

Student Retention Council

2025-2026



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About the SRC

Alabama's leaders are dedicated to investing in the State's future. As we look towards the next century it is more important than ever that we recruit and retain our college graduates. At the Higher Education Partnership, we believe this is critically important as we propel Alabama into the knowledge-based economy of tomorrow.

As lawmakers considered ways to encourage the best and brightest college graduates to consider Alabama as a career destination, early surveys from the state's Retain Alabama initiative showed opportunities for growth in categories across the spectrum. While the data was compelling, it became apparent that students needed to be more than just numbers in a report – they needed to have a voice at the table.

External market research showed that traditional students in the Generation-Z category are digital media natives, who are less responsive to traditional advertising. Instead, they are persuaded by a perception of authenticity and connection.

Recognizing that the strongest voice to reach students is their peers, the Student Retention Council aims to bridge the gap between community leaders, hoping to recruit young professionals and the future young professionals themselves.

The Higher Education Partnership was honored to receive legislative support to host the Student Retention Council, beginning in Fall 2022. The Partnership serves as the advocacy voice for Alabama's 14 public universities and is uniquely positioned for this project to build onto existing grassroots networks of students, administrators, faculty and alumni advocates across the state.

Student Retention Council members were appointed by the University Presidents for their work ethic, leadership quality, and



ability to represent the student voice. The SRC members come from a diverse cross section of student voices – representing a wide variety of majors, hometowns and campus interests.

Throughout the course of the 2025 – 2026 school year, SRC members participated in a fast-paced, hands-on instructional course in which they researched and designed projects that will help to encourage their peers to consider Alabama as a top career destination.

The Higher Education Partnership would like to thank the following groups for sharing their time to support the students throughout this project: the University Presidents' Council, the League of Municipalities, Innovate Alabama, the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, Senator Arthur Orr, Senator Donnie Chesteen, Senator Andrew Jones, the staff at the Town of Pike Road, Greg Clark of the Central Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission Regional Planning Commission, Dr. Rhea Ingram at Leadership Montgomery, Director Greg Reed, Franklin Johnson and Department of Workforce team, Director Bill Poole, Asst. Director Susan Wilhelm and Office of Finance Team, and the Alabama Department of Tourism..

Executive Summary

The Student Retention Council (SRC), developed by the Higher Education Partnership in 2022, serves as a platform aimed at empowering Alabama's college students to voice their perspectives on remaining in-state following graduation. In accordance with this mandate, the Chancellor or President of each of the fourteen public universities appointed student representatives to serve on the SRC for the current academic year. Through the Innovate Alabama's "Innovative Entity" designation, the Student Retention Council also expanded the roles of the SRC to include leadership positions that would build on targeted messaging to strategically reach even more perspectives. This initiative ensures that voices from across the

state are comprehensively represented, enabling meaningful dialogue on matters that shape the future of Alabama's college students.

The SRC is structured to fulfill two essential objectives: first, to provide Alabama college students with a platform to express their concerns and opinions, and second, to promote awareness among emerging professionals and communities of the countless career and lifestyle opportunities available within Alabama.

Statistical data underscores the importance of this endeavor: while approximately one-third of out-of-state college students and three-fourths of in-state students remain in Alabama after graduating college, the SRC acknowledges the potential to improve these retention rates. Many students are unaware of the vast opportunities Alabama offers, including its status as having the second lowest cost of living in the nation, a robust job market with outstanding employers, and 21 state parks that contribute to an exceptional quality of life.

During the past year, student representatives and leaders from Alabama's public universities have collaborated to advance the Council's mission by engaging their peers through targeted initiatives. Building on the groundwork established by the first three SRC cohorts, the fourth cohort developed four key projects to highlight Alabama's assets. This report encapsulates the collaborative activities and achievements of the fourth cohort of Student Retention Council representatives in their continued pursuit of fostering student retention and community engagement across Alabama.





The Student Retention Council, founded by the Higher Education Partnership in 2022, seeks to give Alabama's college students a platform to voice their perspectives in relation to remaining in-state following their college graduation. Students serving on the SRC educate their peers about Alabama's strengths and bring key observations about opportunities back to community leaders.



WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

In Spring 2026, the fourth cohort of the SRC is concluding their work. Previous cohorts explored student priorities around post-graduate destinations and developed ideas to emphasize Alabama's opportunities. They delivered informational presentations to peer groups across the campuses, addressing the areas where they identified gaps in perception of Alabama's key strengths. Cohort 4 continued on campus outreach and developed community projects that could be implemented to raise appeal to young professionals.

More Than
5,500
Student
conversations

76
Student Retention
Council Members
Engaged

30+
Community Partners
Reached

Thanks to the SRC Presentation, I learned:

"...Alabama has great job opportunities and a low cost of living."
 "...The amount of diversity as well as the technological and business opportunities."
 "...Alabama is growing economically, and is very culturally diverse."
 "...There are many things to do in Alabama. I've always thought that there wasn't much to do in Alabama- probably because I'm not from here, but I am interested!"

-Audience Survey Responses

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING POST-GRAD DECISIONS



CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Students expressed a desire to learn more about career opportunities in non-urban areas of the state. They also focused on perceived gaps in availability of competitive, knowledge-based jobs.



QUALITY OF LIFE

Students value quality of life, though different for each individual, they highlighted activity based entertainment - from live music to trivia or bowling - students are looking for local outlets.



COST OF LIVING

Cost of living was ranked as their 3rd most influential factor, though many had little awareness that Alabama had a low cost of living. SRC presentations made many aware of how far their dollar could go!



BELONGING

Students emphasize a desire to quickly find belonging in their new home - through service and religious groups, as well as organized activities like run clubs

Consider Alabama - Campus Presentations

SRC Members identified gaps in students' knowledge of Alabama's strengths and opportunities. They developed a persuasive presentation informing their peers about the many great assets Alabama has to offer. To date, they have directly reached **more than 5,500** students on campus and encouraged them to consider Alabama a career destination.



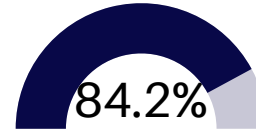
Wide Variety Of Students Reached -

The SRC presented to a wide range of audiences aiming to reach a diverse set of majors and interests including groups from SGA to Greek Life, Engineering to Business to Social Work majors, and beyond.

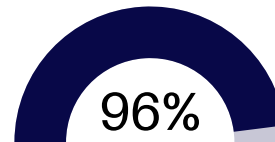


Impact on Perception -

In surveys, many students responded that the SRC presentation encouraged them to think critically about what they were truly looking for in a post-grad destination and to be more aware of strengths in their own backyard.



Said the SRC presentation increased their interest in staying in Alabama.



Said the SRC presentation opened their eyes to a new strength of Alabama that they didn't know about before.

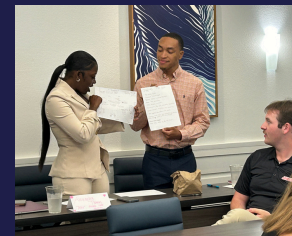


Said Career Opportunities were their primary motivation for post-graduate relocation.

Community Highlights

Previous cohorts identified Quality of Life elements that students may look for in a community. After researching popular post graduate destinations and considering Alabama's assets, Cohort 3 developed key project areas that could be implemented in partnership with **suburban and rural** communities to raise awareness and appeal amongst young professionals. Cohort 4 developed these projects focused on the following topics: identifying career and internship opportunities beyond big cities, developing a pipeline for retention through service and civic groups, strategically utilizing public spaces, and raising awareness of community events to engage students and young professionals.

Additional Projects



SRC students assisted the Alabama Commission on Higher Education's Retain Alabama initiative by completing a peer review of job search databases.

Situational Analysis

I. Introduction

The Higher Education Partnership's Alabama Student Retention Council (SRC) is a collaborative effort among various stakeholders in the state of Alabama, including government agencies, educational institutions, and businesses. The SRC's mission is to address the challenge of retaining Alabama's college graduates and encouraging them to work in the state after they graduate. The SRC recognizes that retaining talent is essential for the long-term economic growth and prosperity of Alabama, and it aims to develop and implement strategies to support this goal. Through its work, the SRC seeks to foster a culture of innovation, collaboration, and engagement that will benefit both graduates and the broader community. It aims to provide a comprehensive summary of existing research, impressions, and anecdotal experiences related to student retention in Alabama. This has been done by analyzing the findings and recommendations of key reports from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) and Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA). Additionally, by reviewing existing programs and incorporating the student voice, the SRC has sought to gain a holistic understanding of the current situation and the challenges that need to be addressed. This



situational analysis aims to build a persuasive case for the plan of work proposed by the Higher Education Partnership's Alabama Student Retention Council (SRC). This analysis will demonstrate how the SRC addresses the challenges identified in the existing research and experiences.

Ultimately, the goal of this situational analysis is to provide a clear, evidence-based case for why the SRC's plan of work is the best option to address the problem statement of retaining Alabama's college graduates to work in the state after they graduate.

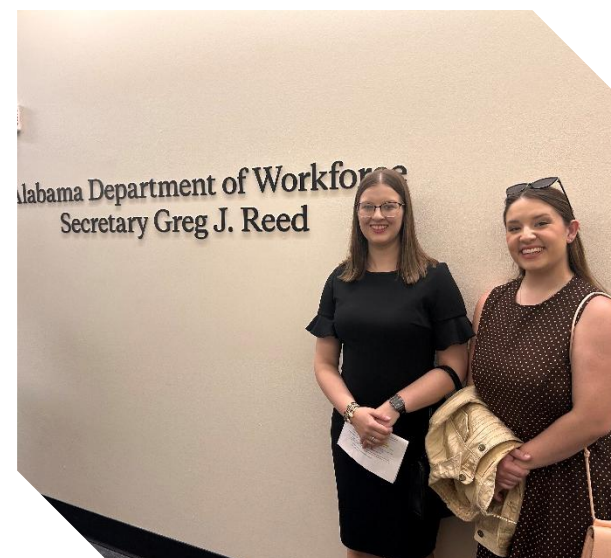
II. Review and Observations of Key Data in ACHE and EDPA Report

The ACHE report, "*The Economic Impact of Alabama's Public Universities and Colleges*,"



highlights the importance of higher education in Alabama's economy and identifies several factors that contribute to student retention, such as affordability, accessibility, and student support services. The report recommends increasing funding for need-based financial aid and expanding programs such as dual enrollment for universities and distance learning to increase access to higher education. Further, ACHE's ongoing work on the "*Retain Alabama Survey*" and "*The Education Employment Outcomes Report*" shed light on demographic data related to those who choose to stay in Alabama or choose to leave after graduation.

The EDPA report, "*Retain Alabama: A Comprehensive Strategy to Improve Alabama's College Attainment Rates*," identifies several challenges to student retention in Alabama, including high student debt and limited job opportunities. The report recommends expanding internship and apprenticeship opportunities to provide students with real-world experience and skills, as well as the experience of working in Alabama.



Overall, both reports highlight the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders, including government, education, and industry, in addressing the issue of student retention in Alabama. Additionally, both reports emphasize the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to improving student retention, encompassing factors such as affordability, quality of life, social and political factors and career opportunities.

One potential weakness is that the reports may not fully account for the diverse needs and experiences of students from different backgrounds and communities. While the reports touch on issues such as affordability and accessibility, they may not fully address the unique challenges faced by students from low-income or marginalized communities. Further, as existing reports aim to centralize conclusions, unique value propositions and qualitative impressions from each campus are lost in the broader picture. Specificity in addressing each institutional demographic could allow for more targeted strategies. It is our belief that the unique makeup of the Student Retention Council fills some of these gaps by bringing

together perspectives from each university.



The SRC is Uniquely Positioned to Reach Gen -Z

The Student Retention Council is uniquely positioned for success, because its primary objective is to provide Alabama's college students a platform to make the changes they need to remain in-state following their college graduations.

Generation-Z supplements traditional news sources and celebrities with social media and often looks up to their peers from their own campuses more than they do traditionally prominent public figures. In line with this, the SRC is composed of student leaders from each of Alabama's 4-year public universities. The SRC was structured with the knowledge that today's college students are much more likely to collaborate with their peers than with those who they find less relatable.

Moreover, enlisting the help of student leaders all over the state allows a deeper connection to be formed between the mission of the SRC and Alabama's college students, who we're working tirelessly to retain. In charging student leaders from each campus to engage in conversations, collect feedback, and connect with communities, a deeper sense of buy-in is created. In this way, the design of the SRC ensures every college student in Alabama knows they have a platform to utilize their voice.



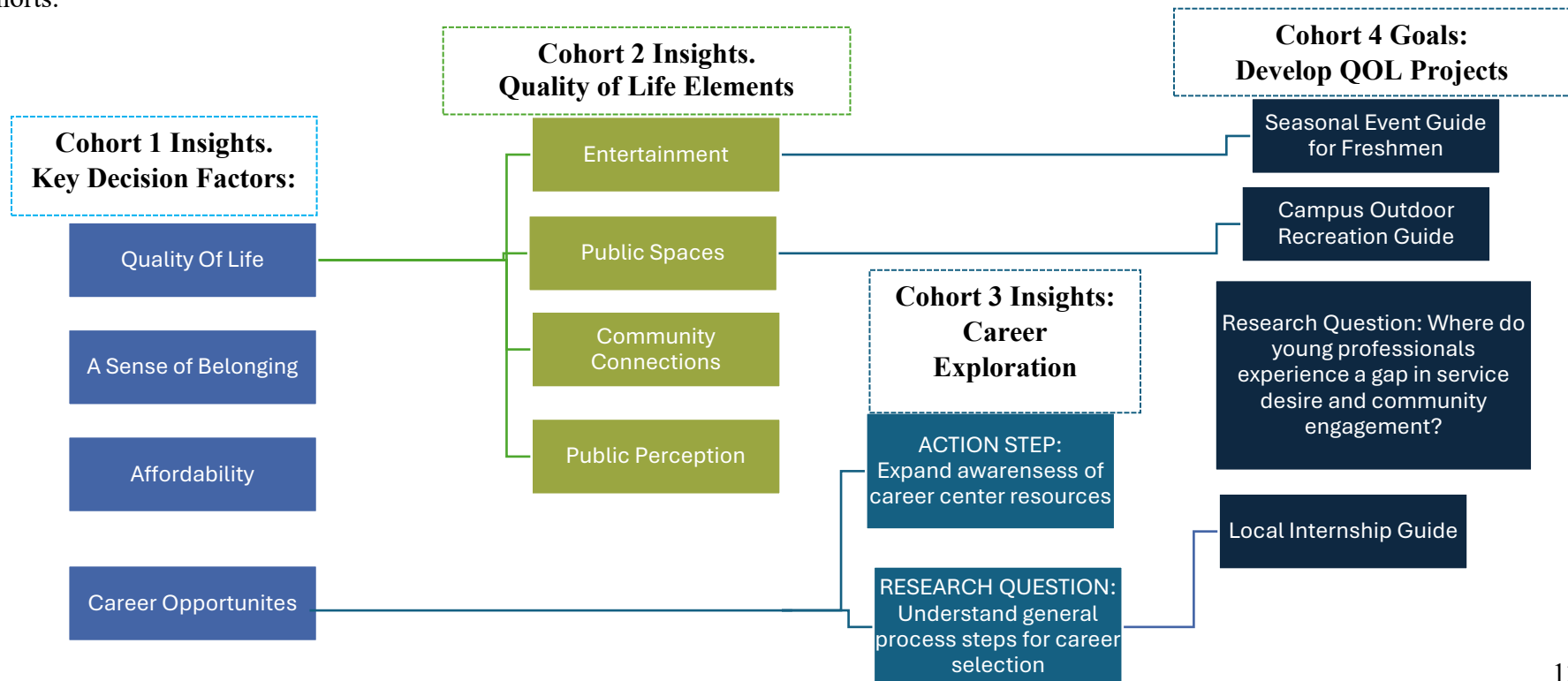
Background

Cohort I of the SRC worked to develop a survey of their peers to identify key areas of concern when students considered their future career destination. Based on their survey, they identified 4 key areas of interest: quality of life, career opportunities, a sense of belonging, and affordability. Competitive career opportunities were the largest driver of interest across the board. They worked to create an informative presentation that they shared with their peers highlighting Alabama's strengths and resources in these four areas.

Cohort II built on these concepts by expanding their survey to interview community leaders working to recruit and retain young professionals. From these discussions, they determined a need to explore a more concrete definition of "quality of life." They identified the following elements of quality of life as opportunities for development: public perception, community connections, entertainment, and public spaces.

Cohort III combined ideas from both previous groups. First, they worked to identify gaps in knowledge of career opportunities and to better understand the career landscape in Alabama by surveying career centers on campus and creating an in-depth, qualitative profile of job seekers. Second, they took a focused approach to many of the factors listed to create community project ideas that could be implemented through partnerships with the SRC.

Cohort IV further explored quality of life, focusing on developing an action project for each of the four key areas identified by previous cohorts.



Insights that Inform the SRC

Previous insights of the SRC highlighted 4 key areas of “quality of life” that were important to college graduates when choosing their future career destination. In Cohort IV, these categories were addressed with the development of pilot projects that target specific awareness points related to quality of life. The four quality of life areas explored included the following:



Entertainment



Outdoor
Recreation



Community
Connections

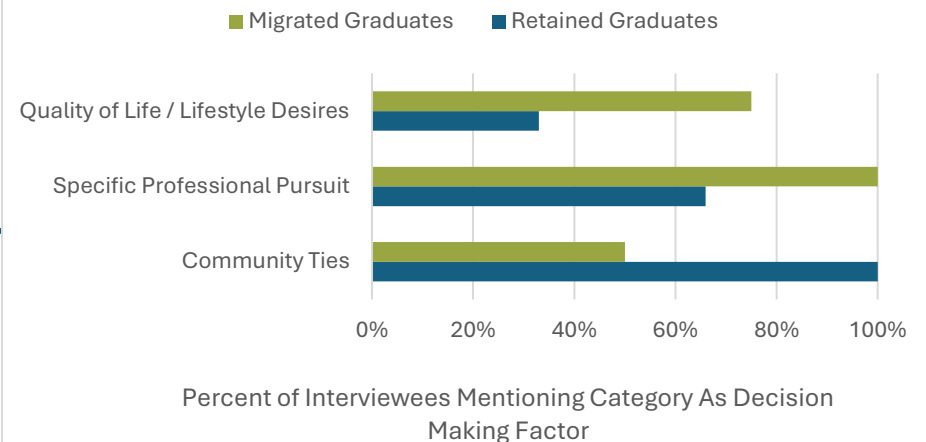


Public
Perception

Of course, career opportunities remain a key factor contributing to post-graduation decisions. Previous cohorts learned that most students who left the state cited a specific career opportunity as a primary motivation for relocation.

“Family and familiarity drive successful retention, while professional and lifestyle aspirations drive migration.”

Factors Affecting Post-Graduate Destination
Importance to Migrated vs. Retained
Individuals



Outdoor Recreation – A Campus Guide to Get Outdoors

In October, the SRC committee met with Dr. Tim Lindblom from the Sweet Trails Alabama foundation. From their conversation, they learned about the wide variety of opportunities students have for outdoor recreation and reflected on possibilities for growth. One key insight was that students are not aware of the outdoor recreation activities near to their campus. Though they may be familiar with Alabama's biodiversity broadly speaking, many are only aware of major trails, beaches, or attractions, (high name recognition opportunities). Additionally, the SRC found that there was significant social media already highlighting these areas, though it was not unified, nor targeted specifically at Gen-Z. Students saw an opportunity to tailor informational documents, narrowing the scope and delivering effectively to incoming college students.

OUTDOOR RECREATION
Explore • Recharge • Belong

Alabama A&M University • Huntsville, Alabama



Hays Nature Preserve
Nature Preserve & Trails

- Over 500 acres of protected wetlands and forest
- Walking trails, boardwalks, and wildlife viewing
- Quiet, immersive nature escape popular with students



Madison County Nature Trail
Nature Trail • Short drive • Free

- 1.5-mile loop around Sky Lake with side trails
- Covered bridge, log cabin, and picnic pavilion
- Quiet wildlife sanctuary ideal for relaxing or walking



Monte Sano State Park
State Park • 10-20 min drive

- Over 2,100 acres with hiking and biking trails
- Scenic overlooks and historic features
- Camping, cabins, and immersive nature experiences

Curated by the Alabama Student Retention Council

OUTDOOR RECREATION
Explore • Recharge • Belong

University of Alabama at Birmingham • Birmingham, Alabama



The Birmingham Zoo
Zoo • 8 min

- Affordable admission
- Events and outdoor exhibits
- Easy access from campus



Oak Mountain State Park
State Park • 17 min

- Hiking, biking, beaches, and camping
- Wide range of recreation options
- Largest state park in Alabama



Vulcan Park and Museum
Park & Museum • 5 min

- Scenic overlooks of Birmingham
- Open green spaces
- Historic landmark experience

Curated by the Alabama Student Retention Council

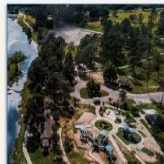
OUTDOOR RECREATION
Explore • Recharge • Belong

University of South Alabama • Mobile, Alabama



Glenn Sebastian Nature Trail
Nature Trail • On Campus • Free

- 3+ miles of wooded trails
- Great between-class escape
- Pet-friendly



Langan Park (aka Municipal Park)
Public Park • 10 min • Free

- Large green space with lake and trails
- Golf course and tennis center
- Near botanical gardens



Mobile Botanical Gardens
Botanical Garden • Short drive • Free

- 100 acres of gardens and pine forest
- Ideal for studying or quiet walks
- Peaceful nature setting

Curated by the Alabama Student Retention Council

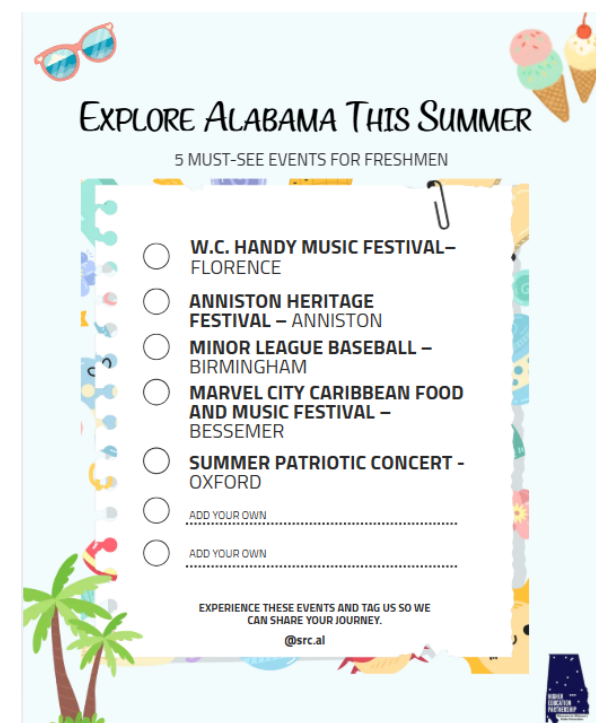
Events and Entertainment – Alabama by Season

This strategy is built around creating a unique position for SRC as a connector between young adults and Alabama's events and experiences. Rather than replicating existing event calendars, this initiative focuses on delivering a curated, student-centered resource specifically designed for 18 to 25-year-olds. The strategy differentiates itself through simplicity and relevance. Instead of overwhelming users with information, it highlights a select number of high-impact events that are easy for students and young professionals to discover and attend.

In Year 1, the focus is on a freshman pilot to establish the model. This reflects a key trade-off: prioritizing a specific, accessible audience over broad but less effective reach. During this phase, the emphasis is on building a comprehensive events list, creating seasonal guides, and developing a clear, reusable format.

In Year 2, the strategy expands to serve a wider audience, including upperclassmen and young professionals. This growth is supported by partnerships with universities, Chambers of Commerce, and local organizations, which contribute content and help distribute the resource.

The strength of this strategy lies in fit. Orientation guides introduce the resource, monthly event highlights maintain engagement, and partnerships ensure ongoing relevance and reach. Together, these elements create a cohesive and scalable system. Full write up and calendar available in Appendix B.



A Deeper Understanding of Community Connections

Previous cohorts identified community connections as a major priority for students choosing a place to live. Currently, students with strong family ties were most likely to stay in the state. Others cited their religious community, friend group or likeminded civic communities as positive reasons to stay in Alabama. Additionally, students shared that opportunities to serve, and to lead in the community were incredibly important in their future choices. Most students engage in service during their time in university and want to continue giving back. On the flip, some recent graduates told us they looked to leave Alabama because they didn't feel they would be accepted, worried they wouldn't be able to find likeminded communities, or wanted a better pipeline for mentorship.

