner with recreation departments or campus shooting sports clubs
- Post ppt. slides on campus TVs
- Approach faculty in natural resource, recreation, or criminal justice degrees
- Identify and advertise in student activity newsletters or university social media





FULFILLMENT

Implementing an Academics Afield Program

IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

Academics Afield is focused on creating outcomes as opposed to outputs. Thus, extensive effort is invested into a single participant. In order to provide students a comprehensive education, an Academics Afield workshop is composed of 3-4 events, each event often held on different days requiring advanced preparations: classroom learning, firearm training, and a mentored hunt with a wild game meal incorporated.

A student in the program is encouraged to attend all events within a workshop. You will find college students will ask for exceptions, so adapt, keeping safety and proper education in mind. You may modify the events to better suit your cohort and available resources, but the general outline for the program is elaborated on below. The order of events should be followed, with lessons building upon each other, preparing students for the next event.

Some programs host a Welcome/FAQ seminar before launching the program as a recruitment strategy. Some programs utilize a rolling admissions strategy between workshops while some programs strive to work with the same cohort of students for multiple semesters.

Programs should require hunter education in advance of a workshop, either as a group or online. Serve food at events to incentivize participation. In advance, create a drive link for everyone to add and view pictures that are taken throughout participation. Most importantly, Academics Afield is a college hunting community so foster relationships amongst participants and with coaches.



IMPLEMENTATION

Classroom Training

This 1-2 hour event sets the stage for the rest of the workshop. It familiarizes students with the Academics Afield program and covers the history of conservation, species biology, hunting strategy, ethics, and safety. Have a staff member of the university or your student intern reserve a room on campus for the event. It is helpful to recruit a qualified instructor from the college or guest speaker to speak about the target species biology or hunting strategy. This introduces more community resources and can introduce students to potential careers in conservation.

Share the Welcome to Academics Afield Presentation (found in the curriculum section of this toolkit) to cover the history of hunting and its role in wildlife conservation. In addition, prepare the students for the type of hunt in which they will participate. Presentations covering species biology and hunting strategy for deer, duck, dove, and squirrel are included in the curriculum section of this toolkit. Try to present information in a way that also prepares students for organizing a hunting expedition on their own. This includes scouting, interactive maps, topography resources, public land access, weather, appropriate attire, laws, licenses, and the correct equipment to bring on a hunt. Hand out and review the Hunter's Regulation booklets. Introduce the firearm that will be used in this program (crossbow, shotgun, rifle, etc).

We encourage making this classroom training interactive to keep the students engaged and interested. Bring examples of field tools, safety equipment, or ammunition for them to handle. Ask students questions and hand out prizes. Finally, incorporate breaks. Even the most invested student will need a rest after 50 minutes of lecture.



I have greater respect for the role that hunters play in protecting our environment.

Academics Afield Student

IMPLEMENTATION

Firearm Training

The firearm training component of Academics Afield walks all participants through safe firearm handling. This is usually an afternoon event ranging from 3-5 hours depending on size of the group and their skill levels. Often, the student participants do not have experience using firearms and find the training to be one of the most fun events in the workshop. It is interactive and they likely have more opportunities to use the firearm at this event than during the actual hunt.

Introduce the students to the type of firearm they will be using, how it works and its parts. Understanding terminology will improve their skill development when receiving shooting feedback and ensure safety measures are fully understood. Safety is your number one priority and must be discussed at the beginning of the training prior to the students using the equipment. Test the students on the Cardinal Rules of Firearm Safety. Refer to the appendix for example shooting curriculum and safety briefing. Familiarize students with safe handling, carrying, loading, and unloading of the firearm. The goal of this event is to ensure the student is comfortable with the firearm, understands safety, and is sufficiently accurate so that they make ethical shots on an animal.

Utilize your unique resources including school shooting sports centers, state ranges, local shooting ranges, or private property. The hunting and shooting community are very receptive to educating the local students on the proper use of firearms. Use a technique for practice that will be applicable to what they will experience on the hunt. For example, if you are hunting deer, practice aiming at a stationary target, whereas for dove or duck, practice aiming at flying clays. Clean the firearms after the shooting training with the students, teaching the students proper technique. This continues to build confidence for the students. Schedule the firearm training close to the hunting event so that the students remember the training and techniques. Make sure the students leave feeling comfortable with the equipment and invite them to ask questions to ensure they're knowledgeable. Remind them of the excise tax paid on firearms and ammunition and that, as target shooters, they are contributing to wildlife conservation.

