

2024 - 2025

ANNUAL REPORT










Encouraging Growth
One Seed at a Time

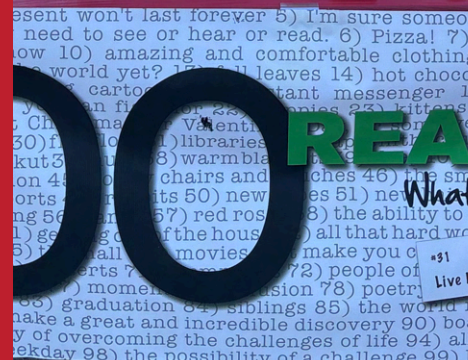
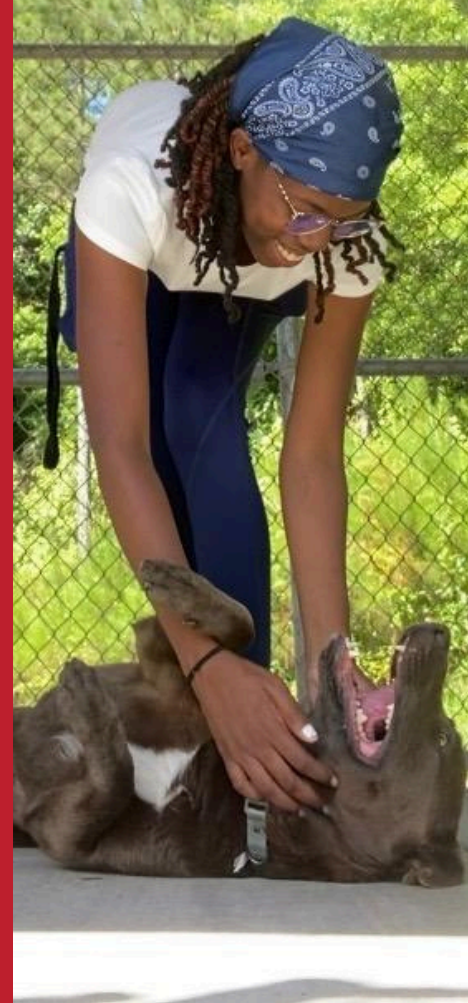


COLUMBUS STATE
UNIVERSITY

WILLIAM B. TURNER CENTER
FOR SERVANT LEADERSHIP

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

As I look back on the 2024-25 academic year, I am deeply appreciative of the continuous growth of the William B. Turner Center for Servant Leadership and the impressive achievements of our students in the undergraduate Servant Leadership Program. I am regularly inspired by the dedication, compassion, and creativity our students bring to their leadership journeys—and this year was no different.

Together, we celebrated a year full of learning, growth, and community impact. During Spring Break, 15 students took part in a transformative study abroad program in a small village in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil. There, they built meaningful relationships, supported conservation efforts, and were welcomed by a community that showed the universal language of compassion. Their experiences expanded their global perspectives and strengthened their sense of purpose. I am very proud of how they represented Columbus State with heart and humility.

Locally, we introduced new programming that strengthened our students' practice of servant leadership. A new partnership with one of our alumni working with foster youth in the Muscogee County School District enabled our second-year students to serve as mentors. Our third-year students embraced "group volunteering," participating in collective service projects that increased both their sense of purpose and their peer community.

I am very proud to share that nearly 40% of our students earned official recognition for excellence in leadership, athletics, academics, and service. These awards highlight their consistent dedication to servant leadership and the meaningful impact they are making throughout our university and beyond.

I am very grateful to work alongside a group of individuals who are dedicated to our vision of transforming the world by empowering students to lead with a lifelong commitment to service. I am especially grateful to Assistant Director Laura Pate, whose clarity and calm guided our work; to Care Services Coordinator Theresa Donahoe, for her warm welcome and essential support; and to Student Assistants Paige Abney and Charlie Hearn, for their dependability, creativity, and enthusiasm.

As we look forward to the year ahead, I do so with great pride in our students and deep appreciation for the many partners and supporters who make our mission possible. Thank you for being part of this journey, for believing in servant leadership, and for investing in the next generation of changemakers.

With Sincere Gratitude,

Courtney Wilson



IMPACT ON **OUR COMMUNITY**

During the 2024-25 school year, 73 students in the undergraduate Servant Leadership Program completed various types of service within the Columbus community.