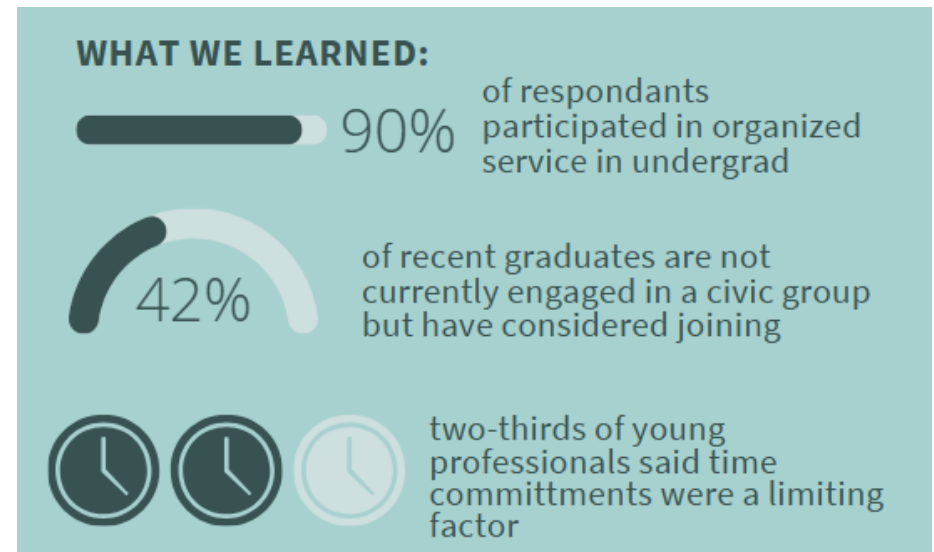
This final idea signifies a key opportunity to build better awareness of all that Alabama has to offer in the community space. A state known for its "southern hospitality," we have no shortage of ways to engage in community efforts. So, Cohort IV reached out to Leadership Alabama, for a deeper look at where the discrepancy in understanding might be found.

While some current students were unaware of their opportunities to engage, community civic organizations like Rotary, Kiwanis, and others, shared that they have had a challenge bringing a new generation into their meetings. We wanted to take a deeper dive into what was creating this gap, so we completed a survey of young professionals to explore ideas about civic organizations. This provided some key insights into opportunities for growth for future cohorts.

Our suggestions? Civic groups should build momentum by offering short-term or project specific entry options for young professionals to get a taste of what it's like to work with this specific groups.

Additionally, groups can develop stronger pipelines through personal outreach and mentoring to collegiate service groups. While many Civic Groups do have collegiate branches, students connections could benefit from deeper hands-on mentoring, linking them to career opportunities and passion areas that will ultimately encourage them to stay local after graduation.

A full detailed report of our survey results is available in Appendix C.



Digital Media as an Avenue for Positive Public Perception

As digital natives, Gen-Z students and young adults are resistant to traditional advertising efforts, but they're not immune to the "cool factor." Areas that see high positive migration often have an appealing digital footprint for Gen-Z, with some young professionals choosing to relocate because they like the idea of a specific location purely from the outside perception. Early SRC research shows that this "public perception" is a key factor of quality of life for some young professionals, with outside impressions affecting how they feel about the place they live.

Additionally, college students and young professionals both use social media as a primary source for information. It's the first place they check for upcoming events, news, and reviews. The SRC is working to harness this with a growing digital presence, aiming to be a hub for information about Alabama's best assets, specifically targeting current college students. Ultimately, our vision for the social platform is to show students what life can look like after graduation and highlight resources to stay connected early in their collegiate career. We will do this by reposting other platforms with positive content and creating peer-to-peer content of our own.

Cohort IV created the first comprehensive social media strategy for the SRC. Future cohorts will work to develop additional content and expand the reach to target more incoming students. A full social media strategy can be found in Appendix D.



Content Pillars

Civic Engagement

- Policy-to-campus impact breakdowns
- Student civic participation highlights
- "What this means for you" explainers
- How-to engagement guides

Outdoor & Belonging

- Weekend rec suggestions
- Mental health + environment posts
- Campus event recaps
- Student life features

Workforce Development

- Internship spotlights
- Alabama-based employer highlights
- Alumni working in-state

Events

- Countdown graphics
- Recap reels
- Volunteer spotlights
- Cross-campus collaborations

Workforce Development – Guide to Local Internships

Results of Cohort III demonstrated that internships were the pivotal action point for recruiting and retaining college graduates. While there are internships available in Alabama, students reflected on the visibility and competitiveness of out-of-state internships.

Similarly, in Cohort II, communities reflected on their difficulty connecting with students or crafting an internship that provided ample opportunities.

Cohort IV recognized this key opportunity to increase student awareness of current internship opportunities and provide resources to communities who want to increase their capacity to host internships.

Ultimately, this team created a dual-purpose guide: one side for students who are seeking internships with tips and tricks to effectively find a local placement; the other for communities with outlines of possibilities that would excite student intern participants. The full guide is included in Appendix E.

Students also highlighted resources that already exist through on-campus career centers in their presentations to more than 1,000 peers.

Future directions for this project could include documenting Alabama internships in one central location for easy access or suggested searches on internal job platforms like Handshake or LinkedIn, creating a database that highlights student to student testimonials of their positive experience at a local internship, and highlighting internships on social media.



Leaky Pipeline Chart demonstrating opportunities for increased visibility and connection, created and explained by Cohort III. Find more details at www.higheredpartners.org/src.



Campus Highlight: Strengths in Career Services

In Cohort III, Students across campuses met with their campus Career Centers to learn more about the ways universities equip their graduates to enter the workforce. We learned that, while Campus Career centers provide rich resources to connect students to their future pathways, they are often under utilized in the job search. Most career centers provide hands-on resources like resume review, mock interviews, cover letter assistance, and even career closets to help students dress professionally when entering the workforce. Additionally, they have the capacity to work with students to identify companies and roles of interest. From virtual search sites like LinkedIn, Handshake, and beyond to in-person career fairs and networking opportunities, the career centers build bridges for students to pursue meaningful internships, fellowships, and careers.

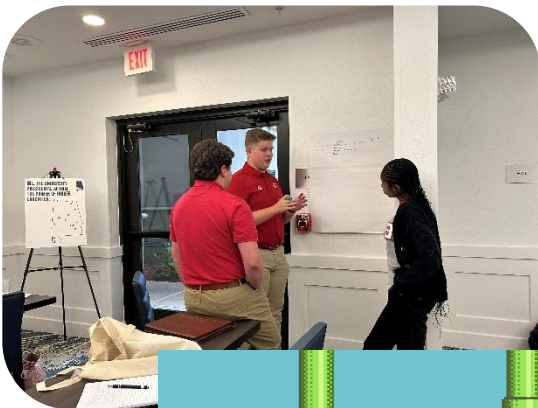
Most career centers provided options for students to filter their job opportunities down to highlight roles in Alabama. While the career centers at every campus successfully amalgamate a wealth of opportunities across the U.S., it is up to the student to select the ones most relevant to them. In this area, the Student Retention Council saw an opportunity to increase interaction in making students aware of the great assets that Alabama has to offer, so that they look first to career opportunities in the state!

Reaching Campus

Cohort I reached campus through in-person presentations. In Cohort II, the Student Retention Council worked to refine this approach to highlighting the strengths and opportunities to put them in line with students' key decision factors. Cohort II delivered one-page flyers to leave with students highlighting these key resources. Cohort III built on these strategies to create interactive presentations that highlighted not only strengths and assets of Alabama, but also key resources (like the Career Centers) that students could use to enrich their search for a post-graduate destination. In addition to the resources identified, Cohort IV used the resources they had developed to create additional possibilities for students to connect during their presentations.

SRC members raised awareness of other external programming as well, including FUEL Alabama and Innovate Alabama programs. Before presentations, the majority of students reported having no knowledge of these programs, so our work with campus presentations serves as a critical awareness point for the growth of those programs.

Presentations reached a range of participants across a variety of age groups, majors, and influence circles, so this direct message was just the beginning of a larger conversation that could be echoed across campus. Students targeted leadership groups like the Student Government Association, Honors College, University/Department Specific Ambassadors and Social groups like Greek life, mentoring programs, leadership courses and more. In all, SRC members visited presented to more than 1,000 peers directly this year, with additional reach on social media and beyond.



The SRC's Instagram platform is designed to target current college students with engaging content ideas – from sharing behind the scenes insight into the SRC's work, to highlighting exciting events in Alabama, and reposting career and internship opportunities. In the future, the SRC plans to continue growing this digital reach.



Detailed reports from each campus found in Appendix F.

Future Directions

Insights from this year demonstrate the need for a peer-to-peer group representing the student voice in conversations around recruiting and retaining college graduates. The unique position of the Student Retention Council provides a well-rounded reach across the state, as well as an opportunity to continue building a network of leaders who spread the message that Alabama should be considered a top career destination for college graduates.

Looking ahead, the Student Retention Council aims to continue outreach on campus and into communities, bridging the gap between job providers and the next generation of talent. The SRC will also work to further expand partnerships with key groups that acutely address talent attraction, like Chambers of Commerce. The SRC would like to build on the ideas created by this year's Statewide leadership team to develop pilot projects that could be aimed at students.

The Student Retention Council will also work to expand their work on campus by creating new assets for student access. One pilot project for next year's cohort will be to begin the development of a student-to-student database of internship



opportunities. Through our conversations, we learned that a student's internship experience provides an important foundational moment for their final career selection, but that many students have low awareness of competitive internship opportunities in Alabama. Inversely, communications with community and business leaders demonstrated that they had a hard time reaching students with their available positions – it seemed they got lost in the information overload of large databases. The goal of the SRC would be to create a pilot project that emphasized peer-to-peer networking and internship recommendations, by formalizing the word-of-mouth pipeline that students already rely on. The SRC would spread the word amongst our student networks to ask them to submit the title and a brief overview of any internships they had served before. They could also include tags with details about their experiences in the role. At the same time, an SRC member would work with our community partners to gather more information about available roles in their areas – specifically targeting small to midsize communities to raise awareness about roles that might not have previously hosted traditional internships.



Additionally, the SRC would like to work with more partners like the Outdoor Recreation Council or Trails Society on projects that might raise awareness about Alabama's beautiful outdoor landscape. The goal of the SRC would be to supplement the work being done by Innovate Alabama and others by connecting more students to trails or potentially working on either volunteer projects or marketing/raising awareness.

Another partner the SRC would like to engage is civic and leadership groups across the state. As the team explored pipelines for service and community leadership, it was evident that civic groups were eager to expand their base to include young professionals, and that college students relied on mentorship and networking opportunities like those in civic groups. In the upcoming year, the SRC will work to connect with civic or leadership groups and begin to develop a pilot project that would create a feeder system linking college students to some of their local organizations/

Finally, the SRC plans to continue to expand our social media presence. With awareness of the great work done by pages like BhamNow, Visit Alabama, our research shows that current students respond more strongly to content from people in their same age group. It is our goal to continue to develop the Student Retention Council Instagram to highlight small to mid-size communities, as well as major well-known events across the state. Partnering with groups like the Alabama League of Municipalities and their campaign "Live Locally" could provide a strong background for the Student Retention Council to add a new audience to this messaging, promoting the quality of life opportunities across the state.



Conclusion

The 2024 – 2025 Student Retention Council accomplished a strong move forward as they grew the reach of the message to their peers: “Consider Alabama as your career destination.” This cohort’s depth of research and creative brainstorming creates a pivotal opportunity for growth as the SRC looks to the future. The SRC is encouraged by the results achieved in the last four years, and optimistic that our work will build the sentiment for young professionals that Alabama is their prime destination for sweet home. The Higher Education Partnership is proud to continue hosting the Student Retention Council. Graduates from Alabama’s 14 public universities are shaping the future. Engaging student voices to build opportunities for those graduates to call Alabama home is just one way these bright students

More information:

www.higheredpartners.org/src

Instagram: @src.al



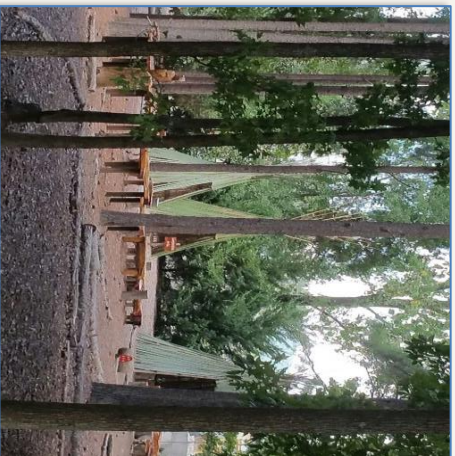
Appendix

Appendix A: Outdoor Recreation by Campus

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Explore • Recharge • Belong

Alabama A&M University • Huntsville, Alabama



Hays Nature Preserve

Nature Preserve & Trails

- Over 500 acres of protected wetlands and forest
- Walking trails, boardwalks, and wildlife viewing
- Quiet, immersive nature escape popular with students



Madison County Nature Trail

Nature Trail • Short drive • Free

- 1.5-mile loop around Sky Lake with side trails
- Covered bridge, log cabin, and picnic pavilion
- Quiet wildlife sanctuary ideal for relaxing or walking



Monte Sano State Park

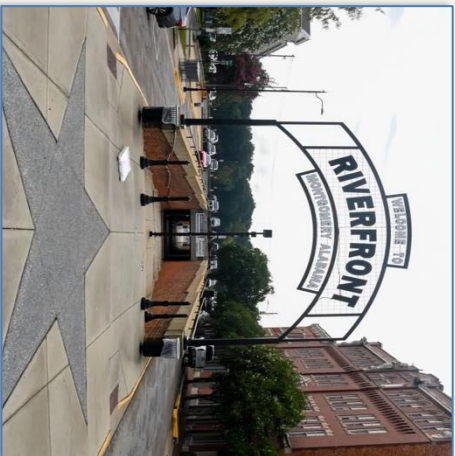
State Park • 10–20 min drive

- Over 2,100 acres with hiking and biking trails
- Scenic overlooks and historic features
- Camping, cabins, and immersive nature experiences

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Explore • Recharge • Belong

Alabama State University • Montgomery, Alabama



Riverfront Park

Park & Trail • 2 miles • Free

- Scenic riverwalk paths along the Alabama River
- Benches, splash pad, and amphitheater
- Close to downtown and Riverwalk Stadium



Oak Park

Urban Park • 1.5 miles • Free

- Shaded walking trails and botanical gardens
- Picnic areas and open lawns
- Calm green space in the city



Lake Jordan

Lake • 35 min drive

- Boating, kayaking, and fishing opportunities
- Shoreline trails for hiking and wildlife viewing
- Popular weekend lake escape

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Explore • Recharge • Belong

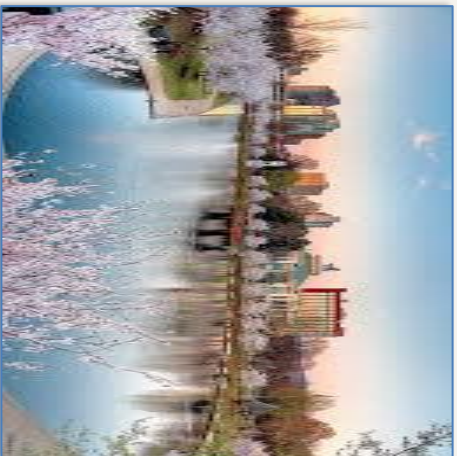
Athens State University • Athens, Alabama



Swan Creek Greenway National Recreation

Trail & Waterway • 2.5 miles • Free

- Forested trail following Swan Creek
- Access to sportsplex and recreational facilities
- Kayaking and rafting opportunities



Big Spring Memorial Park

Park & Pond • 5 min • Free

- Central pond with walking paths
- Tennis courts and pickleball facilities
- Well-known local gathering spot



Athens–Limestone Nature Center

Nature Center & Trails • 15 min

- Scenic walking trails through forest and wetlands
- Wildlife exhibits and bird-watching areas
- Peaceful, educational outdoor experience for students ly

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Explore • Recharge • Belong

Auburn University • Auburn, Alabama



Chewacla State Park

State Park • 10 min

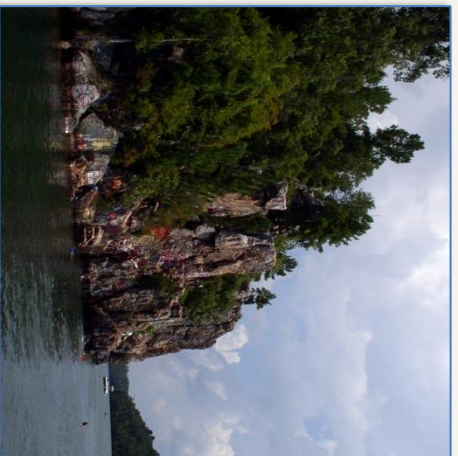
- Waterfall, lake, and scenic hiking trails
- Swimming, kayaking, and paddleboarding
- Mountain biking for all skill levels



Kreher Preserve & Nature Center

Nature Preserve • 12 min • Free

- Peaceful walking trails and wildlife viewing
 - Outdoor education spaces
- Popular for photography and relaxation



Lake Martin – Wind Creek State Park Area

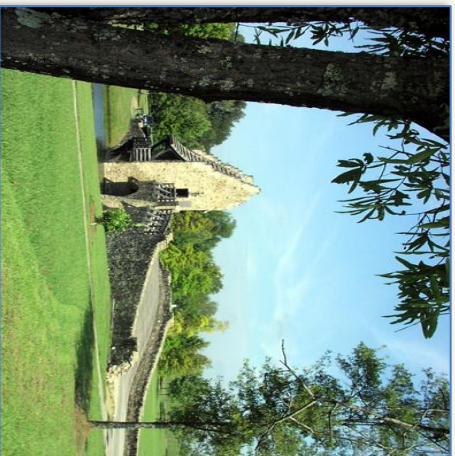
Lake & Park • 45 min

- Boating, swimming, and fishing
- Picnic areas and scenic overlooks
- Access to nearby hiking trails

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Explore • Recharge • Belong

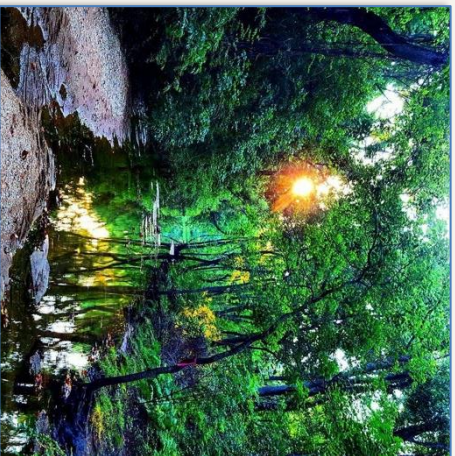
Auburn University at Montgomery • Montgomery, Alabama



Winton Blount Cultural Park

Park & Trails • 3 min • Free

- Open green spaces and walking trails
- Lakes and shaded picnic areas
- Home to arts and cultural venues



Lagoon Park Trails

Trail System • 12 min • Free

- Wooded trails with boardwalk sections
- Wetlands and wildlife viewing
- Quiet paths for walking and biking



Alabama Nature Center (Lanark)

Nature Center • 22 min

- Forest and creek trails
- Conservation and outdoor education
- Scenic overlooks and boardwalks

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Explore • Recharge • Belong

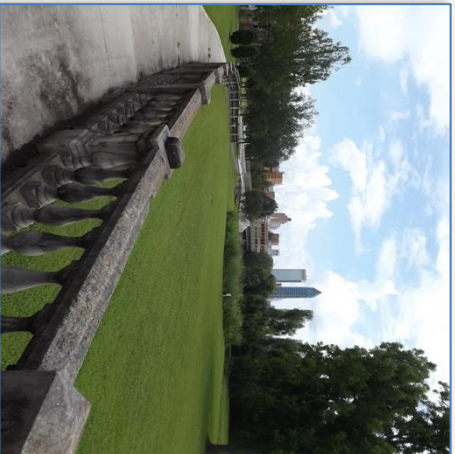
Jacksonville State University • Jacksonville, Alabama



Chief Ladiga Trail

Multi-Use Trail • Near campus • Free

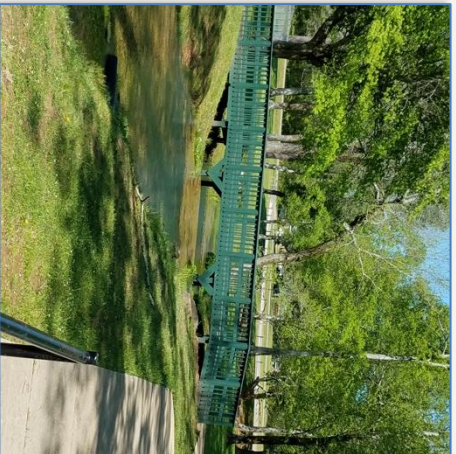
- One of Alabama's longest rail-trails
- Ideal for biking, running, and walking
- Easy access from student housing



Henry Farm Park

Park & Trails • Close • Free

- Mountain biking loops and nature trails
 - Picnic areas and sports fields
- Good mix of activity and relaxation



Germania Springs Park

City Park • Short drive • Free

- Access to trail system
- Dog-friendly green space
- Picnic and playground areas

OUTDOOR RECREATION

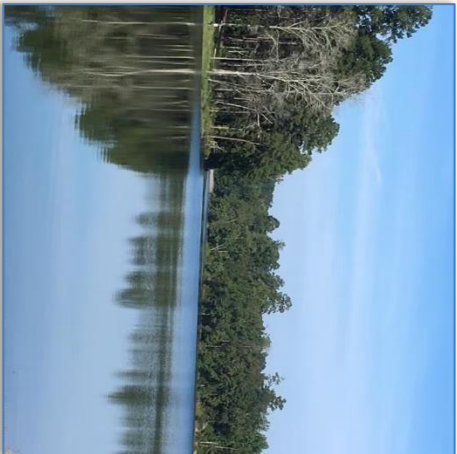
Explore • Recharge • Belong

Troy University • Troy, Alabama



Troy University Arboretum

- *Nature Preserve • On Campus • Free*
- 2.5-mile trail through woods, swamp, and stream
 - Over 300 tree species
- Mullis Pond offers peaceful water views



Pike County Lake

- *Lake & Park • 12 min*
- Stocked fishing lake and walking areas
 - Picnic spots and scenic views
 - Boat rentals available



Butter and Egg Adventures

- *Outdoor Adventure Park • 13 min*
- Ziplining and aerial courses
- Kayaking and team activities
- Popular for student organizations

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Explore • Recharge • Belong

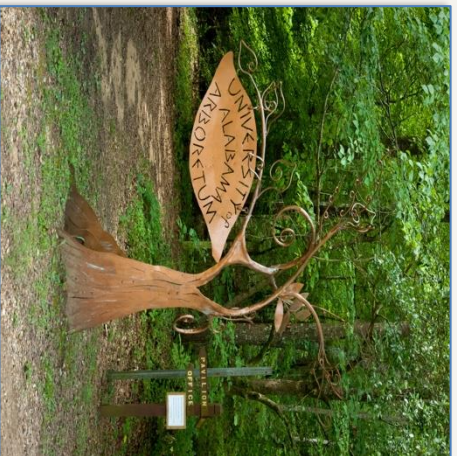
University of Alabama • Tuscaloosa, Alabama



Tuscaloosa Riverwalk

Park & Trail • 5 min • Free

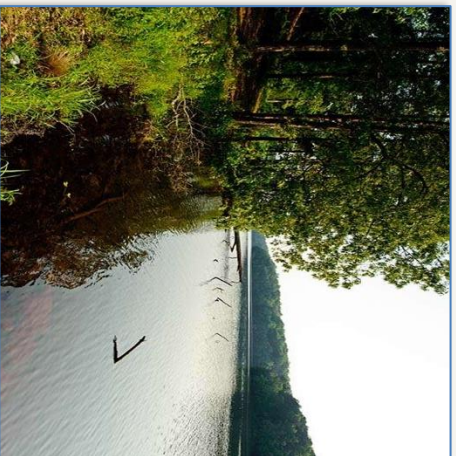
- Riverfront walking and biking paths
- Picnic areas and public art
- Connects campus to downtown



University of Alabama Arboretum

Arboretum • 10 min • Free

- 12+ miles of trails
- Native plants and seasonal blooms
- Quiet nature immersion



Lake Lurleen State Park

Lake • 20 min

- Boating, swimming, and fishing
- Sandy beach and picnic areas
- Multi-use shoreline trails