IMPLEMENTATION

Mentored Hunt

On the day of the mentored hunt, there will be many moving parts, but it can be the most meaningful aspect of Academics Afield for the students. Expect for this activity to take half a day on a weekend. Provide the option for students to meet at the school to carpool to the hunt location. Carpooling has the added benefit of students getting to know each other during the ride to the property. For an ideal hunt, there will be a 1:1 ratio of participants and coaches. If you are unable to find enough students with hunting experience to mentor the participants, recruit faculty members, staff from state agencies, public volunteers, or other members of the conservation community that want to assist with passing on the tradition.

How you prepare for the hunt will depend on the type of property to be hunted. If it is public land, scouting prior to the event is essential to setting students up at optimal locations. If it is private land, discuss with the landowner where the students should be placed. Including everyone in a group text prior to going afield allows communication throughout the hunt and helps participants stay in touch after the program.

Make sure the students are prepared for the type of hunting they will do (stalking, still hunting, hunting with dogs, etc.) and review this information with them prior to the hunt. Remind them of their Cardinal Safety Rules, expectations of land owners, ethics, and pertinent laws. Physically view their hunting licenses in advance or day of ensuring they are legal. Remind them of their contribution to conservation via their purchase. Speak with the coaches independently prior to mentoring about how best to guide the new hunters. Coaches need to be open to the participants' feelings; need to walk participants through a clean and safe shot; teach how to approach an animal post shot; and be willing to answer questions from the students without judgment. Coaches need to remember non-traditional hunters have different perspectives and to be sensitive to these nuances.

If no one has a successful harvest, discuss that this is part of hunting and mention the positive experiences that did happen. Teaching them to scout the area and look for game sign is still a lesson learned. Sometimes you see interesting signs of animal life that are not related to the target species that can be useful for the next workshop. Be prepared for field dressing harvests at the end of the hunt. Also, have a backup plan in case there are no successful harvests. For example, harvest an animal prior to the hunt and have it available for the field dressing demonstration. Students should be offered an opportunity to participate but do not force them to field dress the animal if they are not comfortable with it yet. Each student will progress at their own rate and have a different level of comfort. Remind them of their contributions to conservation via species population management achieved through legal regulated hunting.

IMPLEMENTATION

Game Meal

A wild game culinary social may sound intimidating but it doesn't have to be fancy. The goals of this meal are to allow students to prepare meat from a harvest, taste wild game, ask questions, tell stories, and above all socialize.

It is very impactful to teach participants how to prepare and cook the meat from a harvest. It is easiest to come prepared with game meat that is already cooked or easily cooked. It is okay if the meat provided is not from the target species for the hunt. Venison burgers are a favorite. They are a quick and easy option that allow students to participate in meal preparation. Some students will not be inclined to eat certain species, so having more than one protein option may make them feel more comfortable. Recall, even if we are not creating hunters, we want to create hunting advocates via positive experiences.

Allow ample time for students to eat and mingle with their peers and coaches. This socializing helps forge the lasting relationships necessary to sustain their hunting participation and foster a collegiate hunting community. This time spent laughing and retelling stories from the field is often the most memorable aspect of the hunt.

This is also a good time to debrief, conduct a Q&A, pass out handouts, and complete any evaluations. Sow the idea that participants this year, may be valuable student coaches next year. A mentor does not have to be an expert, just know more than the student and provide support. Provide them dates of the next workshop, resources available for independent replication, and remind them of their contributions to wildlife conservation.



A photograph of three individuals in camouflage attire standing in a field. On the left, a woman in a camouflage jacket and hat holds a rifle. In the center, a person with their back to the camera wears a blue backpack and a cap. On the right, a man in a camouflage suit and sunglasses also holds a rifle. The background features a row of tall, dried corn stalks on the left and a field of green vegetation in the foreground. The sky is a clear, light blue. A large white title is overlaid across the center of the image.