3,474

Hours Spent in various Organizations on Campus and in the Community



3,182

Hours Spent at Community Agencies



198

Hours Spent Mentoring At-Risk Youth



270

Hours Spent as a part of Group Volunteering



398

Hours Dedicated to the Senior Project



433

Hours Participating in Reflections and Retreats



THE ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THESE SERVICE HOURS IS

\$57,680

During the 2024-25 academic year, the William B. Turner Center for Servant Leadership awarded

\$190,894

in scholarship dollars.

These funds helped 63 students offset the cost of their education and 15 students participate in Study Abroad Programs



FACTS AND FIGURES

The undergraduate Servant Leadership Program is full of individuals of diverse backgrounds, demographics, and interests.



28

Students are currently involved with both Servant Leadership and the Honors College on campus

24

Unique majors are represented in the undergraduate Servant Leadership Program

222

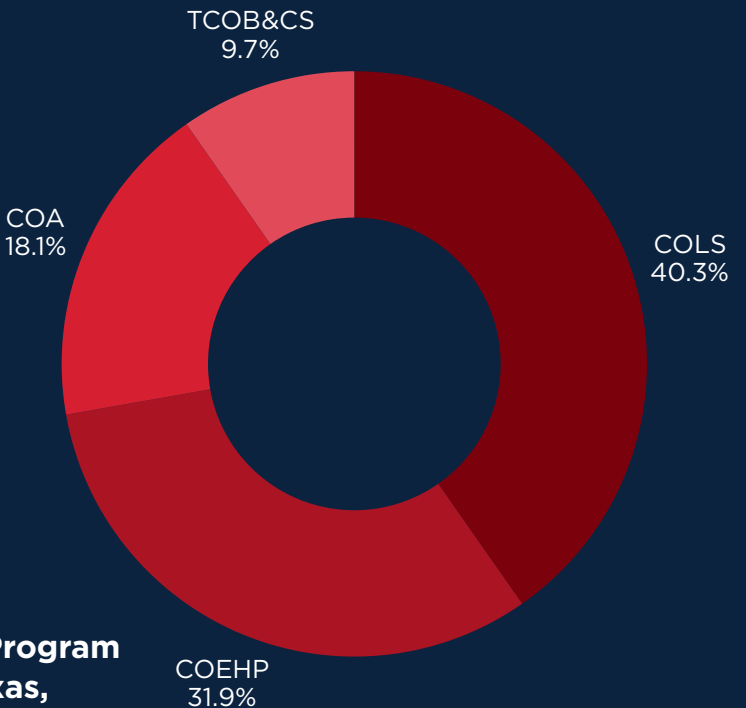
CSU students completed LEAD 1705, the introduction to Servant Leadership course, this academic year



Athletics Teams Represented

- Men's Basketball
- Cross Country
- Cheer
- Women's Soccer

Academic Colleges Represented



GPA

Fall	Spring
3.5	3.5



The Servant Leadership Program has students from Texas, South Carolina, Florida, New York, Alabama, Georgia, Germany, and China.

SENIOR PROJECT CLASS OF 2025

Each year, the senior class of the undergraduate Servant Leadership Program at Columbus State University plans and executes a service project in Columbus. The project is designed to provide students with an opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge they have acquired through the program outside of the classroom to identify and address needs in the local community. The senior project provides graduating members of the Servant Leadership Program with first-hand experience envisioning, planning and implementing a service project while simultaneously fostering new relationships within the local community.

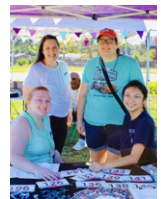


The Class of 2025, similar to those before them, began their project by fund raising through the annual Uptown Tree Trail. The Uptown Tree Trail also serves as an opportunity for the senior class to bring awareness for their chosen organization, as well as engaging with local businesses and community. This year's class sold 68 trees, raising a total of \$13,000.



The Class of 2025 comprised 12 seniors from unique and diverse backgrounds, united by their passion to serve. Planning officially began in the spring semester of 2024 as the senior class discussed community needs and personal areas of interest, ultimately electing to partner with the George Washington Carver (GWC) Victory Garden and Farm, an initiative of Turn Around Columbus.

The primary goal of this project is to aid in their efforts to alleviate the burden of food insecurity and provide a safe space for the community to gather and have fellowship. Guided by the slogan "Encouraging growth one seed at a time," the senior class envisioned a project that would continue to benefit the farm and the surrounding community after their graduation and the project's close.