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Explore • Recharge • Belong

University of Alabama at Birmingham • Birmingham, Alabama



The Birmingham Zoo

Zoo • 8 min

- Affordable admission
- Events and outdoor exhibits
- Easy access from campus



Oak Mountain State Park

State Park • 17 min

- Hiking, biking, beaches, and camping
- Wide range of recreation options
- Largest state park in Alabama



Vulcan Park and Museum

Park & Museum • 5 min

- Scenic overlooks of Birmingham
 - Open green spaces
- Historic landmark experience

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Explore • Recharge • Belong

University of Alabama at Huntsville • Huntsville, Alabama



Monte Sano State Park

Park & Trails • 15 min

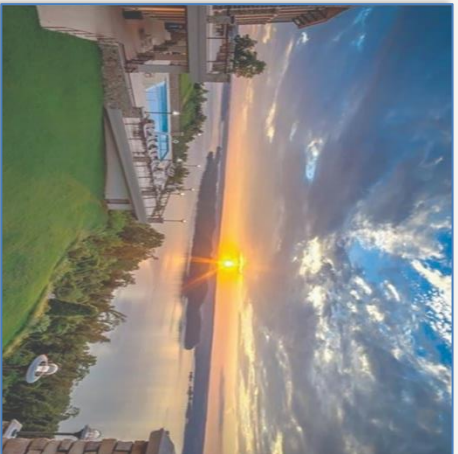
- 20+ miles of hiking and biking trails
 - Scenic overlooks
- Historic cabins and picnic areas



Hays Nature Preserve

Nature Preserve • 20 min • Free

- River trails and wetlands
- Birdwatching and wildlife viewing
- Boardwalks and open nature areas



Lake Guntersville State Park

Lake • 50 min

- Boating and fishing
 - Shoreline trails
- Nature center and beach access

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Explore • Recharge • Belong

University of Montevallo • Montevallo, Alabama



Orr Park

- Park & Trails • 3 min • Free*
- Famous carved tree sculptures
 - Creekside walking paths
 - Picnic and green spaces



Shoal Creek Park

- Park & Meadows • 5 min • Free*
- Open meadows and forest trails
 - Creek access and historic structures
 - Quiet outdoor escape



Oak Mountain State Park

- State Park • 18 min*
- Extensive hiking and biking trails
 - Lakes and scenic overlooks
 - Wildlife habitats

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Explore • Recharge • Belong

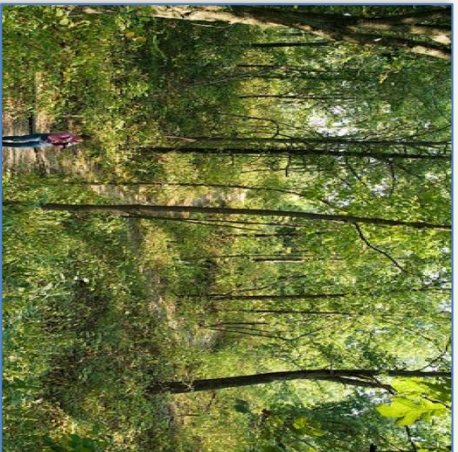
University of North Alabama • Florence, Alabama



McFarland Park

Riverfront Park • 6 min • Free

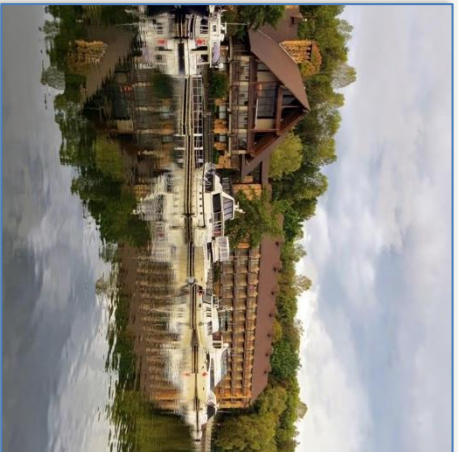
- Sandy river beaches
- Open green spaces and marina
- Events and outdoor gatherings



Shoal Creek Preserve

Nature Preserve • 18 min • Free

- Miles of hiking and horseback trails
- Streams and water access
- Preserved natural wilderness



Joe Wheeler State Park

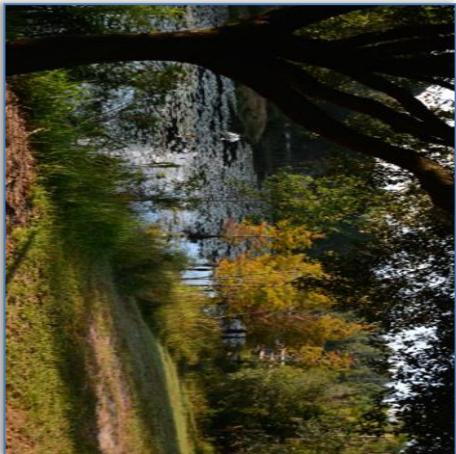
State Park • 30 min

- Hiking, camping, and lake access
 - Fishing and watersports
- Cabins and recreational facilities

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Explore • Recharge • Belong

University of South Alabama • Mobile, Alabama



Glenn Sebastian Nature Trail

Nature Trail • On Campus • Free

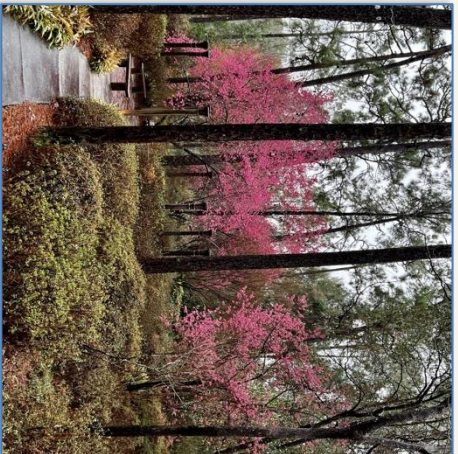
- 3+ miles of wooded trails
- Great between-class escape
- Pet-friendly



Langan Park (aka Municipal Park)

Public Park • 10 min • Free

- Large green space with lake and trails
- Golf course and tennis center
- Near botanical gardens



Mobile Botanical Gardens

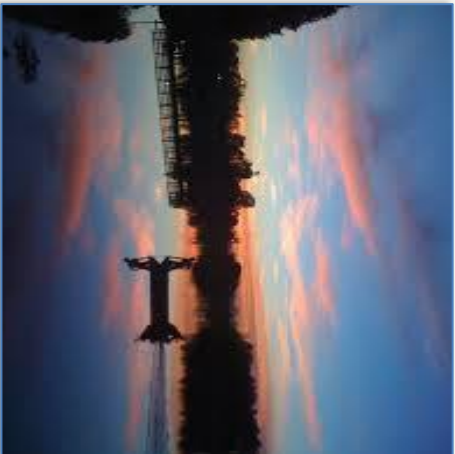
Botanical Garden • Short drive • Free

- 100 acres of gardens and pine forest
- Ideal for studying or quiet walks
- Peaceful nature setting

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Explore • Recharge • Belong

University of West Alabama • Livingston, Alabama



Lake LU

Campus Lake • Free

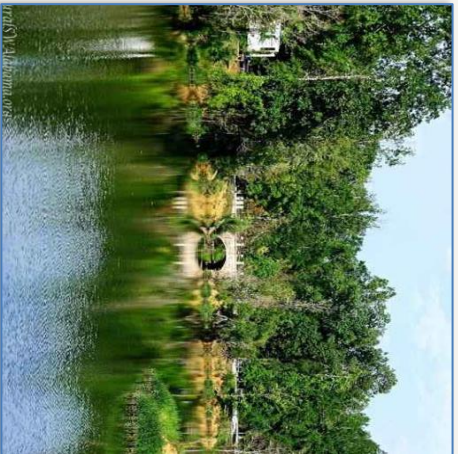
- 54-acre lake
- Walking and jogging trail
- Fishing and kayaking



Sumter County Nature Trails

Nature Trails • 5 min • Free

- Conservation-focused trails
- Wildlife viewing
- Educational outdoor spaces



Gainesville Lake (Upper Tombigbee River)

Lake • 22 min • Free

- Fishing and boating
- Scenic river-lake setting
- Relaxed weekend destination

Appendix B: Events and Entertainment by Season

Events Director Overall Strategy:

This strategy is built around creating a unique position for SRC as a connector between young adults and Alabama's events and experiences. Rather than replicating existing event calendars, this initiative focuses on delivering a curated, student-centered resource specifically designed for 18 to 25-year-olds. The strategy differentiates itself through simplicity and relevance. Instead of overwhelming users with information, it highlights a select number of high-impact events that are easy for students and young professionals to discover and attend.

In Year 1, the focus is on a freshman pilot to establish the model. This reflects a key trade-off: prioritizing a specific, accessible audience over broad but less effective reach. During this phase, the emphasis is on building a comprehensive events list, creating seasonal guides, and developing a clear, reusable format.

In Year 2, the strategy expands to serve a wider audience, including upperclassmen and young professionals. This growth is supported by partnerships with universities, Chambers of Commerce, and local organizations, which contribute content and help distribute the resource.

The strength of this strategy lies in fit. Orientation guides introduce the resource, monthly event highlights maintain engagement, and partnerships ensure ongoing relevance and reach. Together, these elements create a cohesive and scalable system.

Current Year Focus (Foundation Building):

- Compile a comprehensive, verified list of recurring events across Alabama
- *Develop seasonal “to-do” guides (Fall, Spring, Summer) tailored for freshmen (Alexi’s email)*
- Design reusable, one-page Canva templates that can be updated annually
- Establish a clear structure for how events are categorized (by season and region)
- Create a student-friendly format that is easy to read, visually engaging, and shareable

FRESHMAN ORIENTATION DISTRIBUTION PLAN

This is how I plan to distribute the freshman event guides across Alabama universities by partnering with student organizations that already reach large numbers of freshmen.

At the University of Alabama, I would focus on groups like UAwho or UAWhatsUp (student-run Instagram pages), and University Programs (event board). These organizations are highly visible, table at Get On Board Day, and already promote events to students.

At UAB, strong targets include student media like Kaleidoscope, Student Government Association, campus involvement or programming boards, Blazer Welcome/first-year programs, and orientation leaders or ambassadors. Because UAB is located in Birmingham, these groups are especially aligned with promoting local events. **(They have a student involvement fair multiple times a year.)**

At Auburn University, I would target The Auburn Plainsman, University Program Council (UPC), Student Government Association, Eagle Eye TV or WEGE Radio, and Auburn Ambassadors. Auburn has a strong campus culture around events, making these groups a good fit. **(Huge tabling event similar to UA’s GOBD.)**

At the University of South Alabama, I would focus on Jaguar Productions (the campus programming board), Student Government Association, orientation leaders, and student media like The Vanguard. Their proximity to coastal events makes them especially relevant. **(They do a Weeks of Welcome.)**

At Alabama A&M and UAH, I would prioritize Student Government Association, campus activities boards, orientation leaders, and ambassadors. These groups consistently engage with students and help promote campus and local events. (A&M does a Bulldog Welcome Week.)

At Troy University, I would target Student Government Association, Trojan Vision (student media), campus activities board, and ambassadors.

At Auburn University at Montgomery and the University of West Alabama, I would focus on Student Government, campus programming groups, ambassadors, and Greek life organizations, as they tend to have strong student networks and visibility.

Across all universities, the most important organizations to prioritize are student media, campus programming boards, orientation leaders, and student government. These groups already distribute information, table at events, and have direct access to freshmen.

The ask is simple: provide them with a one-page freshman event guide and ask them to include it on their table during involvement fairs, orientation events, or share it digitally.

Next Events Director Priorities (Implementation Phase):

1. Campus Distribution

- Partner with student organizations at public universities across Alabama
- Distribute guides at:
 - Involvement fairs (GOBD, Welcome Week, Org Fairs)
 - Orientation events
 - Student organization tables
- Prioritize high-visibility groups such as:
 - Student media
 - Programming boards
 - Orientation leaders
 - Student government

2. Monthly Engagement Strategy

- Launch “Events of the Month” posts through SRC platforms (with social media director)
- Highlight:
 - 3–5 curated events per month
 - Mix of local + travel experiences
- Use social media to keep the guide active beyond initial distribution

3. Chamber of Commerce and FuelAL Partnerships

- Position the guide as a way to help Chambers:
 - Reach college students and young professionals
 - Increase attendance at local events
 - Promote local businesses and experiences

4. Digital + Print Strategy

- Use print for:
 - Orientation packets
 - Involvement fairs
 - Quick exposure
- Use digital for:
 - Full event lists

- Monthly updates
- Long-term engagement
- Include a QR code on all printed materials linking to updated content

5. Audience Expansion (Potential Spring 2027)

- Develop additional guides for:
 - Upperclassmen
 - Interns and recent graduates
 - Young professionals
- Tailor Canva content to section by:
 - Lifestyle
 - Career stage
 - Location

Resources for 26-27 SRC Events Director:

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTACTS:

University of Alabama (UA)

University Programs (UP – Events Board)

Email: up@ua.edu

University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Kaleidoscope (Student Newspaper)

Email: editor@kaleidoscopeonline.com

UAB Student Involvement & Leadership

Email: getinvolved@uab.edu

Auburn University

University Program Council (UPC)

Email: upc@auburn.edu

University of South Alabama (USA)

Jaguar Productions (Events Board)

Email: jaguarproductions@southalabama.edu

Alabama A&M University

Office of Student Activities & Leadership Development

Email: studentactivities@aamu.edu

Troy University

TrojanVision (Student Media)

Email: trojanvision@troy.edu

Office of Civic Engagement / Student Involvement

Email: involvement@troy.edu

University of West Alabama (UWA)

Office of Student Life

Email: studentlife@uwa.edu

Resources for 26-27 SRC Events Director:

<https://alabama.travel/festivals-and-events>

EXPLORE ALABAMA THIS FALL

5 MUST-SEE EVENTS FOR FRESHMEN

☐ **MAGIC CITY CLASSIC -
BIRMINGHAM**

☐ **KENTUCK FESTIVAL OF THE
ARTS - TUSCALOOSA**

☐ **SIDEWALK FILM FESTIVAL -
BIRMINGHAM**

☐ **NATIONAL SHRIMP FESTIVAL -
GULF SHORES**

☐ **NATIONAL PEANUT FESTIVAL -
DOTHAN**

☐ **ADD YOUR OWN**
.....

☐ **ADD YOUR OWN**
.....

EXPERIENCE THESE EVENTS AND TAG US SO WE
CAN SHARE YOUR JOURNEY.

@src.ai



EXPLORE ALABAMA THIS SPRING

5 MUST-SEE EVENTS FOR FRESHMEN

☐ **GULF COAST HOT AIR BALLOON FESTIVAL – FOLEY**

☐ **MOBILE MARDI GRAS – MOBILE**

☐ **SIDEWALK FILM FESTIVAL – BIRMINGHAM**

☐ **HUNTSVILLE ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE – HUNTSVILLE**

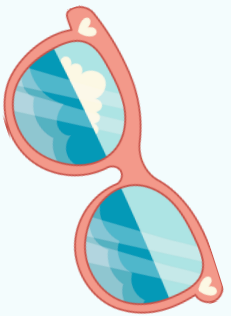
☐ **DO DAH DAY - BIRMINGHAM**

☐ **ADD YOUR OWN**
.....

☐ **ADD YOUR OWN**
.....

EXPERIENCE THESE EVENTS AND TAG US SO WE
CAN SHARE YOUR JOURNEY.

@src.al



EXPLORE ALABAMA THIS SUMMER

5 MUST-SEE EVENTS FOR FRESHMEN

☐ **W.C. HANDY MUSIC FESTIVAL - FLORENCE**

☐ **ANNISTON HERITAGE FESTIVAL - ANNISTON**

☐ **MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL - BIRMINGHAM**

☐ **MARVEL CITY CARIBBEAN FOOD AND MUSIC FESTIVAL - BESSEMER**

☐ **SUMMER PATRIOTIC CONCERT - OXFORD**

☐ **ADD YOUR OWN**
.....

☐ **ADD YOUR OWN**
.....

EXPERIENCE THESE EVENTS AND TAG US SO WE
CAN SHARE YOUR JOURNEY.

@src.ai



FALL SEMESTER EVENTS (AUGUST – NOVEMBER 2026)

North Alabama

- Panoply Arts Festival – Huntsville
 - Nearby: University of Alabama in Huntsville, Alabama A&M University
 - When: Late April (included for early semester awareness)
 - What: Large arts festival with live music, vendors, and interactive exhibits.
- Huntsville Oktoberfest – Huntsville
 - Nearby: UAH, Alabama A&M
 - When: October
 - What: German-style festival with food, beer, and live entertainment.
- Alabama Renaissance Faire – Florence
 - Nearby: University of North Alabama
 - When: October
 - What: Themed Renaissance event with performances, vendors, and costumes.
- North Alabama State Fair – Muscle Shoals
 - Nearby: University of North Alabama
 - When: September
 - What: Regional fair with rides, food, and agricultural exhibits.

Central Alabama

- Sidewalk Film Festival – Birmingham
 - Nearby: UAB, Samford University
 - When: Late August
 - What: Nationally recognized independent film festival.
- Magic City Classic – Birmingham
 - Nearby: UAB, Alabama State University, Alabama A&M University
 - When: Late October
 - What: Largest HBCU football game with major cultural events.
- Kentucky Festival of the Arts – Tuscaloosa
 - Nearby: University of Alabama
 - When: October
 - What: Top-ranked arts festival with artists, music, and food.
- Birmingham Greek Festival – Birmingham
 - Nearby: UAB, Samford
 - When: October
 - What: Cultural festival with Greek food, music, and dancing.
- Pepper Place Farmers Market – Birmingham (weekly)
 - Nearby: UAB, Samford
 - When: Saturdays (year-round, peak fall season)
 - What: Popular outdoor market with local vendors, food, and live music.

South Alabama

- National Shrimp Festival – Gulf Shores
 - Nearby: University of South Alabama
 - When: October (typically 2nd weekend)
 - What: Major seafood festival with live music and vendors.
- Greater Gulf State Fair – Mobile
 - Nearby: University of South Alabama
 - When: Late October–early November
 - What: Large fair with rides, concerts, and exhibits.
- Fairhope Film Festival – Fairhope
 - Nearby: University of South Alabama
 - When: November
 - What: Film festival featuring independent films and panels.
- National Peanut Festival – Dothan
 - Nearby: Troy University
 - When: November
 - What: One of the largest agricultural festivals in the U.S.
- Mobile Greek Festival – Mobile
 - Nearby: University of South Alabama
 - When: November
 - What: Cultural food and heritage festival.

SPRING SEMESTER EVENTS (JANUARY – APRIL 2027)

North Alabama

- Huntsville St. Patrick’s Day Parade – Huntsville
 - Nearby: UAH, Alabama A&M
 - When: March
 - What: City parade with live entertainment and community events.
- Concerts at The Orion Amphitheater – Huntsville
 - Nearby: UAH, Alabama A&M
 - When: Spring season kickoff
 - What: Major touring artists and live performances.

Central Alabama

- Selma Bridge Crossing Jubilee – Selma
 - Nearby: University of Alabama, Alabama State University
 - When: March
 - What: Historic civil rights commemoration with national significance.
- Alabama Book Festival – Montgomery
 - Nearby: Auburn University at Montgomery, Alabama State University
 - When: April
 - What: Statewide literary event with authors and speakers.

- Do Dah Day – Birmingham
 - Nearby: UAB, Samford
 - When: April/May
 - What: Community festival supporting animal charities with music and food.
- Birmingham Restaurant Week – Birmingham
 - Nearby: UAB, Samford
 - When: January/February
 - What: Citywide dining event featuring local restaurants.

South Alabama

- Mobile Mardi Gras – Mobile
 - Nearby: University of South Alabama
 - When: February
 - What: Oldest Mardi Gras celebration in the U.S. with parades and balls.
- Fairhope Arts & Crafts Festival – Fairhope
 - Nearby: University of South Alabama
 - When: March
 - What: Nationally ranked outdoor arts festival.
- Orange Beach Festival of Art – Orange Beach
 - Nearby: University of South Alabama
 - When: March
 - What: Coastal arts festival with visual and performing arts.
- Gulf Coast Hot Air Balloon Festival – Foley
 - Nearby: University of South Alabama
 - When: May (end of spring semester)
 - What: Balloon launches, live music, and food vendors.

SUMMER EVENTS (MAY – JULY 2027)

North Alabama

- W.C. Handy Music Festival – Florence/Muscle Shoals
 - Nearby: University of North Alabama
 - When: July
 - What: One of the nation's largest free music festivals celebrating blues heritage.

Central Alabama

- Secret Stages Music Festival – Birmingham
 - Nearby: UAB, Samford
 - When: July
 - What: Multi-venue music festival featuring emerging artists.

South Alabama

- Hangout Music Festival – Gulf Shores
 - Nearby: University of South Alabama
 - When: May
 - What: Major beach music festival attracting national artists.
- Blue Angels Air Show – Gulf Coast (Pensacola/Orange Beach area)
 - Nearby: University of South Alabama
 - When: July
 - What: Large-scale air show featuring the U.S. Navy Blue Angels.

Link to additional events: <https://alabama.travel/festivals-and-events>

Appendix C: Community Connections, Insights and Opportunities

Civic Engagement and Service Final Report

SRC 2025-2026

We surveyed more than 100 recent graduates and young professionals to understand their attitudes towards “civic engagement” and identify key opportunities for growth in community connections. Results of the survey are included below.

When you hear the term civic engagement, what comes to mind first?

117 responses



Which of the following feels most impactful to you?

117 responses

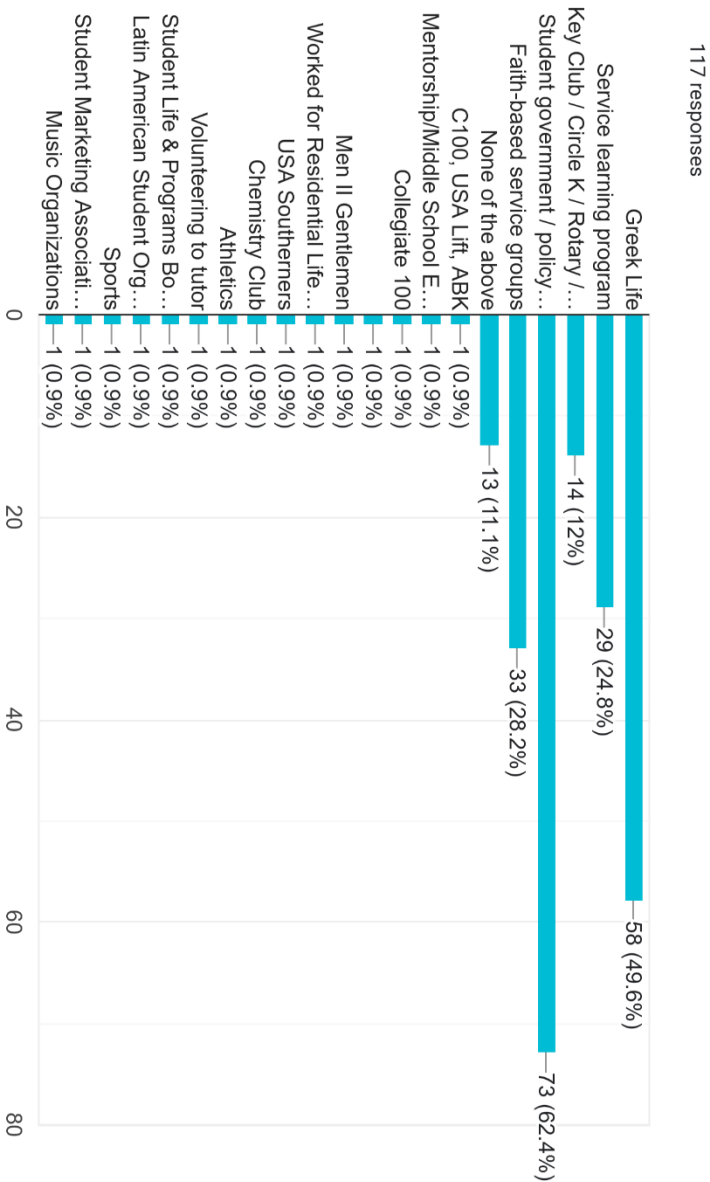


These results demonstrate that young professionals do have a strong understanding of civic engagement both when considering service and advocacy work.

During college, students were most likely to engage in service through Student Government or Greek Life groups, followed by faith-based groups or service learning programs.