CHRONICLES OF ACADEMICS AFIELD

CHRONICLES

Introduction

Academics Afield programming can look and function in many different ways between programs. The strongest programs tend to have significant support from non-governmental conservation organizations, state wildlife professionals, and university leadership. This three-legged stool approach allows for flexible student hiring, improved access, and effective recruitment of participants and coaches respectively.

The following examples of 2021 Academics Afield Programs demonstrate the unique stories of different programs, insightful lessons, and key takeaways. Differences came about due to the priorities, opportunities, and challenges of the region and conservation community.

Implementers strived to achieve the following criteria, but adaptations were made as outlined below. Identifying challenges, remaining flexible, and responding to evaluation is key to a program's success.

Fundamentals of Academics Afield

1. Educate new and existing hunters on conservation history and hunting's role in the North American Model of Wildlife Management
2. Implement program evaluations for a data-driven program design
3. Host 3-4 hunting workshops a year with each workshop offering species biology education, firearm training, a one-on-one mentored hunt, and a wild game culinary social
4. Coordinate via a student intern (Academics Afield Coordinator) with peer coaches enhancing immediate social support network
5. Integrate students to support structures and available resources for post program participation



A photograph of the University of Georgia's main archway at night. The archway is a dark, ornate metal structure with three pillars and a central arch. Two bright lights are mounted on the top of the arch. The archway is set on a paved walkway that leads towards a large, white, classical-style building with columns. The scene is surrounded by lush green trees and bushes, and the sky is a deep blue. The text "UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA" is overlaid in white, bold, serif font across the center of the image.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Partners

- University of Georgia (UGA)
- UGA Warnell School of Forestry's Young Alumni Association
- Georgia Wildlife Federation (GWF)
- Georgia DNR - Wildlife Resources Division
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Ducks Unlimited
- Georgia Chapter of Safari Club International

Primary Contact

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UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Program Description

Academics Afield at UGA was the first Academics Afield chapter established in 2019. It is led by an undergraduate student intern with guidance from staff at GWF. The program consists of 3-4 multi-week workshops a year, each focusing on a different species. The short duration workshop model is more flexible than extended programs and allows students to participate when their schedule allows. Interns recruit participants for programming prior to each individual workshop primarily by word of mouth to the natural resource focused students. This rolling recruitment method increases program exposure and ensures anyone who wants to participate has the opportunity to apply. Applications from alumni of previous workshops are given priority over other students to ensure these committed new hunters have continued access to mentoring. Selected participants complete hunter education online at their own pace prior to participation.

The student intern identifies qualified student coaches to provide one-to-one guidance to the students. Student coaches are invited to all trainings, but typically only participate in the mentored hunt. Often student coaches are incentivized by permitting them to hunt alongside or after participants. Venison burgers, campfires, and socializing at the post hunt meal can also be an enticing incentive. If the program cannot identify enough student coaches, GWF and other NGOs assist with coaching. The program provides dove, deer, duck, and sporting clays workshops.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Takeaways

GWF designed the program in partnership with a university that had significant support from college administration. The program has received continued engagement from college faculty. This has led to successful recruitment of participants and coaches.

Academics Afield at UGA secured funding via an endowment established by the UGA Warnell School of Forestry's Young Alumni Association to maintain the program in perpetuity.

Housing the program's firearms took some research and some patience. Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. 925 (a)(1), firearms sold to a state department or agency are exempt from the requirements of the Gun Control Act. A public university is technically a state agency and is able to accept firearms. GWF donated firearms to UGA making them easily available for Academics Afield events.



UGA student intern providing firearm instruction to new duck hunter.



UGA student intern providing firearm instruction to new deer hunter.

