

NEW FACULTY

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT *tour*

MAY 10-12, 2023



Executive Report

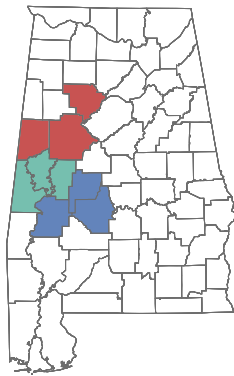
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INTRODUCTION

The New Faculty Community Engagement Tour (NFCET) exists to engage early-career faculty, staff, advanced graduate students and selected undergraduate students in three, day-long tours of West Alabama and the Alabama Black Belt region. This initiative provides participants with opportunities to develop innovative partnerships with community members and other campus researchers interested in community-based approaches to addressing community needs and plays a vitally important role in advancing the University's mission by facilitating community-University partnerships.

The 2023 Tour took place on May 10, May 11, and May 12, and included stops in nine West Alabama counties. Participants included University faculty, staff, graduate students, undergraduate students and community members across various counties in the Black Belt region. Data presented in this report were collected from surveys of participants and community members. Results indicate that the NFCET continues to be a satisfying experience for participants, connecting them with research partners to further their professional aspirations based on community-identified needs.

The Division of Community Affairs is proud to host this Tour in partnership with the Office of Academic Affairs, the Graduate School, the Center for Community-Based Partnerships and the Council on Community Based-Partnerships.



DAY 1

WALKER COUNTY

PICKENS COUNTY

TUSCALOOSA COUNTY

DAY 2

GREENE COUNTY

SUMTER COUNTY

HALE COUNTY

DAY 3

MARENGO COUNTY

PERRY COUNTY

DALLAS COUNTY

UA TOUR PARTICIPANTS

A total of 52 faculty, staff and students participated on the Tour, including two members of the Division of Community Affairs Board of Advisors. This figure represents a 49% increase in travelers from the previous year. The first day of the Tour had the most participants with 38 travelers, or 73% of the total number of Tour attendees. Of the 52 participants, 20 participated in all three days, representing approximately 39% of the total travelers.

Each stop along the Tour included discussions with community members to share community successes and challenges, as well as areas for collaboration to increase successes and reduce challenges. Tour planners administered surveys at the end of each day to obtain feedback from travelers. (See Appendix A.)

Registered participants were from the following departments/units:

Division of Academic Affairs	Division of Community Affairs
Alabama Transportation Institute	Board of Advisors
Anthropology	Education
Biological Sciences	Educational Studies in Psychology, Research Methodology, and Counseling
Blackburn Institute	English
Civil Construction and Environmental Engineering	History
College of Communication and Information Sciences	Management
Computer Science	New College
Department of Curriculum and Instruction	Nursing
Division of Community Affairs	Nutrition
	Psychology
	Social Work



The survey included three quantitative items, which asked travelers if they were satisfied with the Tour, if it met their expectations, and if they would recommend the Tour to others respectively, on 10-point scales, with 10 being the highest score possible and 1 being the lowest score possible. **Table 1** shows the daily and composite averages for satisfaction, expectation and recommendation.

Table 1	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Entire Tour
Satisfaction	9.09	9.5	9.38	9.29
Expectation	9.21	9.61	9.62	9.44
Recommendation	9.58	9.67	9.73	9.64

The overall responses were highly positive, with all the mean scores exceeding 9.0 on a 10-point scale. Judging from the responses received, the travelers were very satisfied with the Tour, thought the Tour met their expectations and would recommend it to others in the future.

Table 2 shows the comparison in averages among faculty, staff and students across the entire Tour.

Table 2	Faculty	Staff	Students
Satisfaction	8.94	9.34	9.36
Expectation	9.12	9.55	9.46
Recommendation	9.71	9.76	9.46

These figures suggest that the Tour provides a positive experience for participants interested in community-engaged teaching and learning. Students had the highest satisfaction level, indicating that the Tour's expansion toward including graduate and selected undergraduate students continues to be a positive investment. Faculty and staff were nearly equal in their scores to recommend the Tour to colleagues, suggesting that travelers consider the Tour beneficial to their teaching, research and service.

Five open-ended questions yielded qualitative data in terms of how participants thought the Tour furthered their careers and educational opportunities through building community partnerships. Themes from these responses indicate that the Tour provided participants with networking opportunities, understanding of communities beyond the campus, and areas for collaboration in research and teaching.

“[I liked] the choice of the touristic sites, panelists and meaningful conversations, great leadership from UA, ability to network, learning more about American history, especially coming from a foreign country,” said one student.

“[I enjoyed] networking with other like-minded faculty,” said a faculty member.

“[I liked] learning about communities and resources outside UA, getting out of the University ‘Box’ as one speaker said,” said another faculty member.