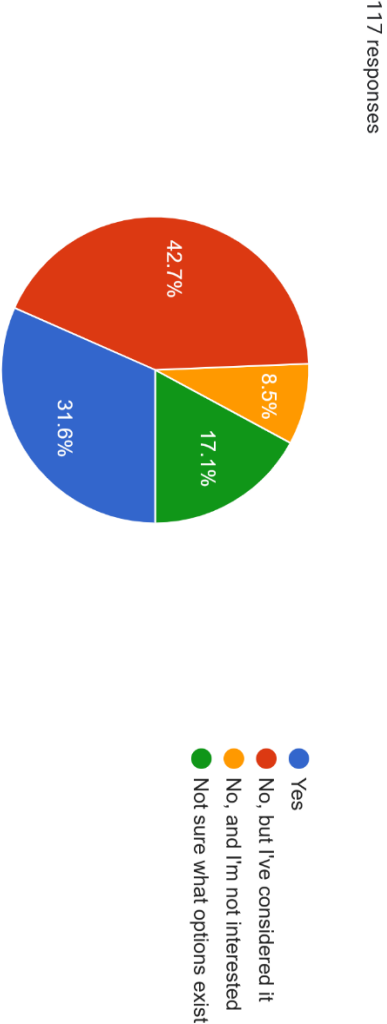
Collegiate branches of civic engagement groups engaged only about 12% of respondents.

Were you involved in any of the following in college? (Check all that apply)



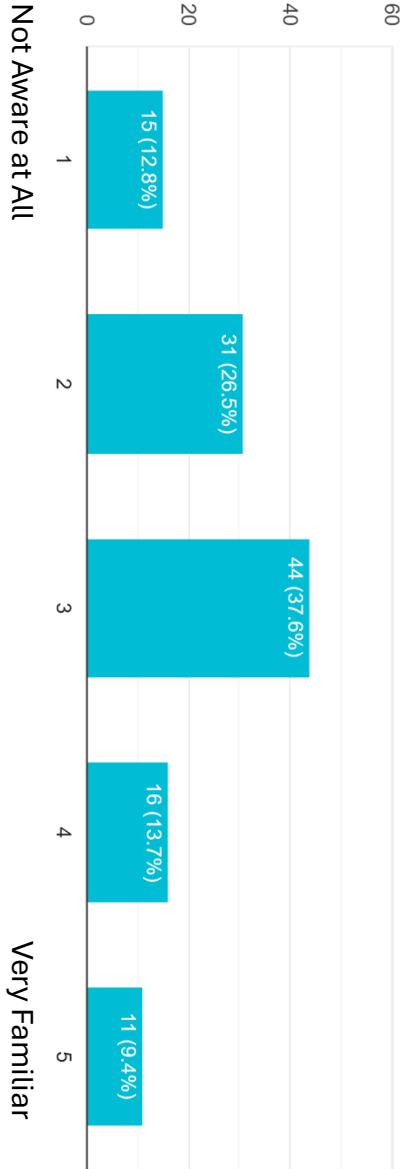
Moving into current attitudes about service and community engagement, our results indicate that young professionals do have a strong interest in staying engaged in their community organizations, but aren't sure what path to follow.

Are you currently a member of any civic or professional service organization?



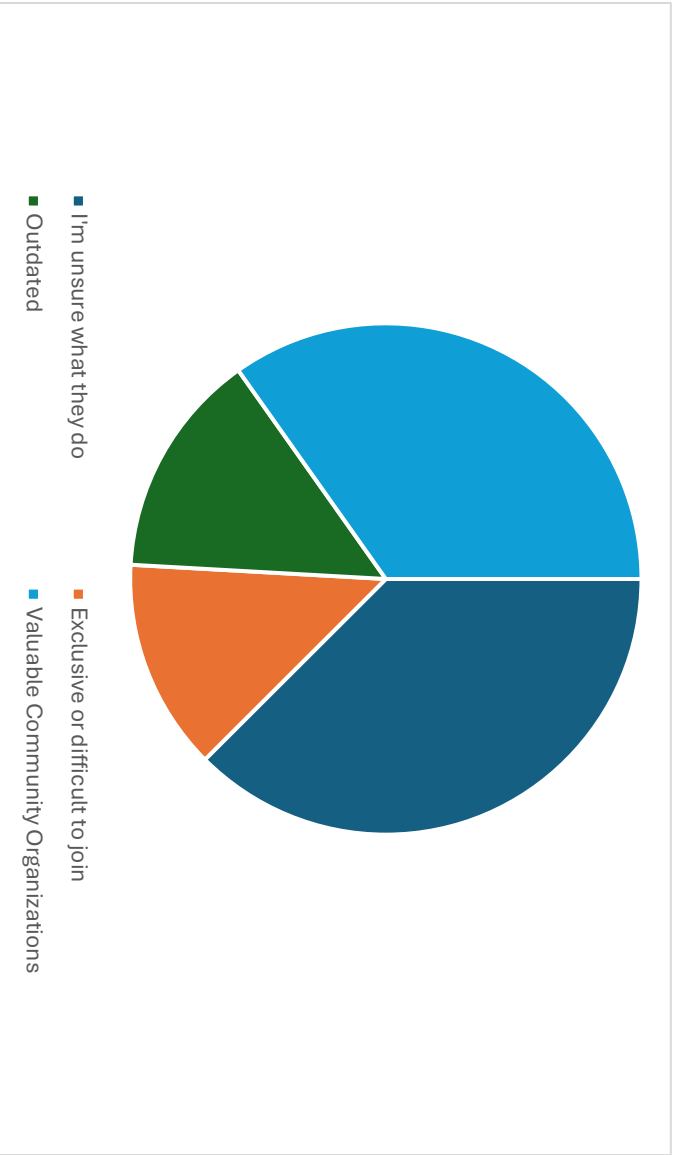
How familiar are you with civic/service organizations in your area?

117 responses



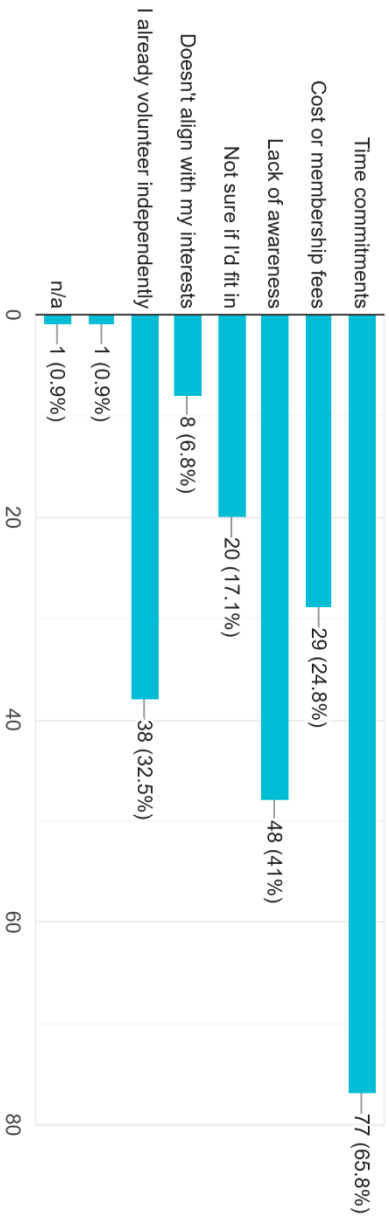
When you hear names like Rotary, Kiwanis, or Junior League, what comes to mind?

117 responses



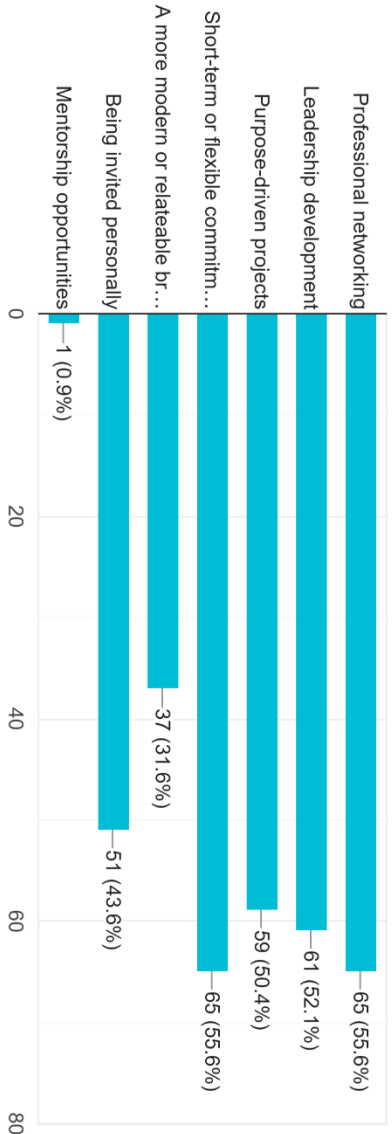
What prevents you from joining a civic or service organization? (Check all that apply)

117 responses



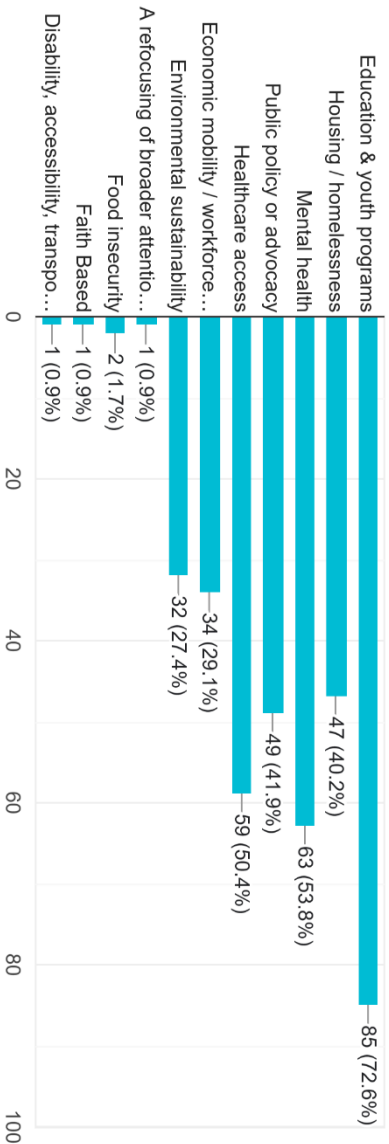
What would make you more likely to join a civic/ service organization? (Check all that apply)

117 responses



Which types of causes do you feel most connected to? (Check all that apply)

117 responses



Appendix D: Digital Media Plan for Future Growth

SRC MEDIA PLAYBOOK

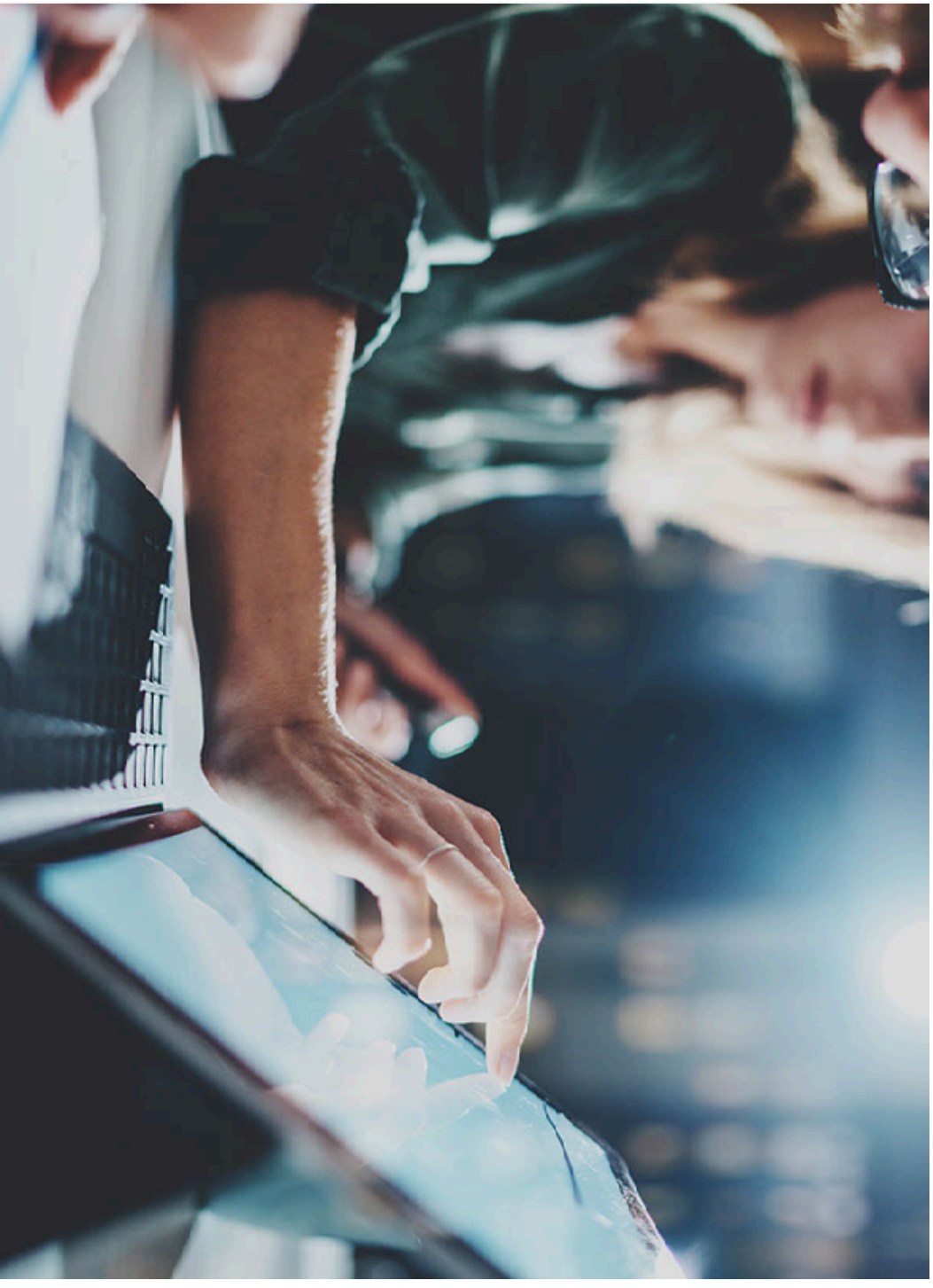
Strategic Framework for Multi-Campus Engagement

Media Strategy & Operational Guide

Alabama's leaders are committed to investing in the state's future. As we look toward the 22nd century, recruiting and retaining college graduates is essential to building a knowledge-based economy. The Student Retention Council exists to build a statewide campaign made for students, by students. The src is encouraging graduates to consider Alabama as the place to build their lives and careers.

This guide ensures that our digital presence consistently supports that mission.

- [Media Strategy & Operational Guide](#)
- Our Digital Role
- Partnership and amplification strategy
- Performance & Impact Metrics
- Strategic Framework: Retention Through Visibility
- [Multi-Campus Strategy Model](#)
- Tier 1: Large Public Universities
- Influencer Prospecting Categories
- Content Pillars
- [First 30-Day Plan](#)



OUR DIGITAL ROLE

SRC media is a retention tool. We exist to:

- Reinforce opportunity in Alabama
- Showcase in-state career pathways
- Highlight civic participation
- Strengthen belonging across campuses
- Make information actionable

We are not:

- A partisan platform
- A trend-driven entertainment page

- An event-only promotional feed

We are:

- Student-led
- Opportunity-focused
- Future-oriented
- Credible and consistent



PARTNERSHIP AND AMPLIFICATION STRATEGY

Objective: Expand SRC's reach across campuses by leveraging aligned student and institutional accounts.

Ideal Partner Characteristics:

- Student centered audience
- Established engagement
- Non-partisan tone
- Campus or community relevance
- Responsive communication



PERFORMANCE & IMPACT METRICS

Engagement should be evaluated based on quality and mission alignment, not vanity metrics.

Track:

- Reach
- Shares
- Saves
- Comments
- Link Clicks



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: RETENTION THROUGH VISIBILITY

Retention increases when students:

1. See opportunity.
2. See community.
3. See impact.
4. See a future in-state.

Before publishing, ask:

- Does this reinforce Alabama as a viable future?
- Does this elevate student voice?
- Is this actionable?

Multi-Campus Strategy Model

TIER 1: LARGE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

High content volume. Harder to stand out.

Strategy:

- Collab posts with major orgs
- Data-driven carousels
- Short-form reels
- Ambassador partnerships

INFLUENCER PROSPECTING CATEGORIES

Campus Leaders

- SGA accounts
- Student ambassadors
- Large org media chairs

Civic-Oriented

- Campus Votes initiatives
- Student journalism
- Policy-related clubs

Outdoor & Belonging

- Outdoor recreation groups
- UREC accounts
- Student wellness pages

Workforce Development

- Career centers
- Internship boards
- Entrepreneurship clubs
- Alumni features

CONTENT PILLARS

Civic Engagement

- Policy-to-campus impact breakdowns
- Student civic participation highlights
- “What this means for you” explainers
- How-to engagement guides

Outdoor & Belonging

- Weekend rec suggestions
- Mental health + environment posts
- Campus event recaps
- Student life features

Workforce Development

- Internship spotlights
- Alabama-based employer highlights
- Alumni working in-state
- Transfer and certification pathways

Events

- Countdown graphics
- Recap reels
- Volunteer spotlights
- Cross-campus collaborations

First 30-Day Plan

- Audit past posts
- Identify top 5 performing posts
- Prospect 20 potential partners
- Initiate 5 outreach messages
- Launch 1 collaborative post
- Establish a performance baseline

The most important thing is to take it seriously, but to think about it from the perspective of yourself as a student. What would you want to see from an account like ours?

INTERNAL COMMS GUIDE

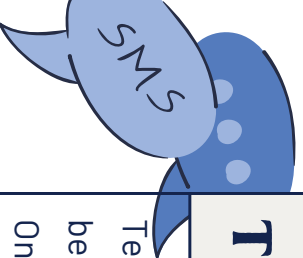


PURPOSE

The intention of this guide is not to remove creative innovation in motivating the SRC to accomplish its goal, but to prevent the future from falling into the same mistakes of the past. This year has been one of much learning and many mistakes, but these mistakes produce growth, and this guide will hopefully pass that on to the next cohort.

TEXT MESSAGES (INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP)

Text messages are the fastest and simplest form of communication. They must be treated as such. Keep all language and information in text quick and simple. One text = one piece of information. Some good uses for text messaging are check-ins, day-of information, and reminders. They should not be used to disseminate mass information.



E-MAIL

E-Mail is comprehensive and durable. By this I mean that the contents of e-mail are able to contain all the details of an event or task and that these details are easy to refer back to. Because of this nature of e-mail, it should be used infrequently, but entirely to provide whole event details and task information.



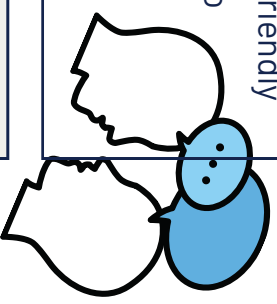
INTERNAL COMMS GUIDE



GENERAL COMMS GUIDELINES

Communication must be constant and concise. Keep it brief, and remind them.

When you fail to remind people of events and deadlines, the other parts of their life will cause them to forget. The job is to help them remember. Be as friendly and graceful as possible in messaging. People have responded better to messages that are more colloquial and friendly than the boilerplate professionalism.



IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE FUTURE

There is an inherent separation between groups that should be bridged. Before the next cohort establishes their own channels of communication, there should be a unified workplace management platform put in place (e.g. Microsoft Teams or Slack). These allow for distinct channels for each project group, while allowing oversight by all leaders. Additionally, these have a unified calendar feature which may be managed by the leaders.



Jonathan Duncan

SRC Internal Communications Director

Cohort 4 (2025-2026)



Appendix E: Internship Guide



ALABAMA'S INTERNSHIP GUIDE: AN EMPLOYER AND STUDENT GUIDE TO INTERNSHIPS IN ALABAMA

Presented by the Student Retention Council under the Higher Education Partnership

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WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

According to NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers), an internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learning in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional workplace setting. Internships provide students with the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields. Internships serve as a significant recruiting mechanism for employers, providing them with the opportunity to guide and evaluate potential candidates.

An internship typically includes:

- Structured learning and goals supervised by a professional with relevant experience in the field
- A defined timeline, most internship programs last 3 months long. It can be part-time or full-time.
- Provides academic, career, or professional development
- Incorporates the interns' learning goals with the organization's needs.
- Includes a supervisor or mentor who provides guidance and feedback to interns
- A safe environment with the resources needed for interns to learn and gain experience
- Learned skills and knowledge that can be applied to other employment opportunities

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Internships provide employers with the opportunity to identify and develop a talent pipeline. By offering students exposure to the businesses culture, environment, and values, you can screen potential employees before offering them a full-time position. This leads to financial savings for recruitment and retention of employees. Employers report that greater than half of eligible interns accept a full-time position. If hired, previous interns have a quicker adjustment to their new role than external hires.

Additional Benefits for Employers:

- Recruit other students and young professionals
- Introduce new ideas and perspectives for company expansion and projects
- Increase employee retention rate
- Promotes mentorship and positive employee relationships
- Serve the community by providing educational and professional opportunities to the future workforce
- Spread awareness about company opportunities and values for future hires
- Establish connections with colleges and expand exposure on campuses

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON FAILURES?

Lack of Structure

Poorly structured internships create uncertainty and difficulties for interns and employers. Interns may not have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, goals, or expectations. This leads interns to feel unsatisfied and undervalued in the company. Employers also suffer through loss of

productivity, damaged brand reputation, and missed opportunities to create a talent pipeline. Without a clear program structure, interns need excessive supervision, taking time away from employees to do their work. Interns will be less likely to recommend the internship to others and may provide negative feedback, hindering recruitment and retention. A poorly developed internship program does not adequately train or expose the intern to the company or field. This causes a loss of opportunities for interns to build meaningful connections and experience in the company, reducing their chances of seeking a full-time position.

Assigning Only “Busy” Work

A common oversight in developing an internship program is the failure to provide meaningful work. Assigning only repetitive and low-value tasks is a waste of time for the students and prevents quality learning and engagement with the industry. It's important to get to know your interns, so you can properly pair their learning desires with company projects and mentors who can fulfill those needs.

Poor Mentorship

Poor mentorship reduces intern retention, engagement, and skill development. Without proper mentors, interns become disengaged due to a lack of clear communication, support, and feedback. This can reduce learning outcomes because they are not receiving the guidance needed to complete projects and gain industry knowledge.

Limited Integration

Internships are an investment, so don't waste them by isolating your interns and never following up with them. The immersion of an intern into the company is just as important as the work they do during their internship. Interns are prospective employees and should be included in team conversations, meetings, and company events. With this, following up regularly with past interns is important. This keeps your company in their mind and can reinforce that you want to support their career.

WAYS TO IMPROVE AN EXISTING PROGRAM

Do you already have an intern position in your organization? If so, here are some tips for improvement to increase success and efficiency.

Know Your Interns

Make the effort to get to know your interns. Sit down with them and learn more about who they are, what their career goals are, what they hope to learn, and what they hope to achieve while working for your organization. This will help you understand how to best support them during their internships. This is also a great way to welcome them to the company.

Direct Connection to Students

Focus on communicating with students. A great way to do this is to contact local career centers and universities, so students are aware of opportunities. This builds your relationship with local campuses and gets your opportunities out there! Later, in this guide, we will provide resources from across that state of Alabama that you may find helpful in this area.

Work that Matters

Like we mentioned previously, meaningless work creates disengagement and poor learning outcomes in an internship program. Internships are supposed to provide real-world experience and knowledge, so interns should be working on projects that matter in the company. Allow your interns to work on real company issues and projects because it enables them to develop industry skills. Interns could provide new ideas or perspectives that have not been considered. Additionally, you will get to assess how they handle problem-solving and teamwork in your company.

Mentorship

As an organization, it is important to give interns the opportunity to connect with professionals and leaders in the industry. Internships are valuable because they connect students with professionals and leaders who can support them during their internship and in their career. Make the effort to connect them with colleagues and mentors who will help them succeed.

Give and Get Feedback

Interns want to learn and grow during their time at your company. A great way to do this is by providing them with constructive feedback. Be intentional and constructive and focus on what you can do to help them improve. Along with giving them feedback, you should ensure that there is way for them to provide you with feedback. Create an environment where interns can be honest about their experiences and provide insight into the improvement of the program. This helps you to enhance your program and maybe even your company.