A photograph of the North Carolina State University clock tower and a flag. The clock tower is a tall, slender, light-colored stone structure with a clock face near the top. The clock face is circular and features a central figure, possibly a bird or a person, surrounded by numbers 1 through 12. The tower has a decorative top section with columns and arches. To the left of the tower, a flagpole holds the North Carolina state flag, which is blue, white, and red with a yellow emblem. The background is a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Partners

- North Carolina State University (NCSU)
- North Carolina Wildlife Federation (NCWF)
- Wake County Wildlife Club
- NC Wildlife Resources Commission

Primary Contact

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919-833-1923



NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Program Description

Academics Afield launched at NCSU with NCWF. NCSU Faculty actively researches R3 efforts at college institutions making the partnership a great fit. NCWF and NCSU selected a dedicated PhD graduate student to implement the program. They marketed the program to potential participants as a competitive three-semester opportunity. The coordinator advertised the opportunity via list serves within all colleges and accepted students with varying degrees of study. The program held an info meeting, selected student participants for the year's cohort, and held their first firearm training workshop during spring 2021. This ensured students were committed and prepared to participate in the first fall hunt. By maintaining the same student participants for a longer period of time, the program developed a strong sense of community within the cohort and between the students and coaches.

The program established an enduring partnership with the local Wake County Wildlife Club, which has a vested interest in conservation, education, and preparing future hunters. The club provided hunter education courses, hosted firearm training events, and mentored hunt coaches. Students were able to access this support network even after completion of the program. The partnership with the Wake County Wildlife Club was essential in providing liability coverage for the range events and acquiring coaches for the program. This was found to be a beneficial model for future expansion of the Academics Afield program because there are numerous similar Wildlife Clubs across North Carolina.

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Takeaways

The program recruited a cohort of committed students for year-long participation to establish a strong community and increase confidence in participants. Participation waned throughout the year; however, this was found to be beneficial as the remaining students were able to get more practice and one-on-one guidance.

Expanding NCWF's liability coverage to include learn-to-hunt programming was not achievable. The program had to work with partners to provide insurance for events. They were able to obtain short-term limited policy coverage for a hunt, but the cost was not sustainable.

Identifying student coaches was challenging. Thankfully a few very experienced student coaches were retained and they participated in every event of the workshops. Additional support came from Hunter Education Instructors. They composed a majority of the coaching volunteers in the program and brought wealth of knowledge.



NCSU Academics Afield students and coaches socializing before a duck hunt.



NCSU student intern coaching a new duck hunter.

A large, multi-story red brick building with a prominent central clock tower. The tower has a white clock face and a dark, pointed roof. The building features numerous windows with white frames and a central arched entrance. In the foreground, there is a paved walkway, a small landscaped area with green bushes, and a statue on a pedestal to the right. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

Partners

- Clemson University
- South Carolina Wildlife Federation (SCWF)
- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR)
- Upstate Coon/Squirrel
- South Carolina Wildlife Partnership Council
- National Wild Turkey Federation

Primary Contact

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CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

Program Description

Academics Afield at Clemson University launched with SCWF. Clemson University Faculty had implemented R3 workshops previously making the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Science welcoming environs for a reoccurring learn to hunt program. SCWF was encouraged to work with the Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society (TWS) to identify participants, coaches, and interns. Students in professional organizations such as TWS tend to be ambitious and promising candidates for the Academics Afield Coordinator internship.

The program benefited from having their interns in student organizations to aid in marketing efforts. Student coaches and participants were recruited from TWS for semester long involvement. Most of these students were studying natural resources. Academics Afield at Clemson also partnered with the Student TWS Chapter on their Annual Buzzard Banquet- an event at the end of the academic year celebrating wild game. This event strengthened and expanded the students' hunting relationships and increased their comfort with wild game foods.

SCWF provided a variety of opportunities to the program via their strong partnerships with many other wildlife conservation organizations. SCDNR hosted an in-person hunter education seminar and hunts on special use property for participants.

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

Takeaways

Academics Afield at Clemson partnered with multiple entities to provide a variety of opportunities including in-person hunter education, firearm training, hog, deer, and squirrel hunting.

The program provided students hunting experiences on both public and private land. Hunting public land enables easier student replication, but can sometimes reduce harvest opportunity.

SCWF had to develop a strategy for scheduling events that considered the potential time conflicts students face. The program had to consult academic schedules, syllabi, sports calendars, and TWS conference dates when planning out their workshops.



Clemson students squirrel hunting.



Clemson students gaining skills and knowledge from local Game Wardens.