One faculty member remarked how the Tour also provided “opportunities, ideas for clinical placement and experiences for graduate students.”

In terms of research and teaching, respondents noted new areas for partnerships within their field of study, such as oral history, youth engagement, education and healthcare.

“This tour provided me the opportunity to know challenges each community has. It made me think of how I can include the community-engagement perspective in my own research.”



COMMUNITY PARTNER FEEDBACK

There were 63 community partners who served as site coordinators and panelists over the nine sites visited. Community partners were surveyed via Qualtrics for their feedback on the Tour. (See Appendix B.)

Quantitative questions addressed community partners' satisfaction, meeting expectations and the likelihood of participating in future Tours on 10-point scales, with 10 being the highest score possible and 1 being the lowest score possible. Results are presented in **Table 3**.

	Average Community Partner Scores
Satisfaction	9.83
Expectation	9.75
Future Participation	10.0

Overall, responses were highly positive, with all the mean scores exceeding 9.0 on a 10-point scale, indicating that participating site coordinators and panelists value the experience and the opportunity to participate in this Tour.



"[I liked] inviting the group to participate in further collaboration to strengthen our community."



Like the participants, community partners also answered five open-ended questions. These qualitative responses addressed how community partners perceived collaboration efforts and networking opportunities that would benefit from University resources.

“[I liked] inviting the group to participate in further collaboration to strengthen our community,” said one participant.

“Thank you for providing an opportunity for community members to gather and to showcase who and what the Black Belt really is!” another community participant said.

Additional input was gathered during community-led panel discussions in which community partners identified needs within their communities that would benefit from University partnerships. These community-identified needs were in education, healthcare, youth development programs, homeownership and financial literacy. The group also toured areas of the aftermath of the Jan. 12 tornadoes that devastated Dallas County and the city of Selma, learning how to support recovery efforts for natural disasters.

“At the Black Belt Community Foundation, our tagline is taking what we have to make what we need,” said Chris Spencer, chief community engagement officer for the Black Belt Community Foundation. “It is going to take all of us working together. ... [Dr. Samory Pruitt] said the core value of universities is to help improve the quality of life, and we need assistance and we need help in Dallas County and Selma and throughout the Black Belt.”

SIGNIFICANCE

Ultimately, the Tour bridges the gap between academia and surrounding communities by connecting faculty, staff and students with outside communities. These encounters further enrich participants' understanding of community that transcends into their teaching and research. As one participant noted, the Tour gave them "an opportunity to know communities where my students and future students grow up." From hearing firsthand the challenges and strengths of communities across the Black Belt, faculty, staff and students can work toward advancing the University's mission by developing mutual partnerships in research and teaching that address critical needs in education, healthcare, and quality of life in Alabama and beyond.



APPENDIX A

NEW FACULTY
**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**
tour

2023 Post-Tour Feedback | Participants

Thank you for participating in UA's 2023 New Faculty Community Engagement Tour. We request your participation in this short survey to help us determine 1) how useful the Tour was for you and 2) improvements for future tours. This survey should take 5–10 minutes to complete.

1. Please circle the group into which you best fit:

Community Student Staff Faculty

2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your satisfaction of today's Tour? (Please circle 1 if you were not satisfied at all to 10 if you were completely satisfied.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How well did the Tour meet your expectations? (Please circle 1 if it did not meet your expectations at all to 10 if it met your expectations completely.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. How likely are you to recommend this Tour to future new faculty, staff or students? (Please circle 1 if you definitely would NOT recommend the tour to 10 if you are extremely likely to recommend it.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. What did you like most about participating in today's Tour?
6. What areas for collaboration or partnerships did today's Tour provide?
7. What suggestions do you have to improve the Tour?
8. What additional information would you like to know about the places you visited today?
9. Please add any additional comments you would like to make.

APPENDIX B

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Thank you for participating in UA's 2023 New Faculty Community Engagement Tour. We request your participation in this short survey to help us determine 1) how useful the Tour was for you and 2) improvements for future tours. This survey should take 5–10 minutes to complete.

1. Please circle the site where you participated:

Jasper Gordo Alberta Eutaw York Greensboro Demopolis Marion Selma

2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your satisfaction with your role in the planning/participation of the Tour? (Please circle 1 if you were not satisfied at all to 10 if you were completely satisfied.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How well did the Tour meet your expectations? (Please circle 1 if it did not meet your expectations at all to 10 if it completely met your expectations.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. How likely would you be to agree to participate in next year's New Faculty Tour? (Please circle 1 if you definitely will not participate next year to 10 if you fully intend to participate again.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. What did you like most about participating in today's Tour?

6. What areas for collaboration or partnerships did today's Tour provide?

7. What suggestions do you have to improve the Tour?

8. What suggestions do you have for follow-up?

9. Please add any additional comments you would like to make.