STEPS TO BUILDING AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Businesses are diverse in terms of age, field, market, and size. Thus, their internships will vary as well. How do you know if an intern is a good option for your business? Developing an internship does not have to be complicated. Here's some easy steps to follow to build an internship that meets your needs.

Step 1: Right Fit?

To evaluate if an intern is the right choice for your business, ask yourself the following questions:

- Are there specific projects or assignments that will give an intern meaningful hands-on experience and strong learning opportunities?
- Can the company dedicate time and resources to developing a student and providing insight into its operations?
- Can the company provide an inclusive, supportive, and welcoming environment to interns?
- Does the company need new ideas and perspectives?
- Does the company have an interest in helping to shape the future workforce?

If your answer is yes to each question, then your company is ready to host an intern!

Step 2: Establish Program Objectives

You have decided an internship is the right investment for your company. Now, it's time to consider program goals. These goals should be clearly discussed within the company so management and others involved are aware of the expectations. For an internship to run smoothly, everyone involved must be committed to the program and know their role in ensuring the program's success.

To begin developing your program objectives, start by asking the following questions:

- Is the company looking for motivated new employees?
- Is the company looking for additional support on projects?
- What does the company hope to gain from an internship program?

Answering these questions enables the company to create goals they can build an internship program around.

Step 3: Create a Program Structure

After determining the objectives for your internship program, it's time plan and write it each aspect of the internship. This plan should be detailed and include any information relevant to the program. We have listed some things to consider when developing your program structure:

Duration and Timeline

Many internships follow the academic year. Thus, internship timelines vary depending on season. Here's what you should consider determining a timeline of your program that works best with your need.

Most employers should begin recruiting at least 4-6 months before the internship start date. This ensures strong applicant pool. It is generally recommended that interns are selected at least one month before the start date to begin the on-boarding and preparation process.

Summer Internships

- Anticipated Hours: Up to 40 hours/week
- Typical Duration: Mid-Late May → Early-Mid August
- Posting Window: December – February
- Keep in Mind: High competition from other companies

Fall Semester Internships

- Anticipated Hours: 15-30 hours/week
- Typical Duration: Late August → Early December
- Posting Window: Spring Semester
- Keep in Mind: Academic scheduling conflicts

Winter Interim Internships

- Anticipated Hours: Up to 40 hours/week
- Typical Duration: Early-Mid December → Mid-Late January
- Posting Window: Late Summer to Early Fall
- Keep in Mind: Smaller applicant pool due to holidays and academic breaks

Spring Semester Internships

- Anticipated Hours: 15-30 hours/week
- Typical Duration: Late January → Late April
- Posting Window: By Early October
- Keep in Mind: Academic scheduling conflicts

Compensation Model

Paid Internship

It is encouraged to pay your intern if you have the means. Many interns are students and interns to gain industry experience rather than work part-time. There is not a set expectation for intern wages, but it is gnarly recommended that a company review their budget and internship expectation to decide fair compensation. Paid internships help promote that the company is invested in its interns, which attract interest and respect.

Unpaid Internships

If a paid internship does not work for your company, there are many unpaid internship programs that are effective and successful. During the recruitment process, it is highly recommended to create a detailed list of the benefits and experiences that the company can provide. This helps potential interns consider experience over their want or need to make a wage. It is also recommended that you compensate your interns in other ways. Some common compensation methods are:

- Free or reduced housing, parking, or meals
- Mileage reimbursements
- Collaborating with university/college for academic course credit
- Invitations to networking events and assistance with building strong industry connections
- Creating a flexible schedule for interns who may want/need to work part-time

Establishing Meaningful Work

Arguably, the most important part in developing your internship program is identifying your intern's role and responsibilities. The intern's main responsibility should include responsibilities that help them gain industry experience and skills. Answering the phone, filing papers, and other menial tasks should not be the primary role of the intern. However, these menial activities should not be entirely excluded as to provide genuine work experience.

It is helpful to consider your organization's needs and current projects. Some primary work examples could be creating promotional material for the company, performing laboratory tests, or developing reports. These primary activities can be supplemented with secondary tasks like filing reports, cleaning lab equipment, or scheduling events and meetings.

Mentors and Supervisors

Mentorship and supervising play two different roles in an internship program, but each are significant to its success.

Identifying a Supervisor

A supervisor is ideally an intern's point person for work assignments, questions about their responsibilities, training, and performance evaluations. They should be closely connected to kind of work the intern will perform to provide relevant information and quality guidance.

Core Functions of the Role:

- Introducing the intern to the organization
- Develop a clear work plan and set of expectations
- Provides training so the intern can gain independence in their role
- Periodic check-ins to answer project questions and offer guidance
- Give constructive feedback and ways they can help the intern improve
- Assign meaningful work that allows for growth and industry experience

Identifying a Mentor

A mentor is usually someone who helps the intern assimilate into the company environment and culture. They are not there to oversee project work but rather support the intern professionally and personally. This often looks like answering questions about the industry or organization, providing advice on careers, and supporting the overall personal growth of the intern.

Note: For some internships, the role of supervisor and mentor may belong to one person. However, it is generally recommended to differentiate these roles to ensure adequate support of the intern.

Develop an Internship Description

Once you have determined how your program will function, you must create an internship position description. When developing this description, consider the following:

Overview of the Company

A brief introduction to your company with links to your social media or website. This helps the applicant understand your purpose and culture.

Internship Title

A specific title will help the applicant determine if it is an appropriate opportunity for them to pursue. Examples: "Sales Intern", "Public Relations Intern", etc.

Degree Track

If students are your anticipated applicants, you might want to consider having specific Degree Track guidelines. Clarify who is eligible by looking at your internship responsibilities and expectations. What degree would best fit into your internship? Can they be high school students, undergraduate students, graduate students, etc.?

Duration and Schedule

State when the internship will start and end and whether it is part-time or full-time. Make sure to include expected weekly hours.

Desired or Required Skills

List the skills an intern must have before hiring and those they will likely gain during the program. This helps applicants understand opportunities for growth.

Responsibilities

This should be the most detailed section. List the key project and tasks of the intern position. These should include meaningful work to provide educational and industry experience to applicants.

Additional Information

Include other relevant information an applicant would need to know. This includes compensation model, application deadlines, interview timelines, travel requirements, and onboarding expectations, etc.

Create Recruitment Strategy

Many Alabama high schools, colleges, and universities provide opportunities for intern recruiting on campus. Employers can participate in career fairs, conduct presentations, attend community events, and get involved with career services to get connected to a broader applicant pool. Social media and networking platforms are also popular ways to connect with students. Many students look for opportunities on sites like LinkedIn, Indeed, and Handshake. We recommend posting on digital platforms and attending local events and fairs to keep you well-connected.

We suggest you target two to three schools or universities with programs that match your ideal intern requirements. Begin building relationships with these entities to get connected with students eager to learn and grow in the industry. At the end of this guide, we have listed some resources throughout the state of Alabama that can help you discover which schools or centers you can reach out to.

Evaluation of Candidates

When evaluating candidates, it's important to consider your program objectives, intern expectations, and responsibilities.

Education: If your company wants to turn interns into full-time hires after graduation, you should prioritize upperclassmen or recent graduates.

Degree and technical skills: Look for clear relevance to the internship role.

Work Experience: Many students may not have industry experience, but you can review previous work experience to get an idea of a candidate's skills and work ethic.

Extracurriculars/Service Work: These provide useful information about a candidate's character, initiative, leadership, and teamwork capabilities.

Cover Letter: This helps you understand how they found the internship, why they are interested, what makes them qualified, and how their experience relates to your company.

Interviews: When interviewing an applicant, it is important to ask questions where applicants must provide specific examples of skills or knowledge they have. This allows you to assess their skills and qualities. Interviews are also the time to clarify availability, educational requirements, and compensation, and answer any questions from the candidate.

Making an Internship Offer

When you have found an applicant with the appropriate experience, character, professionalism, and who fits in well in your company, make an offer. Students are likely to apply for multiple internships, so once you decide, it is best to make an offer soon after. During this time, a work schedule should be in place, compensation agreed on, and the appropriate paperwork and on-boarding information provided.

Step 4: Orientation/On-Boarding Process

Many students enter an internship with no knowledge of the environment or activities of business and industry. Though your interns may have past work or educational experience, this does not mean they know the internal politics, collaboration skills, or the business' profit-driven orientation. This orientation and training introduce the intern to what the organization does, how it operates, and what their role is within the organization.

You can help your intern adjust to their role effectively by informing them of the following:

- Company organization and chain of command
- Industry terminology and work standards
- Availability of supervisors and tasks that require approval
- Communication systems and methods of correspondence
- Security and confidentiality expectations
- Dress code and workplace maintenance
- Specific project assignments and expectations
- Expectations for professional interactions with colleges, clients, and vendors
- Who they can contact regarding questions

This information can be communicated in different ways:

- Provide a facility tour and introduce staff
- Share company materials (newsletters, annual reports, etc.)
- Encourage interns to join employees during breaks and lunch
- Check-in frequently
- Allow interns to participate and sit in meetings

Step 5: Off-Boarding Process

The off-boarding process is the time to assess the success of the internship. It is important to consider if your intern gained experience and knowledge and if your organization benefited from having the intern.

Assessing your program allows you to find way to improve the learning and experiences of your interns and to improve the return of investment for your company. An evaluation is usually helpful in identifying these areas and keeping records of this information.

Towards the End

- Ensure the intern's project is finished or transition the remaining work to an appropriate team member
- Plan a small send-off to acknowledge their contributions
- Discuss next steps with the organization, including any full-time opportunities
- Offer to be a professional reference and discuss how you can support their future job search

Evaluation

An internship needs constructive feedback to be a learning experience. Evaluation should focus on the initial learning objectives identified at the beginning of the internship. Supervisors should make the effort to highlight the interns' accomplishments and areas for improvement.

Interns will look to their supervisors and mentors for guidance and support in building their professional skills. It is recommended that there are regular check-ins with interns to revive and provide feedback. This check-in should include project updates, areas of accomplishment and need for improvement, and insight into what comes next. Supervisors are usually expected to evaluate interns at the middle and end of the internship.

Follow-Up

It is valuable to stay in contact with your former interns. This helps promote your internship, organization, and hiring process.

BENEFITS OF GETTING AN INTERNSHIP

Internships are an opportunity for you to explore your career interests, apply what you have learned to real-world situations, and get connected in the industry. Internships allow you to build your resume, expand your professional network, acquire industry knowledge and soft skills, and boost your opportunities for career growth.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR AN INTERNSHIP?

In Alabama, there are numerous opportunities to get connected with businesses looking for interns. Employers participate in career fairs, conduct panels and presentations, and market their opportunities at career centers. There are also online platforms and media applications designed for job and internship searching. Below, we have listed some resources and information

Internship and Job Posting Websites

Internship and Job Posting websites are easy and accessible ways to get connected with internship opportunities near you. They centralize opportunities and make filtering between opportunities simple. These websites are a great way to find information about local internship opportunities and businesses in the area.

Examples:

- Handshake
- Indeed
- LinkedIn
- ZipRecruiter

Research Local Businesses

Look into local businesses in your area. Is there an industry or business that aligns with your career interests? Do you know the major companies and industries in your community?

Many businesses post their internship opportunities on their online platforms. It's important to be aware of the local businesses that you might be interested in working with. This ensures you remain aware and updated on potential opportunities to get involved.

Attending a Career Fair

Check to see if there are any nearby career fairs you can attend. These events are a great way to meet with employers, gather contact information, and learn about internship opportunities.

We recommend checking your university's and career center's event calendars to see when upcoming internship and job fairs are scheduled.

WAYS TO BE A GOOD CANDIDATE

Cover Letter

A cover letter accompanies your resume and introduces you to a potential employer. It allows you to display why you are a good candidate for the role and to capture the employer's interest.

Tips for Building Your Cover Letter

- Tailor your wording to highlight how your skills and experiences align with the position's requirements.
- Address your letter to the appropriate person at the organization when possible.
- Use clear and active language to make your letter direct and engaging.

Resume

A resume is an informative summary of your experience, education, and skills. It should highlight your strengths and make you stand out compared to other applicants. A strong resume plays a role in your application process. A resume should be tailored to the internship. Not every experience or skill has to be directly related, but you should have examples of knowledge and skills that an employer would be looking for.

Information to Have on a Resume:

Heading

This section should include your full name, phone number, and a professional email address. It should include your contact information.

Education

List your university or college experience. This includes your major or degree path, GPA, institution, and expected graduation date.

Work Experience

This is a section where you include any other internships or other relevant work history. Describe your responsibilities in this role and the skills acquired. Focus on skills or knowledge that would make you a great applicant for the internship program.

Awards and Honors (optional)

If you have received any awards, recognition, or honors for your academic or professional performance, this is your opportunity to highlight those. These display your work ethic and excellence, which lets employers know your dedication to your commitments.

Certifications and Skills

This section displays your professional certifications, projects, and specific skills. These make you stand out from other candidates and display your areas of expertise. Include any special projects, research, certifications, and skills that show your knowledge of the field.

Service/Leadership/Extracurricular Experiences (if applicable)

This area should highlight other activities like service and leadership experience. These experiences should provide information about your passions and interests. Describe your responsibilities in these roles and list skills or knowledge acquired. This demonstrates your ability to manage responsibilities, take initiative, and highlight your ability to make an impact.

Keep in Mind

Your resume should be simple, clean, and professional. Avoid using complex and colorful designs. Keep your resume between one and two pages. It should be easy for employers to read and look over. Double-check you have the correct spelling and grammar before clicking “submit.”

Interview

When applying for internships, you will likely have to attend an interview. Employers use interviews to evaluate candidates based on their character, interest in the company, and skills. It's a way for them to gauge your ability to be successful in their company and to ensure that your goals and interests align with their internship program.

One of the best ways to prepare for an interview is to practice your answers to common interview questions.

Common Interview Questions:

- Tell me about yourself
- What interests you about our company?
- What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- Describe a time you made a mistake or failed. What did you learn?
- Describe a time you worked in a team setting. How do you navigate working in a team?
- What are your career goals?
- What do you hope to gain from this internship?
- What makes you the best candidate for this position?

Information You Should Be Prepared to Discuss

Know the company: Research their mission, values, goals, and products. This allows you to show your commitment to the company and prepares you to answer questions about it.

Review the internship description: Identify your skills, experiences, and knowledge that would apply to the requirements. This will be helpful in having examples of why you are a good fit for the role.

Know your “story”: Be prepared to discuss who you are, your skills, and your interests.

Interview Tips:

- Arrive 5-10 minutes early.
- Dress appropriately for the interview.
- Shake hands with the interviewer.
- Make eye contact.
- Be confident in your answers.
- Be personable and enthusiastic.
- Have 2-3 questions prepared to ask the interviewers relating to the internship or company.

ALABAMA RESOURCES

Public University Resources

Below, we have listed local universities with resources for students and businesses to utilize.

Athens State University

The Career Development Center: assisting students and alumni in career planning, development, and job-seeking strategies. Students and alumni can receive support in the creation of professional documents such as resumes, cover letters, and social media profiles, as well as learn effective interview and job searching techniques.

The university is active in communicating career workshops, internships, and available jobs in the local community with all actively enrolled students.

The SHRM student chapter organization has available workshops, speakers, and co-sponsors career fairs for students, alumni, and the surrounding community. They also announce available internships and job openings via their chapter distribution list.

The university, along with varying partners such as the Athens-Limestone Chamber Foundation, hosts an annual career fair on-campus.

University of North Alabama

UNA has the Career Center available to all current UNA students and alumni, which provides support for any stage of career development. They can assist one-on-one with finding internships, job searching, or changing careers. They also assist with resume and cover letter writing.

UNA has many campus groups that are career, business, and/or workforce oriented, including the Small Business Development Center, Future Business Leaders of America, and SHRM at UNA.

UNA does participate in Career Fairs, which include panels, speakers, and presentations. Many local employers attend.

University of West Alabama (Livingston)

The university offers a variety of career resources through its career center, such as resume and cover letter reviews, career assessments, mock interviews, career counseling, and workshops.

The university also has the Tiger Threads, which is a professional clothing resource for current students to support them in interviews, career fairs, and networking events.

The university hosts the TIGER Career Fair for currently enrolled students, which provides a chance to speak to employers across degree areas and have a professional headshot taken free of charge. The career center hosts many development events, workshops, and learning opportunities.

The Office of Career Development proactively invites employers to connect on campus or virtually with current students and upcoming graduates for internships.

University of South Alabama (Mobile)

USA has a Career Development department which focuses on prospective students through upcoming graduates. This department aids with choosing a career path, helping secure internships or co-op opportunities, and providing interview, resume, and cover letter assistance.

The university focuses on bringing businesses and organizations to their students in the form of Hey Day, which is an option for employers to visit campus and interact with students once each week throughout a semester. They also provide on-campus interview opportunities for businesses, a recruiting platform, and the Jaguar Clothes Closet, which assists students with professional clothing for free.

The university has many career fair events, ranging from specific industries to ones that focus more on volunteer opportunities and internships with local businesses and non-profit organizations.

A job board, Accelerate South, is available for employment opportunities and internships. Employers can register and post their available positions for students.

Alabama State University (Montgomery)

ASU has the Office of Career Services that serves active students, alumni, and works directly with employer sponsors. The Office provides career services such as resume/cover letter help, networking assistance, mentorship opportunities, and prep options for interviews, etc. Workshops and skill-building opportunities are also available.

The University holds various recruitment and job fairs, including targeted options such as a Teacher Recruitment Fair or a USPS Virtual Job Fair.

The Office of Career Services has resources to help students locate internships directly through platforms such as Handshake, internXL, and the INROADS Internship Program.

Auburn University at Montgomery

AUM's Career Development Center helps students and alumni prepare for careers, find internships, and connect with various employers. Students can meet directly with a Career Specialist through Handshake for issues such as career planning, resume and cover letter development, interview prep, and job searching strategies.

The University holds multiple career fairs that are organized by industry (Health, Service, Community, Education and Business, Media, Science, and Technology).

Many of AUM's career services are provided through Handshake.

University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH)

UAH offers multiple services to connect students with professional opportunities. The Career Services Office connects students with internships and co-ops. It also provides professional resume workshops and networking events. Charge Path, powered by Handshake, is UAH's main platform for students and employers to apply and list internship opportunities and information sessions.

UAH's Career Services organizes fall and spring fairs and on-campus interviews that bring employers to campus for direct student engagement. The College of Business offers a Business Career Fair where companies can recruit business students and network.

There are also numerous organization on campus that provides networking and professional development opportunities, such as the Entrepreneurship Club, Connect, Women in Business and Leadership.

Troy University

Troy University's Center for Student Success helps students connect with employers via Handshake, scheduling on-campus interviews, career fairs, and networking events.

Troy University also offers a Co-op Education Program where students can alternate between work and study in professional settings. Troy also offers the Small Business Development Center that supports entrepreneurs and local companies.

Troy University hosts career fairs each semester and allows businesses to sponsor events to speak with students.

Jacksonville State University

JSU has College to Career Initiatives, a specialized career services center offering career advisement, resume and cover letter help, job and internship listings, and more. This center also works with organizing networking and recruiting events for students and local employers.

JSU hosts career workshops and expos to connect students and employers across all majors.

Students can also participate in on-campus employment and positions.

Auburn University

Auburn's Career Services Network is the university's main career center, providing job and internship search support, resume help, interview preparation, and employment engagement strategies.

The Career Discovery Auburn works with employers to facilitate recruitment activities, experiential learning, talent pipelines, and on-campus activities. Auburn also offers career guidance to connect students with industry partners.

Auburn also uses the Handshake platform, co-op programs, and experiential learning opportunities.

Alabama A&M University

Alabama A&M University has a Career Development Services Center that helps students with career coaching, resume support, interview preparation, and internship/co-op placement.

Alabama A&M hosts a fall and spring career fair and part-time job fairs. They also offer employer information sessions, on-campus interviews, and multiple planned weeks dedicated to professional development and career exploration.

Career counseling is another resource available at Alabama A&M. Career counselors assist students and alumni in implementing and exploring career and employment decisions.

The University of Alabama

The University of Alabama aids students in internships and job services through its Career Center. The Career Center helps students with resumes, interviews, and career planning. Students have access to LinkedIn networking assistance, professional headshots, and presentations. The university also provides the Crimson Career Closet, which offers professional clothing for interviews.

The university has stipends for students who have unpaid internships, the Handshake database for job and internship searching, and numerous specialized programs and internships with diverse companies and industries.

There are opportunities on-campus for students to gain experience in a variety of fields. The university provides mentors and advisors to aid students as they navigate exploring and obtaining an internship.

University of Alabama at Birmingham (Birmingham)

The University of Alabama at Birmingham helps prepare students for careers through its Career Center. The Career Center offers resume help, interview practice, and career advising. UAB also utilizes the platform Handshake for job and internship opportunities.

UAB hosts career fairs in the fall and spring and special events for healthcare, business, and STEM studies.

Due to the university's location in Birmingham, AL, students have many internship opportunities with companies like UAB Medicine, Regions Bank, Southern Company, and local technology startups.

University of Montevallo

The University of Montevallo helps students find internships through its Career Development Center. Students receive help with resumes, interviews, and job searches. They can also earn college credit for internships.

The university hosts career fairs in the fall and spring, where students can network with employers and industry partners. Education majors often complete internships in local schools while business and art students work with companies and nonprofit organizations.

Resources in the State of Alabama

Below, we have listed communities with resources for students and businesses to utilize.

Decatur

The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce is very active with the community. They have career fairs, workshops, job postings, skill development, and network and leadership programs starting with children as young as 8th grade.

A Career & Workforce Expo has been held to help connect job seekers with available jobs and organizations in the community. The Chamber of Commerce also partners with Career Connect, which is an online hiring platform.

One of the largest employers in Decatur, Wayne-Sanderson Farms offers an internship program that focuses on experience in live production, plant operations, and corporate skills, manufacturing, healthcare, and food processing.

Tanner

Career fairs and workshops in other nearby towns and cities also encompass Tanner job seekers.

Tanner is known for its industry in farming, food processing, fabrication, and transportation.

Elkmont

Career fairs and workshops in other nearby towns and cities also encompass Elkmont job seekers.

Aviagen, Thomas Welding, and Baccso Cast Stone are key businesses in the area. Aviagen also has an internship program.

Elkmont is known for its industry in manufacturing, welding, and food processing.

Muscle Shoals

The Shoals Chamber of Commerce leads initiatives that support local businesses and expand workforce and education opportunities. They also run programs such as Women in Business, Leadership Shoals, Classroom to Careers, and Shoals Work

The Muscle Shoals Career Academy has hosted career fairs for local job seekers.

Internship opportunities are available through local businesses such as Listerhill.

Muscle Shoals is known for its industry in manufacturing, retail, healthcare, education, and finance

Russellville

The Franklin County Chamber of Commerce advertises various jobs to Russellville job seekers provide various workshops throughout the year for people, including those in college or recent graduates.

The Franklin County Chamber of Commerce has hosted Job and Career Fairs. They also have a Junior Leadership Program, which targets high school juniors

Pilgrim's is a business in the area and also has an internship and a Trainee Program.

Russellville is known for its industry in manufacturing, construction, healthcare, and education.

Tuscumbia

Tuscumbia is covered under the Shoals Chamber of Commerce.

Frito-Lay, a food manufacturer and processor, is one of the more well-known business names located in Tuscumbia. Buffalo Rock is also located there. Pepsi Co. offers internship opportunities for Frito-Lay.

Tuscumbia is known for its industry in manufacturing, retail, finance, and insurance

Demopolis

The Demopolis Area Chamber of Commerce provides community information, events, a business directory, and a job board that is available to the public.

Demopolis hosts various career fairs, such as the Marengo County Hiring Event in 2024 and the State Agency Job Fair in February 2026.

WestRock paper production and Foster Farms are large businesses in the area.

Demopolis is known for its industry in education, business and financial operations, manufacturing, and food processing.

Greensboro

Greensboro is served by the Hale County Chamber of Commerce, which provides various services and events to the community. They also have a job board available for job seekers.

Life, physical, and social science, retail and sales, and food processing and preparation.

Project Horseshoe Farm provides a community health internship for undergraduate and graduate students.

McIntosh

McIntosh is covered under the Mobile Chamber of Commerce. The Mobile Chamber of Commerce provides economic development support, business advocacy, networking events, workforce initiatives, and a public business directory.

Showcase Mobile Career Fair brings students and job seekers together with local employers for networking and recruitment.

Olin Chemical and BASF offer internships and co-ops to connect college students with real-world experience.

McIntosh is known for its industry in natural resources, forestry, and chemical production.