The seniors served the GWC Victory Garden and Farm by aiding in the execution of several events. The first event of the year, the Annual Suicide Awareness Event, was especially impactful for the GWC Staff and community as they celebrated the lives of loved ones lost. This event fostered a familial connection between the senior class and community members early on, which would serve as the foundation for the remainder of the senior project. Other noteworthy events, including a fall festival, a community clean-up along the MLK Jr. Learning Trail, and an Easter celebration further developed the warm, familial relationship between the senior class and the GWC staff and surrounding community.



This year's seniors committed to raising awareness of the GWC Victory Garden and Farm throughout the duration of their project. This dedication and passion for the Turn Around Columbus mission was woven into their poster presentation at the 2025 CSU Tower Day, where several seniors had the opportunity to share about the George Washington Carver Victory Garden and Farm and the process of planning and enacting a service project in their local community.



The Class of 2025 spent substantial time volunteering at the GWC Victory Garden and Farm to understand the community's needs best through hands-on work and intentional conversation with members of the community. By offering their time, effort and dedication, the senior class not only helped plant the seeds of a produce garden that would feed strangers turned friends, but accomplished their primary goal of completing a project that would continue to benefit the community for years to come. The senior class realized this dream by constructing a covered seating area with benches and planters to promote increased community engagement and provide weather protection for visitors.



SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN BRAZIL



A little rain couldn't dampen the spirits of these adventurous students! Their jungle hike offered an up-close look at the Amazon's stunning biodiversity and the environmental challenges faced by river communities.

For eight days, fifteen Servant Leadership and Honors College students, along with instructors Cortney Wilson, Laura Pate, and Eric Spears, spent their spring break in the rainforest of Brazil. Through the week, students learned about ecotourism and leadership while getting to volunteer with a small community on the Rio Negro river. Students got to collaborate with three bilingual students and a few local guides, who served as translators and helped the group learn more about the country and the area they were in. Dr. Eric Spears also assisted the group with the language barrier as he is fluent in Portuguese.

During their experience, the group was tasked with a project. The students were asked to learn about the community they were staying in and come up with initiatives that would help the community promote tourism while protecting their environment. The group learned from the locals what the strengths and weaknesses of the community were in order to prepare their initiative ideas.

Alongside the project, the group explored various local businesses along the river. The group got to visit a bee farm, make soap with natural ingredients, watch them make local flour, learn how to create a famous fish dish, and get a dance lesson on Carimbó, a traditional Brazilian dance style. Also, they were able to swim with pink river dolphins and hike through the rainforest. All of this helped the students with their projects, in addition to the conversations they had with the locals. At the end of the week, the groups presented their ideas to the community and had conversations about how these ideas could be implemented.

Surrounded by the breathtaking beauty of the Rio Negro, the group spent their final day reflecting on a week filled with lessons in leadership, ecotourism, and meaningful cultural exchange. This photo—taken on their last day in the village of Acajatuba—captures the joy, connection, and gratitude each student felt. As their smiles show, they truly fell in love with this special place and the people who welcomed them.



One moment that stood out for the group was their visit to Solar Coca-Cola, one of the largest manufacturers of Coca-Cola in the world. The students got a behind-the-scenes tour of the bottling plant and got to talk with some of the leaders of the Coca-Cola plant. The students got to see how impactful Coca-Cola is to a city in Brazil in comparison to the impacts they feel back at home.

Overall, the trip was filled with insightful conversations and exploration of leadership in another country. The group gained a deeper connection with each other and had impactful experiences that they got to bring back and share with their peers.



Students visited a stingless bee farm where they had the chance to taste locally produced honey and learn about the sustainable practices behind it. The experience offered insight into one of the small businesses contributing to the local economy and preserving regional traditions.



As part of their service to the community, students helped build a garden designed to provide fresh produce and support local sustainability efforts. The project was a hands-on opportunity to contribute to long-term community well-being while learning about collaboration and stewardship.



The group rolled up their sleeves to help clean a turtle enclosure, learning about local conservation efforts and the importance of protecting native wildlife.



One of the most unforgettable moments of the trip—students had the rare opportunity to swim with river dolphins and enjoy fried phirana!



During their visit to Solar Coca-Cola—one of the largest Coca-Cola manufacturers in the world—students received a behind-the-scenes look at the plant's operations. They engaged in thoughtful conversations with company leaders. They learned how the plant impacts the local economy and environment, and how the team is striving to serve its surrounding community more effectively by actively listening and responding to resident feedback.