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

KNOXVILLE

UT KNOXVILLE

Partners

- University of Tennessee Knoxville (UT Knoxville)
- Tennessee Wildlife Federation (TWF)
- Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA)
- Delta Waterfowl, Ducks Unlimited

Primary Contact

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615-925-9182



UT KNOXVILLE

Program Description

Academics Afield at UT Knoxville launched with TWF approaching UT Knoxville with the opportunity to establish a college learn-to-hunt program. TWF and their Hunt and Fish Hunt Academy already had multiple tools in their toolkit to lead a program such as Academics Afield successfully. They recruited a large cohort of 15 students. Participation waned when a new semester started because student's schedules changed and student coaches' priorities changed.

Their first workshop in Fall of 2021 was firearm focused. This was designed to be a solid foundation for the rest of the program. Students then experienced classroom education and a mentored hunt per species. Academics Afield at UT Knoxville students learned squirrel, dove, deer, waterfowl, and rabbit. In hindsight, the program would have preferred to include more shooting practice throughout the duration of the program both so students felt more prepared but also to emphasize how the excise tax on firearms and ammunition is related to conservation.

The mentored hunts were successful at teaching students biology and strategy; immersing students in nature; and allowing them to experience a hunt regardless of if there was a harvest at the end. Most of their hunts did not lead to harvests, thus regular culinary socials were not achieved. Programs can anticipate the possibility of not taking a harvest by bringing game meat to the event. Even if it is not the same species, the opportunity to try wild meat is influential to an individual's development as a hunter. This planning effort can extend to provide dressing and butchering learning opportunities as well.

UT KNOXVILLE

Takeaways

The TWF's Hunt and Fish Academy has a great partnership with the TWRA. By identifying common goals and identifying ways to help each other, the two organizations accomplish more together than they could individually.

By partnering with other groups on campus, such as Delta Waterfowl and Ducks Unlimited, the program was able to provide more experiences for students.

TWF, TWRA, and Ducks Unlimited pooled resources to continue funding Academics Afield at UT Knoxville and expand the program to other universities in the state.



UT Knoxville students after a successful dove hunt.



UT Knoxville students dove hunting.

BRAND GUIDELINES



LOGO VARIATIONS

Several Academics Afield logo variations are available to suit many contexts.



White on Translucent Academics
Afield Brown



White Transparent



Gray Transparent



Gray on White Backer

LOGO USAGE



Maintain a margin of 1/8 logo height.



DO NOT use on distracting backgrounds.



DO NOT stretch or skew.



DO NOT rotate.

TYPOGRAPHY & COLOR

H1: CAMBRIA BOLD, UPPER CASE, Academics Afield BROWN, 30pt min.

H2: Roboto Bold, Academics Afield Gray, 20pt min. (for presentations)

Body Text 1: Roboto Regular, Academics Afield Gray, 18pt min. (for presentations)

H3: Roboto Bold, Academics Afield Gray, 14pt (for documents)

Body Text 2: Roboto Regular, Academics Afield Gray, 12pt (for documents)

Footer 1: Roboto Regular, Academics Afield Brown, 12pt



Academics Afield Brown
RGB: 123/92/37
CMYK: 42/56/100/29
#7b5c25



Academics Afield Grey
RGB: 88/89/91
CMYK: 0/0/0/80
#58595b

IMAGERY

Content

Use only tasteful photos. Choose photos that convey the whole hunting experience from the field to the table (not just the kill).

Resolution

Source high resolution photos.

- 72ppi min. for screen use
- 300dpi min. for print applications

Color Consistency

When working with images from diverse sources maintaining color consistency can be a challenge. When appropriate, consider using a 15-75% opacity Academics Afield Brown filter on your images.



Unfiltered Pair



Filtered Pair

A photograph of two people standing in a field of tall, thin grasses or reeds. The scene is captured during the "golden hour" of sunset, with a warm, orange glow. The person on the left is a woman with her hair in a bun, looking towards the right. The person on the right is wearing a dark baseball cap and also looking towards the right. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape under a hazy sky.

LEARN MORE

To retrieve "R3 For College Students: A Practitioner's Guide & Academics Afield Toolkit" in its entirety, visit gwf.org/r3toolkit.