Bay Minette

Bay Minette is covered by the North Baldwin County Chamber of Commerce, which focuses on strengthening its membership through networking and advocacy, supporting economic and business growth, promoting education and workforce alignment, and enhancing community development to improve quality of life.

Baldwin County Veterans Job Fair – brings together over 50 employers to connect directly with Veterans and other job seekers.

Home to several of Baldwin County's largest employers: Novelis Manufacturing, North Baldwin Infirmary, Quincy Compressor, International Paper, and DentalEZ.

Bay Minette is known for its jobs in forestry and manufacturing.

Saraland

Saraland Area Chamber of Commerce provides resources and opportunities for businesses and students in the area by hosting events and operating programs for professional development and networking.

Saraland has hosted career fairs through the Saraland Civic Center, which are free to all job seekers within the community.

Magnetech Industrial Services is one of the key businesses in the area.

Saraland has employers in the education, health, industrial, manufacturing, retail, and construction industries.

Wetumpka

The Wetumpka Chamber of Commerce is available to connect people with local employers, support small businesses and startups, and partner with local schools, colleges, and training programs.

Employer-driven career fairs have been held in Wetumpka to link community members and graduating students with hiring organizations.

Bass Lumber is a well-known sawmill/wholesale business in the area.

The main employers in Wetumpka belong to the manufacturing, wholesale trade, and retail industries.

Pike Road

Pike Road is covered under the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce.

Bullseye Tree Service and The Straw Farm are key businesses in the area. Internship opportunities are a short drive away in Montgomery, at places such as Hyundai Motor. They have jobs in the professional services, construction, and landscape design industries.

Prattville

The Prattville Area Chamber of Commerce serves the community by supporting education and the workforce. They also partner with various businesses to help bring opportunities to the surrounding community.

Various employer-led career and job fairs have been held in Prattville. The Chamber of Commerce has also hosted hiring events in previous years.

Central Alabama Electric Cooperative offers internship opportunities within its engineering department.

Prattville has jobs in the manufacturing, healthcare, retail, and education fields.

Anniston

The Calhoun County Area Chamber of Commerce serves Anniston, AL by providing workforce development and internship services to connect local businesses with job seekers. The Chamber offers job fairs, workforce programs, and small business support.

LIFT Calhoun County is a partnership between the Chamber, the local city schools, industry partners, and higher education institutions to improve workforce development in the area. The chamber also supports multiple programs and initiatives to benefit student professional development, like the FuelAL Program, Youth Entrepreneur Program, and Chamber Young Professionals.

M&H Valve, BAE Systems, and the Anniston Army Depot are prime companies for engineering, health and safety, and technician internships.

Anniston offers many jobs in defense contracting, manufacturing, emergency training, and education.

Dadeville

The Lake Martin Dadeville Area Chamber of Commerce serves Dadeville and provides resources and opportunities for community engagement and professional development.

The local economy is supported by its location near Lake Martin, where many job opportunities can be found related to tourism and lake services. The area also offers manufacturing and industry opportunities with Hellas Fibers.

Enterprise

The Enterprise Chamber of Commerce provides resources, opportunities, and support for businesses and the community. The Chamber offers professional development and networking services like Leadership Coffee County and Young Enterprise Area Professionals. They also offer resources for small businesses within the area relating to business counseling, licensing, and training.

Outside of the Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise has organizations and programs that operate to support businesses and students in the area. Enterprise has Innovate Alabama, connecting

entrepreneurs, investors, and students in the state. The city also contains Main Street Enterprise, which strengthens the business community and partnerships.

Enterprise and the surrounding Wiregrass region have high industry activity in sales, healthcare, banking, and military contracting. There are a high number of internships and positions available in these fields within the area.

Vance

The town of Vance operates under the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama. The chamber offers networking, advocacy, professional development, and marketing opportunities for businesses within the area. They also facilitate internships and jobs and help form connections between students and businesses in the area.

Vance is a major industrial hub in Alabama for automotive manufacturing and logistics. This is due to the presence of Mercedes-Benz U.S. International (MBUSI). The company provides Co-Op and Apprenticeship programs, specialized training programs, and internships.

Selma

Selma operates under the Selma and Dallas County Chamber of Commerce. The chamber hosts a variety of events that support small businesses and partnerships within the community. The chamber has a business directory and calendar that help the community and businesses stay updated on local events and opportunities within the area.

Selma has unique opportunities in industries related to innovation, education, and technology. The community is also known for its Civil Rights history, outdoor activities, and artistry.

Hartselle

Hartselle Area Chamber of Commerce offers resources and opportunities for networking and building Hartselle businesses. The chamber has initiatives like the Entrepreneurial Center, which offers business coaching, financial guidance, and networking opportunities for new businesses. The chamber also has resources like the Business Beacon for getting updates on events and businesses in the area.

The Hartselle area has a large industry for manufacturing in the area. The area has key industrial and manufacturing companies like Excel Interior Doors, Sonoco Products, Cerro Wire and Cable, and USA Concrete.

Calera

Calera is primarily served by the Shelby County Chamber of Commerce. However, the area does have a Calera Chamber of Commerce and Calera Main Street, which provide support and resources to local businesses in the area.

There are multiple job fairs around the Calera area, like the Staffmark job fair, the Alabaster Career Center “second Tuesday” fair, and others in the broader Birmingham region.

Calera has industries in mining, manufacturing, and construction. Due to its closeness to I-65, it also has distribution and transportation jobs and internship opportunities.

Opelika

The Opelika Chamber of Commerce offers experiential and professional opportunities to promote local businesses and connect students to the workforce in the area. They host industry tours that connect job seekers, students, and community leaders to the area’s employers. They also offer programs like Lee County Young Leaders (LCYL), Opelika Young Professionals (OYP), and 20 Under 40 to build leadership and networking experience in the area. These programs target high schoolers to professionals in the area. In addition to this, the chamber hosts events and has resources for businesses, job seekers, and students in the area.

Opelika has a large manufacturing industry, specifically in automotive parts, food production, and technology. With key employers such as the Northeast Opelika Industrial Park and the Opelika Innovation and Technology Park, Niagara Bottling, GMB USA, and a strong local small business community, the area offers extensive internship and professional opportunities for students and job seekers.

Tuskegee

Tuskegee Area Chamber of Commerce supports Macon County in business advocacy and growth in the area. The chamber offers support to small businesses, hosts events for the community, and builds partnerships within the area.

Tuskegee offers jobs in academia through Tuskegee University as well as industrial and logistics jobs in the Tuskegee Commerce Park.

Appendix F: Campus Outreach Reports

Final Report Template

Report on Your Campus Presentations. Fill in approx. a paragraph for each prompt. Feel free to add any additional information. Please include a copy of your PowerPoint and any photos of you making your presentations.

Introduction:

Greetings! My name is Cameron Prim, and I decided to serve on the SRC because I am deeply invested in the future of Alabama and the role that young professionals can play in shaping a stronger, more economically stable state. As a student, I have witnessed the opportunities and difficulties associated with developing career paths, maintaining talent, and building sustainable communities. One of the most important lessons I've learned this year is the importance of early engagement; when students are introduced to possibilities, leadership pathways, and clear examples of economic success in the state, they are far more likely to think about establishing their life in Alabama.

Presentation Overview:

Throughout this experience, I presented to over 100 students across my campus, reaching a diverse range of audiences including student organizations, leadership groups, and general student populations. I intentionally selected these groups to ensure I was not only speaking to students already interested in civic or professional development, but also those who may not have previously considered their long-term impact on Alabama's economy. My presentations centered on raising awareness of what types of careers each region has to offer, quality of life, and professionals' contributions to the state's advancement. I used interactive conversations, real-world examples of successful Alabama-based initiatives and natives, and open dialogue so students could express their opinions about staying in or leaving the state after graduation to make my presentations more interesting.

Evaluation

Were your presentations effective? What, if any, feedback did you receive? Is there anything you might do differently if you did this again?

Overall, my presentations were effective in generating meaningful conversations and increasing awareness. Many students expressed that they had not previously thought about how their individual career decisions could impact Alabama's economic future. Feedback indicated that students appreciated the interactive format and the opportunity to openly discuss their concerns, particularly around job availability, salary competitiveness, and quality of life. One consistent takeaway was that students want to stay in Alabama but need clearer pathways and stronger incentives to do so. If I were to do this again, I would incorporate more direct connections to employers, such as guest speakers or partnerships

Dejuan Trotman

Alabama State University

Student Retention Council 2026

Final Report

Introduction:

My name is Dejuan Trotman, a graduating senior majoring in Accounting from Lumpkin, Georgia, and I have the honor of serving as the 72nd SGA Executive President at Alabama State University. My reason for wanting to serve on the Student Retention Council was to better understand the resources available to our students so I could share that knowledge with my peers across campus and throughout Alabama. Being part of this council allowed me to stay informed and actively contribute to improving student success and retention. This year, I have learned how to advocate more effectively, especially when engaging with state professionals and educational leaders. That experience has strengthened my confidence in representing student needs with clarity and purpose. I look forward to continuing this work and helping create meaningful solutions that support our students here in Alabama.

Presentation Overview:

As part of my work this year, I strategically tailored my presentations on the quality of life in Alabama to two key groups: my fellow SGA members and the International Students Association. I selected these audiences because SGA leaders play a direct role in shaping student experiences, while international students often face unique challenges that make understanding local resources especially important. In each presentation, I focused on making the information relevant to their lived experiences, highlighting topics such as community resources, safety, cost of living, and quality of life here. To make the sessions more engaging and interactive, I created a customized Kahoot quiz that allowed participants to test their knowledge on the material we discussed. This not only reinforced key points but also helped me gauge how well the information resonated with each group. Through these presentations, I was able to reach a diverse range of students and ensure that the content was both informative and accessible.

Evaluation

I believe my presentation was highly effective because many of the students I spoke with were unfamiliar with the quality-of-life here in Alabama. As I was researching and preparing the material, I even found myself surprised by how much I didn't know, which confirmed that my audience would benefit from the information. During the sessions, students expressed that they learned things they had never heard before, and several shared that the presentation helped them better understand and want to engage more in the community they live in. The Kahoot quiz was especially well-received because it made the learning experience interactive and allowed students to test their knowledge in a fun way.

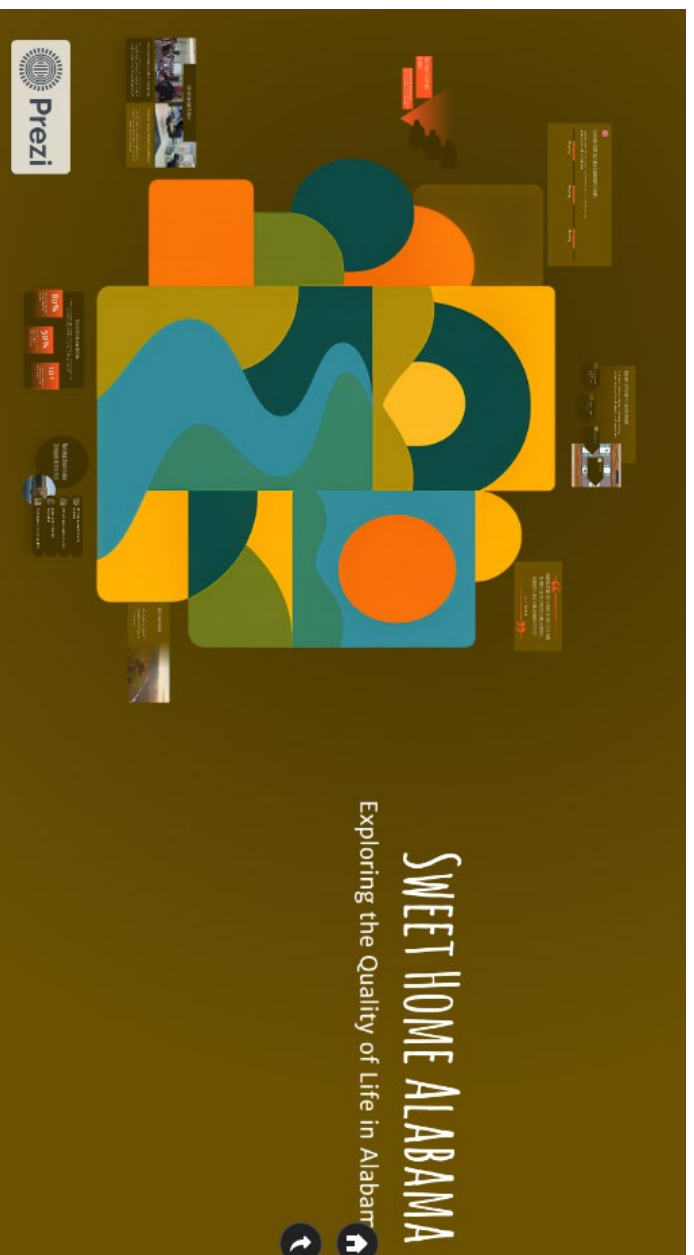
Recommendations:

Based on my presentations and the feedback I received from my peers, one of the most important recommendations I would make to community leaders is to increase their direct

engagement with our university. Many students expressed that they were unaware of the opportunities, resources, and activities available in the surrounding area, which shows a clear need for more intentional outreach. Community leaders should collaborate more closely with campus departments, especially Student Life, to host events, share information, and create consistent visibility for local programs and career pathways. Strengthening these partnerships would help students feel more connected to the community and reduce the perception that “there’s nothing to do here.” Additionally, offering on-campus workshops, internships, and networking sessions would allow students to build relationships with local organizations before graduation. By being present, accessible, and proactive, community leaders can better position themselves to recruit talented graduates from our university.

Conclusion:

Overall, this experience has been incredibly meaningful and has strengthened my commitment to supporting student success at Alabama State University. Through my conversations with peers, I gained a deeper understanding of how important it is for students to feel informed, connected, and supported both on campus and within the broader Alabama community. I also learned how to advocate more effectively, especially when engaging with state professionals and community leaders. This opportunity allowed me to grow as a leader while helping others gain valuable knowledge about the resources available to them. I am grateful to everyone who participated, offered feedback, and encouraged these efforts. Shoutout to my cohort, it was a pleasure working with all of you and to the HigherED Partnership, thank you for allowing me to contribute to this work and for trusting me to help elevate the student experience at ASU.



with local businesses, to provide students with tangible next steps and networking opportunities.

Recommendations:

Based on your presentation and feedback from your peers, what are some recommendations you might make to community leaders aiming to recruit graduates from your university?

Based on my presentations and peer feedback, I would recommend that community leaders and employers take a more proactive and visible approach to recruiting graduates. First, there needs to be stronger collaboration between universities and local industries to create internship pipelines that lead directly to full-time employment. Second, companies should engage with students earlier in their academic careers, not just during senior year, to build relationships and brand awareness. Third, highlighting competitive salaries, career advancement opportunities, and quality-of-life benefits in Alabama is essential to changing student perceptions. Additionally, creating mentorship programs that connect students with young professionals already succeeding in the state can help make career paths feel more attainable. Finally, investing in innovation, entrepreneurship, and diverse career fields will make Alabama more attractive to graduates with a wide range of interests and skills.

Conclusion:

Wrap it up! Summary, last points or ideas about your experience, thank yous etc.

This experience has been incredibly valuable in strengthening my communication skills, leadership abilities, and understanding of workforce development in Alabama. Presenting to over 100 students allowed me to not only share important information but also listen and learn from my peers' perspectives. It reinforced my belief that students are willing to contribute to Alabama's growth if they feel supported and see clear opportunities for success. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve, engage with my campus community, and contribute to conversations about building a stronger, more economically stable Alabama. I look forward to continuing this work outside of the SRC and helping bridge the gap between students, universities, and the workforce.

Ellanora Slusser

Student Retention Council

The University of Alabama

SRC Final Report 25-26

April 20th, 2026

Introduction:

My name is Ellanora Slusser, and I am a sophomore at the University of Alabama studying Apparel and Textiles with concentrations in Apparel Design and Fashion Retailing, along with minors in Sales and Digital Consumer Engagement. I wanted to serve on the Student Retention Committee (SRC) after participating in the Anchor Tuscaloosa program and Fuel Alabama initiatives. These programs highlighted the benefits of staying in Alabama for education and career opportunities, as well as the impact on both students and the state economy.

Through these experiences, I realized how valuable it is to share the benefits of Alabama with other students in a direct and meaningful way. I joined SRC to give other students a similar perspective without needing to go through multiple programs. One of the most important things I learned this year is how much one voice can impact change. Speaking to over 400 students across campus showed me that even a single conversation can shift perspectives and influence future decisions.

Presentation Overview:

I presented to approximately 400 freshmen, 16 sophomores, 2 juniors, and 4 post-graduate adults across two presentations. My first presentation was with the Freshman Forum class, where I spoke to freshmen and a small group of staff/adult participants. I selected this

group because freshmen are in a key decision-making stage and still forming their connection to the state, making them ideal for student retention messaging. I also chose this group due to accessibility and the opportunity to reach a large audience efficiently.

My second presentation was within my sorority, where I spoke to sophomores, juniors, and freshmen. Although smaller in size, this group allowed for more discussion and engagement. For freshmen, I emphasized experiences such as national parks, football games, concerts, and festivals to highlight the lifestyle and enjoyment Alabama offers. For upperclassmen, I focused more on cost of living, internships, and career opportunities, emphasizing Alabama as a smart financial and professional decision as well as a fun place to live.

Evaluation

Overall, I believe my presentations were effective because they generated thoughtful questions and meaningful engagement from my audience. Many students asked follow-up questions about my personal experiences and the opportunities I discussed, which showed genuine interest and reflection. I was able to answer confidently based on my own experiences living and studying in Alabama, which helped strengthen my credibility.

If I were to complete this experience again, I would aim to present to a more diverse range of student groups. Some of my planned presentations did not occur due to scheduling conflicts, so I would be more proactive in scheduling and follow-up. I would also emphasize internship and career pathways earlier in my presentations to better reach upperclassmen audiences.

Recommendations:

Based on my experience, I recommend increasing awareness of internships and career

opportunities available throughout Alabama. Many students are unaware of programs in cities such as Montgomery, Mobile, Birmingham, and Huntsville. Expanding marketing efforts through platforms like Handshake and prioritizing Alabama-based internships would significantly improve visibility.

Additionally, offering incentives such as housing support or structured internship pathways could encourage more students to remain in-state. Strengthening partnerships between universities, businesses, and state organizations would also help create more opportunities and make staying in Alabama a more attractive long-term option for graduates.

Conclusion:

This experience has been incredibly rewarding, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve on SRC. It has strengthened my communication skills and deepened my appreciation for the state of Alabama. I would highly recommend this experience to others and would love the opportunity to participate again in the future.

I want to thank Mayor Gordon, Alexi Bolton, and the Higher Education Department for their leadership and support throughout this program. I am thankful for the opportunity to represent Alabama and share its value with so many students.

Presentation Link:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1PTxb4QLIO2waSSuECTabkLNCwi0R7uNC/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=110052051939328022124&rtopf=true&sd=true>

SRC Final Report- Ashlyn Hill from the University of Alabama at Birmingham

My name is Ashlyn Hill, I am a senior majoring in Kinesiology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. I am a proud woman of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated and involved in a variety of organizations and boards on my campus. I believe that the voice of the students is what keeps UAB diverse and connected with their students to attract students from every walk of life. I wanted to serve on the Student Retention Council to take what I have learned at UAB and apply it on a larger scale. I wanted to be a voice that would force local leaders to think of what young people need in Alabama. Being born and raised in Alabama, I have experienced the good and bad sides of my beautiful state but, being able to highlight and expand on what would help grow was truly impactful. I learned that there is so much more to Alabama than what people may know. It is a variety of experiences that are not known around the state that need more attention to attract more people to the area.

For my presentations, being apart of a D9 sorority I was able to reach around 100+ different members of the different organizations. I also was able to share with some of the panhellenic sororities in a smaller capacity. I feel these groups were more impactful because they are very impactful and involved on campus with connections to different groups to spark more conversation. For the D9 organizations I focused on what Alabama has to offer in terms of service and engagement alongside opportunities for growth because being black in Alabama draws the question of where do I belong and how can I comfortably make a living here? Changing the narrative and highlighting the innovated side of Alabama changed the way of thinking from the past and shed light to the growth of what is to come. In comparison, for the panhellenic sororities I focused more on discussing settling down and creating a comfortable and affordable future with numerous

opportunities from growth in different areas in Alabama. This allowed the girls to consider life in different parts of Alabama such as Huntsville and Mobile rather than just Hoover. With each discussion I posed the question of why/why not Alabama?

My presentations were effective and had transitional conversations that allowed the group to build on what they know and love about Alabama. I do believe that more students are considering life in Alabama, just outside of Birmingham. Many of the students felt “trapped” in Birmingham due to this being where they have matured in college. After discussing the range of opportunities and benefits of north and south Alabama, perspectives of Alabama began to shift. The most appealing statistic was that Alabama has the lowest cost of living followed by plenty of ways to grow in careers locally. The issue of a weak job market did create pushback for some students in certain areas outside of healthcare which is something that I do agree Alabama needs to begin to explore for more career opportunities such as marketing. I valued my conversational style presentation. It allowed for more flow and an easier way to hear from more students because it was a comfortable and less professional environment. I think the other students liked to hear ideas and even have their own rebuttals and facts or opinions on topics which are helpful to guide the conversation around the room.

To the community leaders, I would tell them to come to the students. Each student has an opinion or idea on something, and it is not as easy for us to get to them as it is an alternative. I think that the leaders who truly want to know more and hear from the students should prioritize them as not only voters but as people. Create those relationships with students on campus and provide information regarding new legal topics that involve them or need a younger perspective. I think that even having a variety of student leaders on student board at each public

university in Alabama that works and speaks directly to the state legislation directly to vocalize concerns and discuss better ways to innovate Alabama. Recruiting cannot effectively happen without being sought after. I think they need to go to the audience they want to serve and hear from!

In conclusion, my experience with the Student Retention Council offered me a plethora of opportunities and insight into a state I thought I knew everything about. I think this experience was beneficial to me as I was able to see and learn about different parts of Alabama and be involved in different ways that I did not think a student would be able. I think that having an honest conversation of constructive criticism is a leading factor of having change made. I thank Mr. Gordon Stone and his lovely team for connecting me with some of the most engaged student leaders around the state. It was truly powerful for us all to work together towards a common goal for the overall good of our beloved state. Serving my senior year on this committee has even changed how I see Alabama and has made me want to be more involved and informed on the local leaders. Sad to be a college senior in Alabama but excited to stay a resident of Alabama!

Introduction:

My name is Ayden McArthur, and I'm a student at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. I wanted to serve on the SRC because I've always wanted to be a part of something bigger than just my own college experience. It felt like a real chance to make an impact that actually mattered. Looking back on this year, probably the biggest thing I took away is just how great Alabama really is. I didn't fully appreciate it before, but this experience helped me see everything this state has to offer.

Presentation Overview:

This year, I gave two presentations — one to my fraternity brothers in Pi Kappa Alpha and one to my peers in SGA. Between the two, I got to reach around 120 students. I picked these groups mainly because they were the most accessible to me, and I knew I could have real conversations with them. I also tried to make each presentation fit the group I was talking to rather than just giving the same speech twice. With my Pike brothers, I focused more on outdoor recreation and things to do in Alabama, since I knew that'd land better with them. With SGA, I leaned into civic engagement since that's more their thing. I think that approach made a big difference.

Evaluation:

Both presentations seemed to go over pretty well. People were engaged, and the vibe in the room felt positive, so I left feeling good about how things went. I didn't get a whole lot of formal feedback, but honestly, the reactions in the moment told me enough. If I'm being real, I wouldn't change much about how I did it. I think choosing groups I was already comfortable with and adjusting the content for each audience were the right moves, and I'd do the same thing again.

Recommendations:

The biggest thing I'd tell community leaders is to really push just how much stuff there is to do in Huntsville. Seriously, there is something going on every single day for just about every type of person. I think a lot of students don't fully realize that until it's pointed out to them. When young graduates are deciding where to settle down, the quality of life outside of work matters a lot. Huntsville has that in a big way: outdoor activities, local events, civic stuff, you name it. If leaders can get that message in front of students early, I think it goes a long way in keeping graduates in Alabama.

Conclusion:

Overall, this was honestly just a really fun experience, and I'm glad I did it. On top of whatever impact I made, I personally got a lot out of it, too, especially with public speaking. I'm way more comfortable presenting than I was before, and that's something I'll carry with me. It felt good to be part of something meaningful, and I feel like I accomplished what I set out to do. I just want to say a big thank you to everyone on the SRC staff. You all made this an amazing experience, and I really appreciate the opportunity.