The students were invited into the kitchen with a local chef who taught them how to prepare her award-winning dish—a recipe rooted in regional flavors and tradition. The highlight? Getting to taste their delicious creations together afterward!



The team embarked on a jungle adventure, guided by local experts who shared how the rainforest's natural resources support the daily lives and well-being of nearby communities.


RETREATS AND REFLECTIONS

Reflections and Retreats are a favorite in the Servant Leadership Program year after year. Serving not only as exciting and fun breaks from classes but also as a chance for our students to meet each other, retreats and reflections have grown to become a tradition in our program.

To allow for more involvement and input for our program from students, the Servant Leadership Advisory Council (SLAC) works together to help plan every reflection and retreat we offer each year. This group is made up of students from every year in the program and meets at the start of each semester and a few times over the summer to discuss and plan for the upcoming school year. This year's SLAC team was made up of Erin Billiot, Ta'Mya Talley, Britney Yann, Avery Williams, Fiza Kahn, Paige Abney, Charlie Hearn, Ethan McEntyre, Devante Corbin, Kendal Coreil, and Ansley Caldwell.



This year, we had some program classics in our reflection lineup, including Convocation and the Spring Celebration Event, but opted to change some others out. For instance, our annual Holiday Luncheon in December kept our classic white elephant gift exchange, but shifted the theme to the Holidays Luncheon, where 12 different holidays from Valentine's Day to Groundhog Day were represented, a fun change thanks to SLAC. Other favorite additions to this past year were bowling, an Alice in Wonderland-themed Un-Birthday Party, and DIY Keychains.



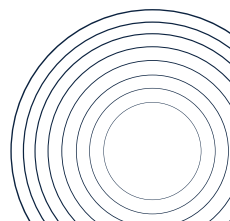
In the fall, 29 new students and 9 seniors went on the LEO Retreat, a 3-day immersive leadership retreat to get freshmen ready for the program and life at CSU, where seniors act as mentors to our incoming freshman class. While at the retreat, students got to participate in leadership and team-oriented activities and explore downtown Columbus. To wrap up the retreat, students get to tour and explore a few local agencies where they can volunteer in the upcoming year. This year, our students visited Habitat for Humanity Restore, Mercy Med Farms, and St. Anne Community Outreach. We are so grateful for our community partners during the retreat and throughout the school year for allowing our students to volunteer with them.

In the spring, we continued our tradition of our annual Spring Retreat, where many of our students and staff went to Uchee Creek for an overnight adventure. While at the retreat, students are tasked with creating a themed meal to represent their cabin. Some cabins went for an all-around the world theme, and others stuck with a specific cuisine or theme to focus on. Students grocery shop using their provided budget and cook their themed meal in the cabin. Then, they present their meal to the judges in hopes of winning the coveted Silver Spoon Award. On day two, students headed to Sleep in Heavenly Peace, where they spent their morning cutting, assembling, and staining bed frames for the agency to give to children in need.



In addition to the retreats and reflections offered, students may also participate in book clubs and not-a-book clubs, which follow television shows instead of books. This year we had book clubs for *Speak* and *The Giver*, and not-a-book clubs for *Abbott Elementary* and a curated selection of episodes from three different animated children's shows called *Saturday Morning Cartoons*. SLAC did a wonderful job, not only coordinating and setting up these sessions, but also facilitating and leading the meetings with deep conversation.

Having Servant Leadership students as a part of the decision-making and planning process for retreats and reflections brings new life and an exciting energy to these events throughout the semester. The Servant Leadership Advisory Council is also a great opportunity for those students to learn new skills and take some of what they learn in the program and put it into practice. We cannot wait to see what they have in store next year!



STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

In today's competitive higher education environment, institutions face increasing pressure to demonstrate student performance and learning outcomes. As a result, data has become an essential tool for making informed decisions and improving teaching effectiveness. By monitoring student performance trends, we can better identify areas for improvement and customize instruction to meet individual needs. Going forward, we plan to enhance our assessment of the Servant Leadership Program by using more direct measures of student growth and learning.

One method we currently use involves examining students' final reflective papers, in which they describe their experiences, learning, and personal growth throughout the program. The boxes below share reflections from the Class of 2025, organized by the undergraduate Servant Leadership Program's Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), which are listed in bold at the top of each section. The excerpts below are from the students' final papers. These reflections demonstrate how students' experiences align with our SLOs and confirm the impact of our curriculum and programming.