RETAIN ALABAMA

Retain Alabama is an initiative from the Alabama State legislature and the Alabama Innovation Corporation, designed to focus on in-state college and university students and encourage them to remain in Alabama to live and work upon or following graduation.

There are so many opportunities not just for students, but for graduates to make their mark right here in Sweet Home Alabama!

How well do you know Alabama? Answers

- 1) T: It became a permanent seat of government in 1846.
- 2) Northern Flicker: Also known as the Yellow-Hammer.
- 3) T: Alabama was the first U.S. State to declare Christmas a legal holiday in 1836.
- 4) 67 counties
- 5) Some examples include Montgomery Whitewater, Little River Canyon National Preserve, and more!
- 6) T: Alabama has among the top 25 most affordable places to live in the united states.

GREAT JOB!!!

Alabama and its hidden treasures

By: Tyreanna C.

Student Retention
Council

STUDENT RETENTION COUNCIL

Out of 67 counties the Student Retention Council or SRC has picked representatives from public four-year institutions in the 14 counties to bring a student voice to the table and share about the work of Retain Alabama with you, our peers, and to represent your thoughts, opinions, and concerns to State and Community leaders.

Follow the SRC On Instagram:
@src.al



How well do you know Alabama?

- 1) T/F: The capital of Alabama is Montgomery.
- 2) What is Alabama's state bird?
- 3) T/F: Alabama was the first U.S. State to declare Christmas a legal holiday in 1836.
- 4) How many counties does Alabama have?
- 5) What are some attractions that Alabama has?
- 6) T/F: Alabama has among the top 25 most affordable places to live in the united states.

*See answers on the back

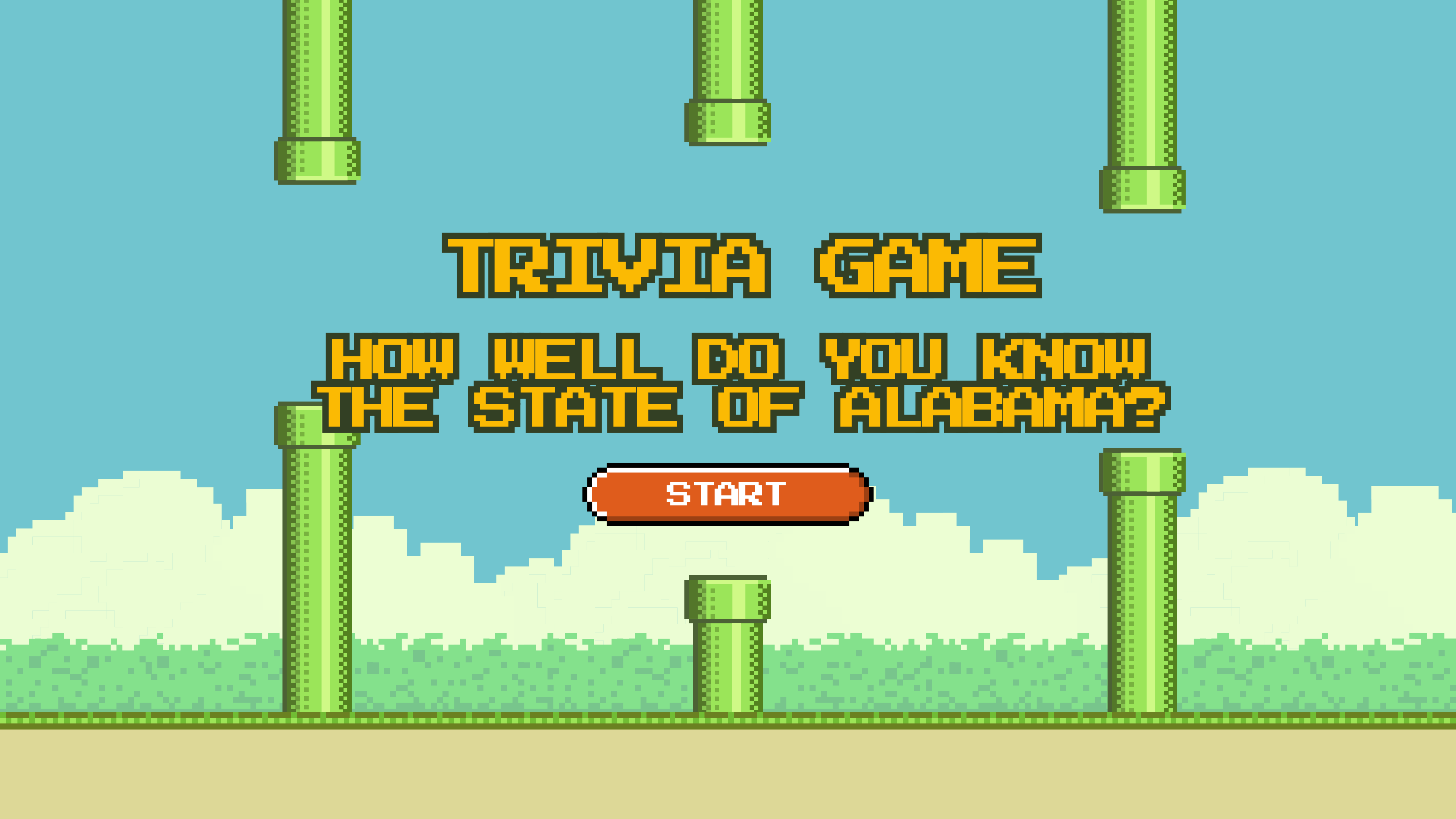
THE HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

The Higher Education Partnership...

- communicates the value of higher education in bettering the lives of Alabamians.
- represent Alabama's 14 public universities.
- hosts the SRC
- host the STARS program
- thrive on bringing together student leaders to advocate for solutions to key issues in the State.

www.higheredpartners.org





TRIVIA GAME

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW
THE STATE OF ALABAMA?

START

HOW TO PLAY

THERE WILL BE 2 DIFFERENT TYPES OF
QUESTIONS!

MULTIPLE
CHOICE

TRUE OR
FALSE

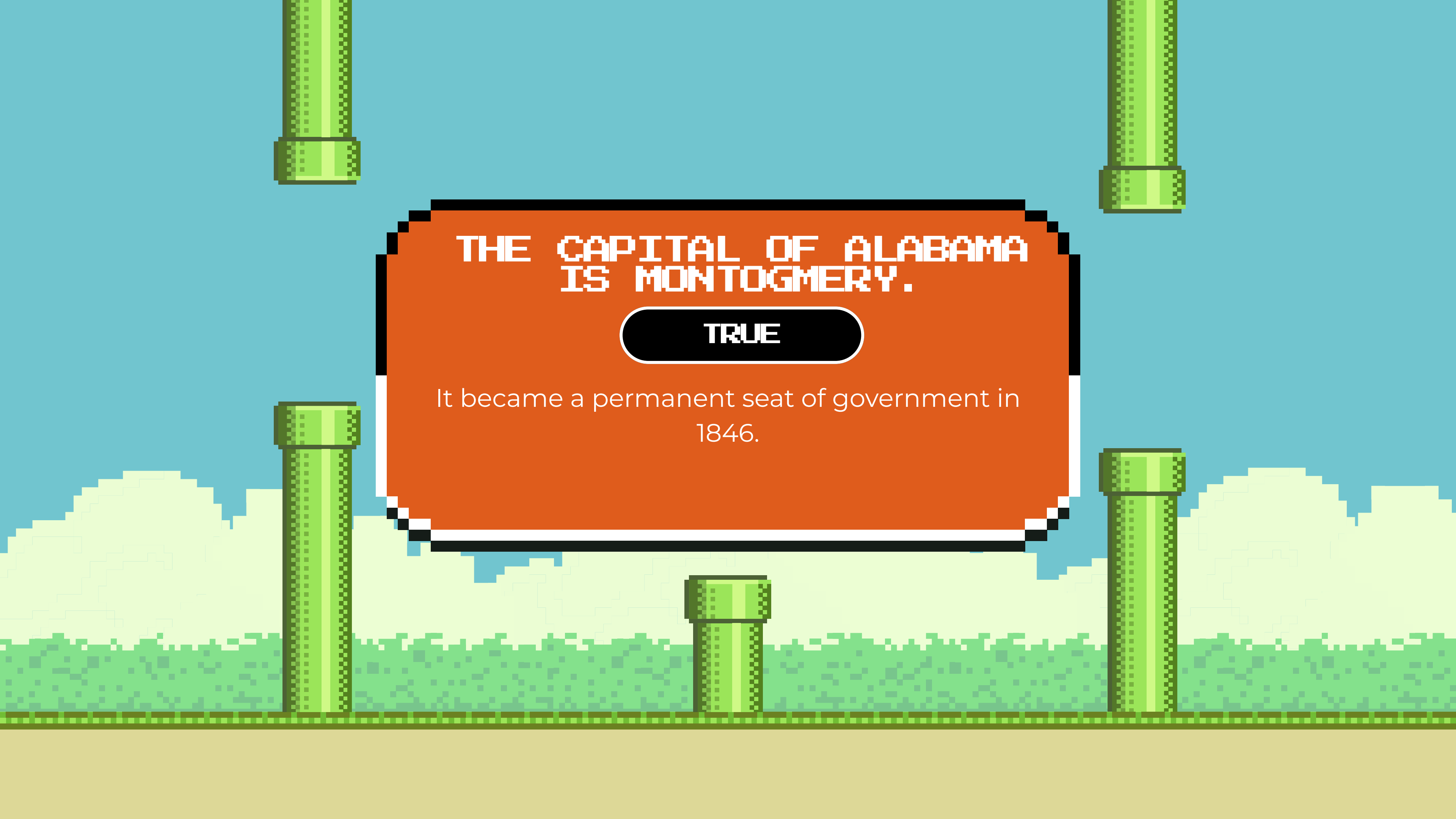
CONTINUE

TRUE OR FALSE

THE CAPITAL OF ALABAMA
IS MONTGOMERY.

TRUE

FALSE



THE CAPITAL OF ALABAMA
IS MONTGOMERY.

TRUE

It became a permanent seat of government in
1846.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

WHAT IS ALABAMA'S
STATE BIRD?

A. NORTHERN
FLICKER

B. SPARROW

C. HOOPOE

D. WOODPECKER



WHAT IS ALABAMA'S STATE BIRD?

**A. NORTHERN
FLICKER**

Also known as the Yellow-Hammer, it nests in woodland areas with dead trees or poles. Its nickname comes from a Huntsville cavalry unit who were called the “yellowhammer company” because of the “yellow bits of cloth on the sleeves, collars, and coattails of their new uniforms.”

TRUE OR FALSE

ALABAMA WAS THE FIRST
U.S. STATE TO DECLARE
CHRISTMAS A LEGAL
HOLIDAY IN 1836.

TRUE

FALSE

TRUE OR FALSE

ALABAMA WAS THE FIRST
U.S. STATE TO DECLARE
CHRISTMAS A LEGAL
HOLIDAY IN 1836.

TRUE

FALSE

MULTIPLE CHOICE

HOW MANY COUNTIES
DOES ALABAMA HAVE?

A. 32

B. 14

C. 67

D. 5

HOW MANY COUNTIES DOES ALABAMA HAVE?

C. 67

There are 67 counties in AL with Baldwin as the largest county in Alabama and Etowah county as the smallest county in Alabama.

Out of those 67 counties the Student Retention Council or SRC has picked representatives from public four-year institutions in the 14 counties to bring a student voice to the table and share about the work of Retain Alabama with you, our peers, and to represent your thoughts, opinions, and concerns to State and Community leaders.

STUDENT RETENTION COUNCIL



HOSTED BY:
THE HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

THE HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

- The Higher Education Partnership communicates the value of higher education in bettering the lives of Alabamians. They represent Alabama's 14 public universities.
- In addition to hosting the SRC, they host the STARS program, bringing together student leader to advocate for solutions to key issues in the State.

www.higheredpartners.org



THE HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

Retain Alabama is an initiative from the Alabama State legislature and the Alabama Innovation Corporation, designed to focus on in-state college and university students and encourage them to remain in Alabama to live and work upon or following graduation.

We started small, taking steps to ensure positive impacts before going full swing. Now, thanks to new developments across the state—and across the country—this place is booming! There are so many opportunities not just for students, but for graduates to make their mark right here in *Sweet Home Alabama!*

WHY ALABAMA?

Quality of life

Cost of Living

Career Opportunities

MULTIPLE CHOICE

QUALITY OF LIFE:
WHAT ARE SOME
ATTRACTIONS THAT
ALABAMA HAS?

A. MONTGOMERY
WHITEWATER

B. NATIONAL
PEANUT FESTIVAL

C. LITTLE RIVER
CANYON NATIONAL
PRESERVE

D. THE CIVIL
RIGHTS MEMORIAL
CENTER

A. MONTGOMERY WHITEWATER

The newly built Montgomery Whitewater offers rafting, kayaking, ziplining, and more. Some cool features including walking trails, dining, live entertainment and a variety of adventurous activities.

B. NATIONAL PEANUT FESTIVAL

Alabama also hosts the National Peanut Festival, the annual National Shrimp Festival in Gulf Shores, and a host of breweries and vineyards statewide.

C. LITTLE RIVER CANYON NATIONAL PRESERVE

Alabama is home to dozens of state and national parks and sites, including the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail and Little River Canyon National Preserve. Here, you can enjoy activities like golfing, hiking, mountain biking, and ziplining!

D. THE CIVIL RIGHTS MEMORIAL CENTER

Alabama is home to dozens of state and national parks and sites, including the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail and Little River Canyon National Preserve. Here, you can enjoy activities like golfing, hiking, mountain biking, and ziplining!

BONUS!!!

QUALITY OF LIFE:
CAN YOU NAME ANY MORE
ATTRACTIONS, PLACES, OR
HANGOUT SPOTS IN
ALABAMA?

TRUE OR FALSE

COST OF LIVING:
ALABAMA HAS AMONG THE
TOP 25 MOST AFFORDABLE
PLACES TO LIVE IN THE
UNITED STATES.

TRUE

FALSE

TRUE OR FALSE

COST OF LIVING:
ALABAMA HAS AMONG THE
TOP 25 MOST AFFORDABLE
PLACES TO LIVE IN THE
UNITED STATES.

TRUE

FALSE

COST OF LIVING:

- **The top 25 most** affordable places to live in the United States are Anniston, AL at #9 Dothan AL at #18 according to **U.S. News & World Report.**
- Compared with all other states, Alabama is **ranked #10 in cost of living.**
- Average grocery costs here are 3 percent lower than the national average. The cost of living in Alabama for a single person is about \$2,203 a month.
- Alabama is **the fourth cheapest place in the U.S. to buy a house**, with an average price of \$203,153.
- The typical apartment-dweller in Alabama **spends \$1,000 a month** on housing.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

- Birmingham is a very valuable city within the state of Alabama and is extremely attractive to young professionals looking to start a career. Top employers in the area are UAB Medical, Regions Financial Corporation, and Brookwood Baptist Health.
- Alabama is home to a significant amount of job opportunities for college graduates seeking employment. Huntsville, Birmingham, Mobile and many other areas of the state all bring unique and lucrative opportunities to the table- the only thing missing is you!
- Mobile, Alabama hosts an enormous amount of economic opportunity-and with economic opportunity existing, that means job opportunities exist. Major employers such as Airbus, Alabama Port Authority and the University of South Alabama want Alabama college graduates to come work for them.
- North Alabama is home to a tremendous amount of workforce opportunity for young professionals, with NASA, Redstone Arsenal, and HudsonAlpha to list a few.
- Central Alabama is home to growing tech corridors and the State's capitol, offering careers in management, local politics, nonprofits, organizing, engineering and forestry.
- The south-eastern area of Central Alabama, including Montgomery, Troy, Auburn, Alexander City, and more. A large part of Alabama's agriculture practices take place in the southern part of Central Alabama

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES: AUM JOB FINDING RESOURCES

- AUM Career Development Center (located on the 3rd floor of the Taylor Center room 323): An AUM resource that provides students...
 - + A career specialist in Handshake
 - + A resume reviewer
 - + Mock interviews
 - + A student interview suite
- + An advisor to help them find jobs, internships, and job shadowing opportunities
- State of Alabama Day at Auburn University at Montgomery
- Career Fairs

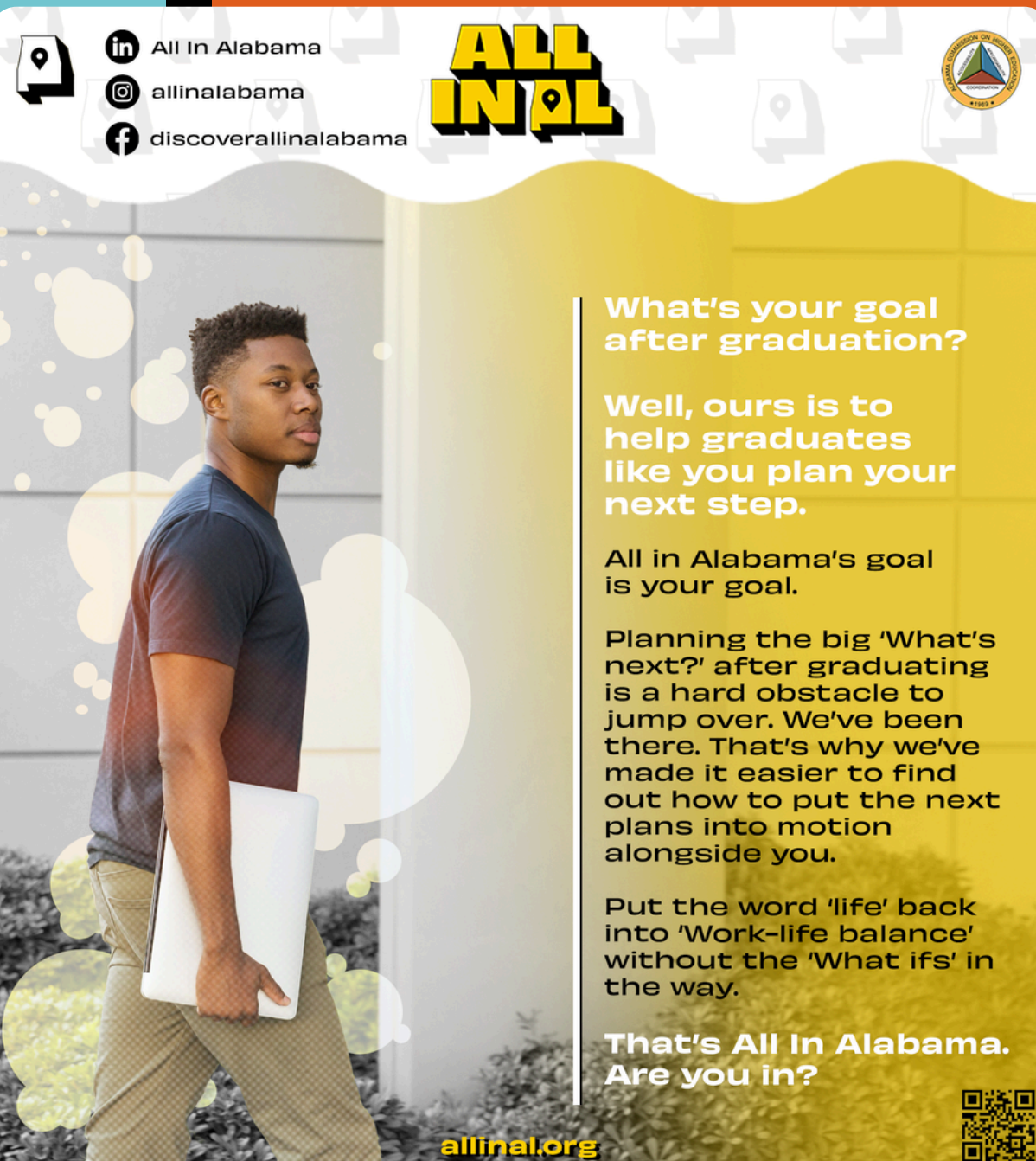
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- We are working to prevent biases and barriers throughout the talent journey, including recruiting effectiveness, work environment and pay data.
- Major companies in the state, like NACME, work to provide opportunities for underrepresented communities, including recruitment of new and diverse talent and providing scholarships and aid to STEM students.
- Local civic groups provide many opportunities for young professionals to engage in leadership.
- Many young professionals in Alabama are able to get involved and make a difference in their community - from running for office, to serving through civic clubs and religious organizations and beyond.

ALL IN ALABAMA

“All in Alabama is an ACHE statewide initiative aimed at retaining current and former graduates within the state. By keeping these highly qualified and educated individuals in Alabama’s workforce, the initiative seeks to enhance the state’s educational attainment and workforce capacity, leading to a stronger economy and improved quality of life for all Alabamians.”

According to the Alabama Commision on Higher Education, but there’s more to it than that! Alabama is thriving now more than ever, and it’s up to us to take advantage of that. More information on cities, jobs, and fun can be found [here!](#)



  All In Alabama
 allinalabama
 discoverallinalabama

ALL IN AL



What's your goal after graduation?

Well, ours is to help graduates like you plan your next step.

All in Alabama's goal is your goal.

Planning the big 'What's next?' after graduating is a hard obstacle to jump over. We've been there. That's why we've made it easier to find out how to put the next plans into motion alongside you.

Put the word 'life' back into 'Work-life balance' without the 'What ifs' in the way.

That's All In Alabama. Are you in?

allinal.org



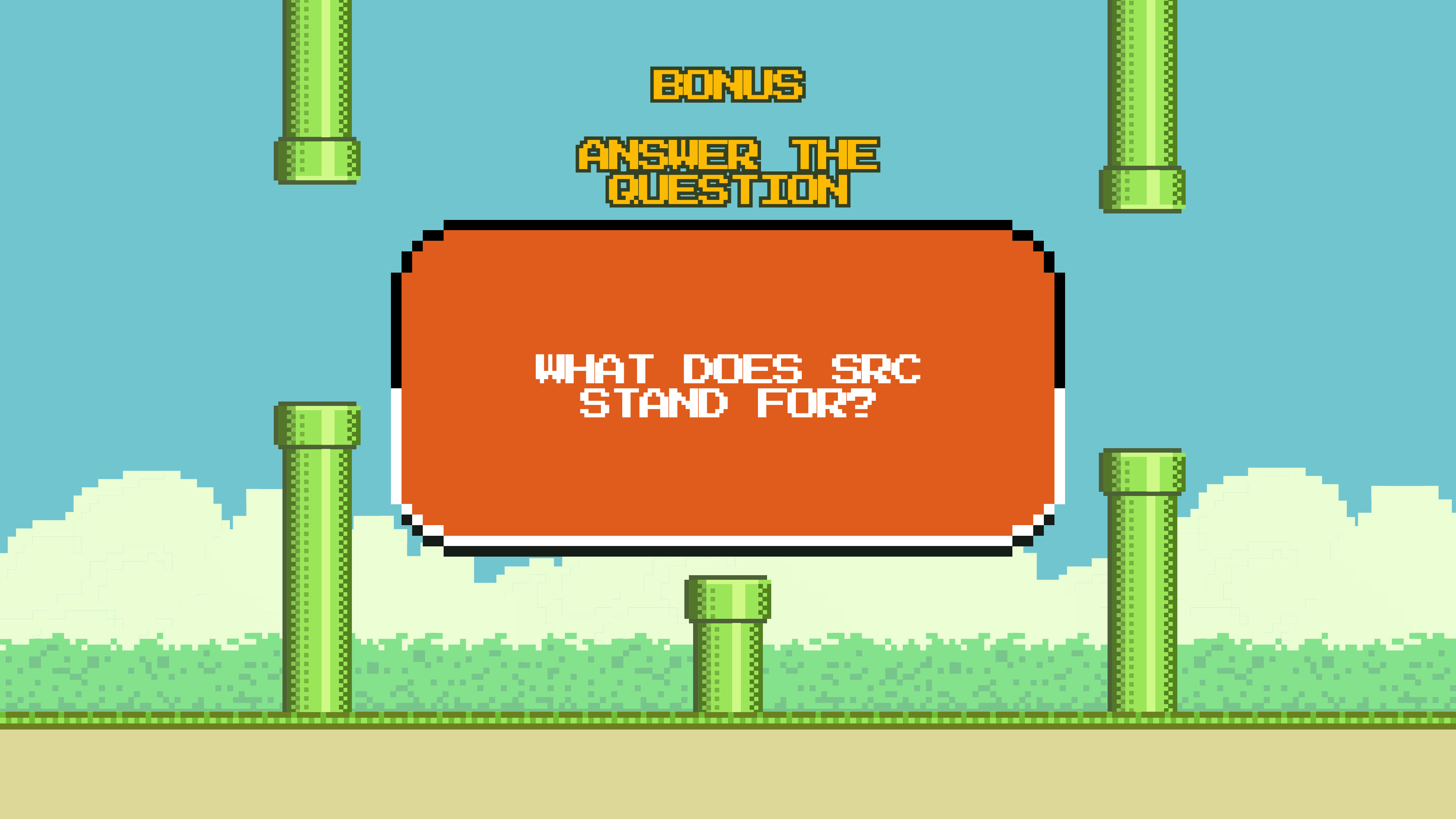
OTHER RESOURCES

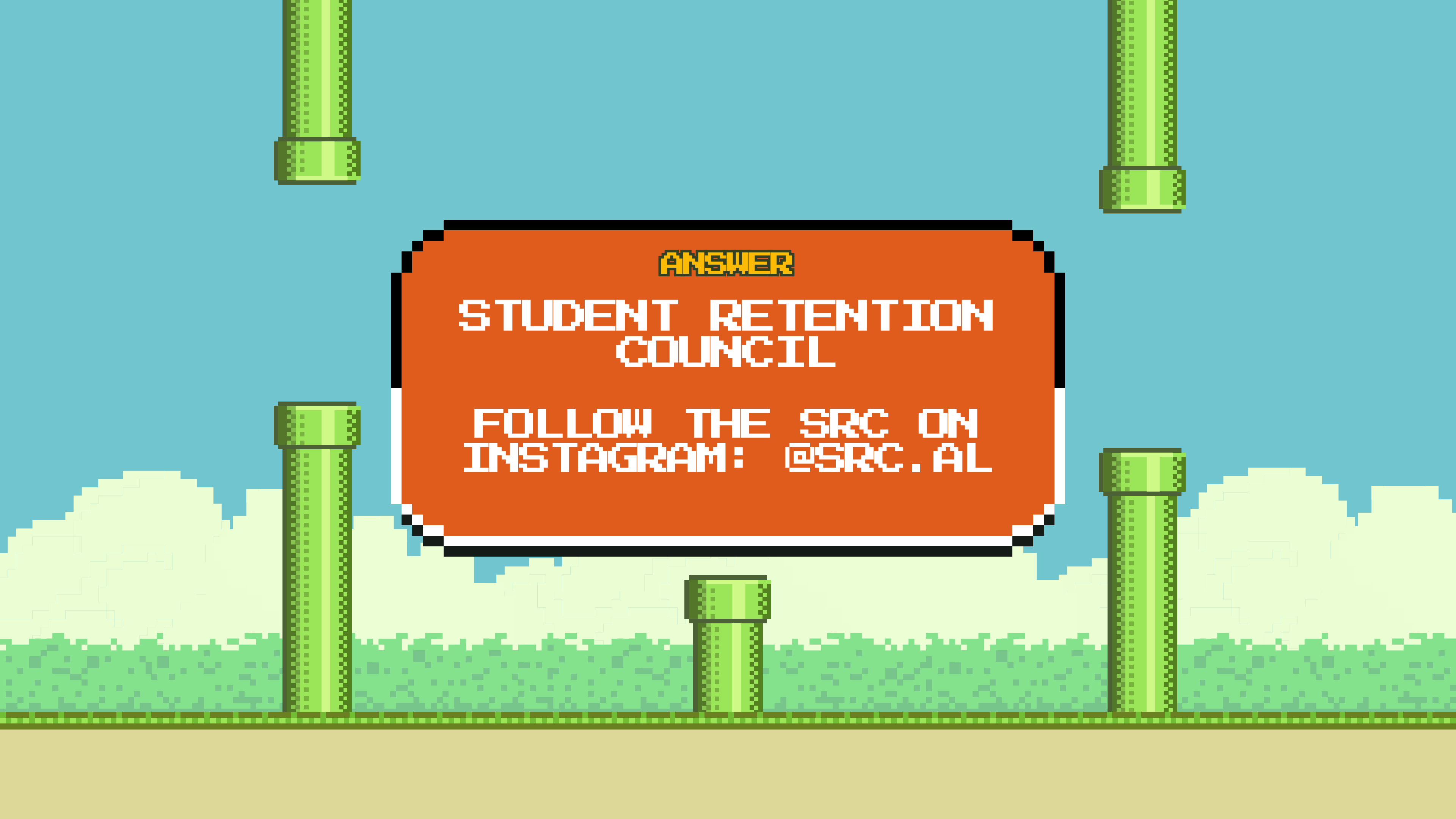
- Seekalabama.com - A guide to any and all outdoor recreational activities in Alabama.
- handshake.com - By using your aum login, this is a resource through the school that provides jobs, internships, and potential opportunities at a click of a finger.
- AlabamaTravels.com - A guide to all things Alabama including locations, activities, and opportunities for native and new Alabamians.

BONUS

ANSWER THE
QUESTION

WHAT DOES SRC
STAND FOR?



The image is a pixelated graphic in a Super Mario Bros. style. It features a light blue sky, a green grassy ground, and white pixelated clouds. There are four green warp pipes: two floating in the sky and two on the ground. A large, rounded red sign with a black border is centered in the image. The sign contains text in a pixelated font. The word "ANSWER" is at the top in yellow. Below it, "STUDENT RETENTION COUNCIL" is written in white. At the bottom, "FOLLOW THE SRC ON INSTAGRAM: @SRC.AL" is written in white.

ANSWER

STUDENT RETENTION
COUNCIL

FOLLOW THE SRC ON
INSTAGRAM: @SRC.AL

The image is a pixelated screenshot of the 'Thank You' screen from the Super Mario Bros. game. The background is a solid light blue sky. At the bottom, there is a green grassy ground with a thin brown line representing the ground level. In the center, the words 'THANK YOU' are written in a large, bold, orange-yellow pixelated font with a thick black outline. Below this, the words 'FOR PLAYING!' are written in a smaller, white pixelated font with a black outline. There are five green warp pipes: three floating in the sky (one on the left, one in the center, one on the right) and two on the ground (one on the left, one on the right). The pipes have a green body with a lighter green vertical stripe and a black top rim. The overall style is classic 8-bit pixel art.

THANK YOU

FOR PLAYING!

Introduction

My name is DeShaun Lester, and I chose to serve on the SRC because I wanted to represent my peers while helping connect students to meaningful opportunities beyond campus. I've always been interested in leadership and community involvement, and this role allowed me to grow both personally and professionally. One important thing I learned this year is how to effectively communicate with different audiences. Whether speaking to small groups or larger classes, I realized that adapting my message to fit the audience makes a significant difference in how well it is received.



Presentation Overview

Throughout my time on the SRC, I conducted several presentations reaching roughly 100 students across various groups, including the Student Government Association and the Music Fraternities. I selected these groups because they represented a diverse range of students with different interests and career goals. This allowed me to tailor my presentations to better connect with each audience. To make my presentations more engaging, I incorporated interactive elements such as asking questions, sharing personal experiences, and using relatable examples. I also included specific topics that would resonate with each group, ensuring that the information felt relevant and valuable rather than generic.



Evaluation

Overall, I believe my presentations were effective in delivering key information and engaging students. Many attendees responded positively, and I received feedback that my presentations were clear, informative, and relatable. Some students mentioned that they

appreciated the interactive aspects, as it made the experience more engaging. However, if I were to do this again, I would work on improving time management to ensure I could cover all points without feeling rushed. I would also try to include even more audience participation to keep students actively involved throughout the presentation.



Recommendations

Based on my experience and feedback from peers, I would recommend that community leaders focus on building genuine connections with students when recruiting graduates. Providing opportunities for direct interaction, such as networking events or Q&A sessions, can make a strong impact. Additionally, highlighting real-world benefits, career growth opportunities, and success stories from alumni can make recruitment efforts more appealing. It's also important to communicate in a way that is clear, relatable, and tailored to students' interests and goals rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach.



Conclusion

Serving on the SRC and presenting to my peers has been a valuable experience that helped me develop my communication, leadership, and adaptability skills. It allowed me to step outside of my comfort zone while making a positive impact on my campus community. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve, as well as for the support from my peers and mentors throughout this process. This experience has prepared me for future leadership roles and reinforced the importance of effective communication and engagement.

Presentation:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1rSE3aJWfJeO5kn9qZNYARBMUyYt9Md9e/edit?usp=drivesdk&ouid=105268808405170172146&rtoref=true&sd=true>

Final Report – Campus Presentations

Introduction:

Hello! My name is Kylee Thomas, and I chose to serve on the SRC because I wanted to help connect students with opportunities beyond graduation and also learn about those opportunities myself. I've always been interested in leadership and communication since I was very young, even taking on competitive communicative roles in high school, so this role felt like a great way to build those skills while making a difference. One important thing I learned this year is how valuable the resources are that we have to succeed post-graduation within the state of Alabama.

Presentation Overview:

Throughout this experience, I presented to a variety of students. In total, I reached approximately 25 students, though I wish it had been more, in smaller group settings. I chose to speak to both music, communications, engineering, business, and creative arts majors to represent a mix of specific degrees and class levels, which allowed me to connect with a broader audience. To keep my presentations engaging, I tried to make them interactive by asking questions and encouraging discussion rather than just speaking the whole time. I also focused on topics that were relevant to each group, such as career opportunities, leadership development, and ways to get involved after graduation.

Evaluation:

Overall, I believe my presentations were effective. Students seemed engaged, and many asked questions or shared their thoughts during and after the presentations. The feedback I received was mostly positive, with some students mentioning that the information was helpful and easy to understand. If I were to do this again, I would probably include even more interactive elements, like short activities or real-life examples, to make the presentations even more memorable and engaging.

Recommendations:

Based on my experience and the feedback I received, I would recommend that community leaders focus on making connections with students **early** in their collegiate careers and in a more personal way. Presentations should be tailored to specific audiences, so the information feels relevant to them. It's also important to make presentations interactive and not just informational—students are more likely to stay engaged when they feel involved.

Conclusion:

Overall, this experience was very rewarding and helped me grow both personally and professionally. I gained confidence in my public speaking abilities and learned how to better connect with different audiences. I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve on the SRC and to

share valuable information with my peers. Thank you to everyone who supported me throughout this process.

Link to Presentation:

[UNA SRC Presentation](#)

Introduction:

My name is Anna Grace Silvey. I am a senior at Jacksonville State University. My major is History, and I have a double minor in Political Science and Geography. I wanted to serve on the SRC because Jax State turned my dreams into reality, and I want to spread that across the state and highlight to college students that Alabama can do that for them, too. And then speak with State leaders to share with them the perspective of college students and what they look forward to when it comes to picking a state to live in after college.

Presentation Overview:

I presented to diverse groups across campus, those organizations are as follows: Honors College, SGA, Delta Zeta, Lambda Sigma Sophomore Honors Society, and The Kappa Alpha Order. For my presentation, I centered it on JSU and what Calhoun County has to offer. I was able to reach around 100 students. I chose these groups because they are leaders on campus. I focused a lot on the cost of living, career opportunities, and outdoor rec options in the area.

Evaluation

Yes, they were effective. A lot of the feedback I received was on the career opportunities that people didn't know about, as well as the benefits that Alabama has to offer. If I were to change one thing, I would make my presentation a little more state-wide applicable and not just so focused on JSU and Calhoun County.

Recommendations:

I would recommend making job opportunities more accessible, as well as benefits clearer and easier to understand. Also, I recommend giving incentives to people who move to rural Alabama. Because you can live in rural Alabama and commute to the bigger city for work, but still have the quiet small town life.

Conclusion:

To wrap things up, I believe the State of Alabama is on the right track to retaining students after graduation, and I believe that with these small improvements, Alabama will have one of the best workforces in the country. I thoroughly enjoyed my time on the council, and I have learned so much, and I have had the opportunity to share it with others. I recommend this program 100% to all students of Alabama public universities.

SRC Final Report

My name is Tyreanna Causey, and I am the Presidential Appointee for Auburn University at Montgomery. I wanted to serve on the SRC to learn more about Alabama. I was born and raised in Montgomery and rarely left the city growing up. For a long time, Montgomery was all I knew. That changed when I turned 16. Since then, I've traveled to many different counties and continue to learn more about the state I've lived in my entire life. Alabama has countless hidden gems tucked away in every corner, you just have to take the time to find them. By joining SRC, I hoped to work with leaders across the state and connect over what Alabama has to offer, and it did exactly that. Throughout my time in SRC, I learned many things, including what SRC is and its mission, the importance of quality of life, instinctive training, and more. But the biggest lesson I will carry with me is the importance of asking questions. This experience allowed us to meet people from many different fields and backgrounds who shared their stories, resources, and insights with us. One moment that stood out to me was when Mayor Gordon Stone spoke to us about his life and goals. At the end, he asked if we had any questions. No one responded at first, but Alexi Bolton reminded us how valuable it is to take those opportunities and ask questions to help you stand out. Since then, I've carried that advice with me to every conference and meeting I attend. It's a life skill that helps you make connections and leaves a lasting impression.

As the Presidential Appointee, I had the opportunity to present to AUM students about Alabama and its resources. Through presentations and speaking with students in the hallway, I reached around 110 students. I presented to three groups, the Communication Department, the Student Government Association, and students I met in the halls while tabling. I chose the Communication Department because they are future journalists and anchors, and I felt it was important for them to learn more about Alabama to inspire their work. I also presented to SGA

because they serve as leaders on campus, and with our large international population, I wanted to help them better understand the state they represent. Lastly, I approached students in the hallway because not everyone is involved in organizations, and this allowed me to reach a wider range of students with different backgrounds and majors. For the Communication Department and SGA, I used a PowerPoint presentation with optional pamphlets. My PowerPoint was like a game inspired by the mobile game Flappy Bird where students who answered questions received a bracelet or a glow-in-the-dark duck. For my table, I had the presentation looping on my computer, but I mainly focused on handing out pamphlets and talking to students about where they're from and their plans after college. For my table and one-on-one conversations, I created pamphlets that summarized my presentation.

I believe my presentation was fairly effective. I received a lot of positive feedback about how engaging and interesting it was. Some students were honest and shared that their desired career fields aren't prominent in Alabama, or that better pay and more progressive opportunities exist elsewhere. If I were to do this again, I wouldn't change much. The game was fun and innovative, and the one-on-one conversations were successful because I reached so many students with the pamphlets and prizes. I might would try to reach out to more organizations to increase the number of students I reached, but overall, the approach I used was enjoyable and effective.

A recommendation I would make to community leaders hoping to recruit AUM graduates is to host tabling events featuring organizations and businesses that advisors recommend. Some students mentioned that there aren't enough events, places, or job opportunities to keep them in Alabama after graduation. By hosting events in different locations, students could explore more of what Alabama has to offer and build meaningful connections.

It has been a pleasure to serve on the Student Retention Council and work with their staff. I've met so many people and college leaders I never would have met otherwise. I learned a lot about Alabama, AUM students, and myself throughout this process. I've been inspired to travel more and discover more of Alabama's treasures, and that wouldn't have happened without SRC. I want to thank AUM for selecting me to represent them, Mayor Gordon Stone for being our biggest motivator, and the civic engagement group, especially Alexi Bolton, for being amazing. If I could give one piece of advice to the next AUM representative, it would be to soak in every moment and take notes. This opportunity is truly special. You'll make friends and connections with people from all over Alabama. Have fun, don't be afraid to mingle, and ask questions.

Final Report Template

Report on Your Campus Presentations. Fill in approx. a paragraph for each prompt. Feel free to add any additional information. Please include a copy of your PowerPoint and any photos of you making your presentations.

Introduction:

My name is Ashley, and I am a student at Athens State University. I was interested in joining the Student Retention Council because it felt like a meaningful way to support both my university and the state I have always called home. Alabama has always felt familiar to me, but I wanted the opportunity to better understand how we can encourage students to build their futures here rather than looking elsewhere. One of the biggest things I learned this year is just how much Alabama truly has to offer. I always knew there was more here than people tend to recognize, but being part of the SRC gave me a much clearer picture of that. From the diversity of career opportunities to the range of events and even the natural biodiversity across the state, there is far more available than most students realize. That gap between perception and reality stood out to me and became a main part of how I approached my presentations.

Presentation Overview:

I estimate that I reached approximately 100 to 125 students through a combination of live and asynchronous presentations. I presented to incoming first semester students through the Student Success Center, spoke with members of the SHRM Student Chapter, and worked with multiple professors who incorporated my presentation into their courses. Because many students at Athens State complete coursework online and do not always meet live, I intentionally used recorded presentations to ensure I could still reach graduating and workforce focused students who might not otherwise attend a live session. I chose these groups strategically to reach students at different stages. Incoming students are still forming their perspectives on career paths, while SHRM members represent one of the largest and most engaged groups on campus. The use of recorded presentations allowed me to connect with students who are closer to entering the workforce and are actively thinking about the next steps of their lives.

My presentations focused on Alabama's workforce, the range of available career paths, and the lifestyle elements that influence long term decisions, such as entertainment, community, and overall quality of life. I also included interactive elements to keep students engaged, such as a "This or That" activity designed to show that different lifestyles can exist within Alabama. To make the presentation more memorable and reflective of campus culture, our mascot, Hebrew the Bear, was incorporated throughout the slides.

Evaluation

I do believe my presentations were effective. Students were engaged, willing to participate, and open to discussion throughout the sessions. In one instance, the conversation extended well beyond the scheduled time because students were actively contributing and asking questions. One consistent theme that came up during discussions was concern about the impact of artificial intelligence on the workforce. Students were unsure how emerging technologies might affect job availability and long-term career stability within the state. While I

was able to acknowledge these concerns, it was an area where I felt I could have provided a more developed response. If I were to do this again, I would prioritize scheduling more time for each session. There were several moments where deeper conversations could have been explored further, especially around workforce trends and future job security.

Recommendations:

Based on both my presentations and feedback from students, one of the most significant challenges is a lack of visibility around opportunities. Many students are simply not aware of the range of careers available within Alabama, especially in smaller towns and communities that often go overlooked. When students cannot clearly see a path forward, they are more likely to look outside the state. Students also emphasized the importance of feeling heard and included. Alabama is diverse in both its people and its opportunities, but that diversity is not always reflected in how opportunities are communicated. Creating messaging that feels inclusive and representative can make a meaningful difference in how students view their place within the state.

Community leaders should focus on improving how opportunities are shared and who they are shared with. This includes highlighting career paths beyond major cities, building stronger connections between local employers and universities, and creating more accessible entry points such as internships or mentorship programs. There should also be a stronger effort to support smaller businesses and emerging industries alongside larger, well-established organizations. When students see growth and investment happening at all levels, it reinforces the idea that they can build a future anywhere within the state, not just in a few specific

Conclusion:

Overall, this experience allowed me to learn far more than I expected. It gave me a deeper understanding of the state, the challenges students face when making decisions about their future, and the role that awareness plays in those decisions. I was able to see firsthand how perceptions of Alabama are formed and where those perceptions do not always match our reality. While I have always had a strong connection to Alabama, this experience gave me a new perspective on how I can contribute to its growth. It shifted my thinking from simply appreciating what the state offers to actively considering how I can be part of improving awareness and creating opportunities for others.

I would like to thank Amy Garrison, Catherine Wehlburg, and Jordan Jones for their support and guidance throughout this process. Their leadership and involvement made this experience both possible and meaningful. I would also like to thank everyone at the Higher Education Partnership for all they do to support students across Alabama and for the work they continue to do to create opportunities, strengthen connections, and invest in student success throughout the state.

Final Report Madison Booker- University of West Alabama

Hello everyone! My name is Madison Booker, and I am currently a sophomore at the University of West Alabama. I am majoring in Early Childhood/ Elementary Education and will start my pre-junior block next semester! I was appointed to be on the Student Retention Council by my chancellor! I had heard of the Student Retention Council but was not entirely sure of everything they did! During my time here on the SRC, I have personally learned of several amazing outdoor recreation places that our wonderful state has to offer.

During my on-campus presentation, I reached a little over one hundred students. I presented to some of the Greek life on our campus, our cheer team, SGA, and our freshman forum. I selected these groups of people because I knew there were students from Alabama and from out of state, and I wanted to educate them on our quality of life, cost of living, and our many career opportunities. I personally hit on the career opportunities the most, since I am a part of the workforce committee within the SRC.

I believe my presentation was effective in a few ways. Many people were shocked to learn of our low cost of living and the many career opportunities we have in Alabama. Several people who were from Alabama like me, learned about the many outdoor festivals and concerts we have in our areas and outside of Livingston. If I could do this again, I would probably have been more specific for what some of the areas around UWA have to offer for a lot of my topics, but I feel I hit on the high points.

I would focus on making sure students know about our career fairs well in advance and make sure they are advertised well! We do not have much in Livingston, but I do think that our businesses do a great job at offering jobs and internships to our students/ graduates.

I think our community leaders should focus on promoting jobs that already exist here in Livingston and Sumter County. I feel that a lot of students may not be entirely aware of all the opportunities that are available to them locally, so they look out of state. I think they could work to better improving access to career opportunities and strengthen communication with students. Offering more internships and entry-level jobs would be an awesome way to recruit our graduates.

I want to personally thank Alexi for her hard work and countless hours she spends on making sure we had so many amazing opportunities this year in Montgomery. I want to thank Mr. Gordon Stone for being an amazing role model to myself, and his selflessness towards our higher education. This experience has been a once in a lifetime opportunity and I can't thank Mr. Byron and Dr. J.J. Wedgeworth enough for choosing me to represent

the University of West Alabama on the SRC. I will forever be grateful for the friendships, lessons, and opportunities within our state capital as I continue my journey at UWA.

KC Crusoe

04/07/26

“SRC Final Report”

I am KC Crusoe, a senior Political Science and Philosophy major at the University of South Alabama and a second semester graduate student in the accelerated Master of Public Administration program. I chose to serve on the SRC because my passion for public service and civic engagement started early. In ninth grade, a lesson on local government sparked my interest in politics and advocacy, and from that moment I began to see the impact that informed, engaged citizens can have on their communities. Since then, I have consistently advocated for my peers to stay in Alabama and invest their talents here. I realized that my passion for public service is deeply connected to the potential of this state, and there is no better place to serve than somewhere that still has so much room to grow and improve. Through the SRC, I was able to merge the work I was already doing in civic engagement and student retention with a larger, statewide effort. Serving as the Civic and Service Director, I was able to make a direct impact as the first person to hold this role, and I truly enjoyed setting the tone for what future committees will be able to accomplish, especially because this work is so important and continues to grow in relevance. In my presentations, I reached a broad group of students primarily through organizations such as the Student Government Association, Collegiate 100, and the NAACP on campus at the University of South Alabama. These groups were intentional choices because they are already rooted in leadership, service, and advocacy, which aligns directly with the mission of the SRC. Altogether, I engaged dozens of students across these spaces, many of whom are already thinking critically about their futures and their impact. What made my approach unique was that I did not just present information about staying in Alabama, I connected it to real opportunities and my own lived experience. I also incorporated topics such as civic engagement, workforce development, and insights from my civic engagement survey project, which highlighted what students need in order to feel confident about staying and building their careers here.

Overall, my presentations were effective, as students were engaged, asked thoughtful questions, and continued conversations even after the sessions ended. The most consistent feedback I received was that many students feel Alabama is not the place for them because it seems stagnant and that growth is not happening fast enough. That feedback was important because it revealed a real perception that must be addressed. If I were to do this again, I would place more emphasis on providing clear, centralized resources that show students exactly what opportunities exist within the state. I would also incorporate more interactive elements so students can leave not just informed, but with a clearer personal plan for how they can succeed in Alabama. Based on my experience and the feedback from my peers, I recommend that community leaders create a centralized platform where students can easily access opportunities, resources, and pathways to get involved. There also needs to be stronger collaboration between organizations, along with a

greater willingness to mentor and support younger professionals instead of viewing them as competition. Organizations should be more flexible, more visible, and more intentional about building relationships with students early. If students can clearly see where they fit and feel supported in their growth, they are much more likely to stay and contribute. In conclusion, this experience has reinforced my belief that the work of the SRC is both necessary and impactful. The conversations we are having are real, and the concerns students are raising are valid, but they also present an opportunity for growth and change. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve, represent my peers, and contribute to this mission. I look forward to continuing this work in the years ahead and helping to create a stronger, more connected system where students can directly engage with legislators and see a clear future for themselves here in Alabama.



The SRC appreciates the support of Innovate Alabama and was named an Innovative Entity in 2023 - 2024.