Student Learning Outcome #1: Students will be able to apply the principles and practices of servant leadership in a "real world" context.

"Working on the garden and farm was not just about planting seeds in the soil; it was about planting seeds for future growth in the community."

- Avery Williams

"Not only does our Senior Project and work on the farm pass Greenleaf's best test, but we also have helped raise awareness for the farm... The goal of the project was always about putting the needs of the farm before our own hangups and wants."

- Nic Taylor

"I think the biggest thing I am taking away from this program is that it has made me a better teacher... I am now able to step outside of myself and look at the needs of a classroom full of young students and recognize when to put them ahead of myself."

- Ashleigh Killebrew

Student Learning Outcome #2: Students will exhibit enhanced life skills such as self-awareness, interpersonal skills, communication skills, networking skills, time management, and self-confidence.

"The assessments truly allowed me to reflect on myself so much more than I had anticipated... I now know how I prioritize relationships and develop ideas while also having a more foundational understanding of how it is that I go through conflict."

- Adam Cobis-Ribeiro

"My Community Dialogue Partner taught me the importance of delegation... She taught me the importance of allowing others to make decisions and mistakes, but being alongside them to help them grow and develop."

- Lauren Barnes

"When our class ran into problems... I did my best to facilitate any tension while also making sure we stayed on task. There were many times when we would go off topic due to a disagreement, and I would regroup the class and remind us of our goals."

- Imani Brown



Student Learning Outcome #3: Students will build a network of peers as well as a sense of community on the Columbus State University campus.

"Sharing spaces with peers turned out to be extremely fulfilling and allowed for a unique learning environment for growth."
- Mikal Martin

"The reflections are what make the Servant Leadership program at CSU a home, that's where the friendships and memories are made."
- Britney Yawn

"I opened up to my friends in the SL Program. Their support made me forget about my problems, even for a little bit."
- Maddie Kinninger

Student Learning Outcome #4: Students will be able to identify the needs of others and articulate how they can contribute meaningfully to those needs.

"By providing something like low-cost or free veggies, you can enrich people's lives just by leveling the field." - Collin Miller

"I have seen growth in the way I treat others, in how I serve them... I don't have to be their best friend to serve them, but I can still make them feel loved in how I serve them... I want others to feel seen, heard, loved, and empowered to reach their full potential."
- Court Garrett

"I learned that one conversation with a person could be the reason they smile throughout their day or go home happy instead of feeling sad or defeated."
- Ta'Mya Talley

WHAT ARE THEY DOING NOW?



LAUREN BARNES

Pursuing a Doctor of Physical Therapy at Augusta State University



IMANI BROWN

Teaching English language arts in New Haven, Connecticut



ADAM COBIS-RIBEIRO

Representing the U.S. State Department as a Youth Ambassador at the 2025 World Expo in Osaka, Japan



COURTNEY GARRETT

Pursuing a Master of Arts in Leadership through the Impact 360 Residency Program



ASHLEIGH KILLIBREW

Completing a Bachelor of Science in Education at CSU



MADDIE KINNINGER

Completing a Bachelor of Science at CSU



MIKAL MARTN

Pursuing at Master of Music at Yale University



COLLIN MILLER

Pursuing a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine at University of Georgia



TA'MYA TALLEY

Teaching mathematics at Spencer High School in Columbus



NIC TAYLOR

Pursuing a Master of Business Administration at CSU



AVERY WILLIAMS

Pursuing a Master of Public Health at CSU and applying for medical school



BRITNEY YANN

Working as a medical assistant at MercyMed of Columbus and applying for medical school

CARE SERVICES

This year, we continued to identify ways to establish an enduring support system for all Columbus State University students through our Care Services programming. Building on the foundation that was laid last year, our Care Services Coordinator has become a key figure in connecting students facing housing or food insecurity with essential resources and ongoing support.

In an effort to improve accessibility and efficiency, we introduced PantrySoft, a new online system that allows students to request Food Pantry items with just a few clicks. This innovation has helped us meet students' needs more quickly and with greater discretion.

The need for these services remains urgent. Students seek Care Services for many reasons: loss of family support, unexpected trauma, or changing academic or financial circumstances. Regardless of the situation, we support students with empathy, practical assistance, and ongoing encouragement.

Care Services continues to be a vital extension of our mission to practice and promote servant leadership across our campus community. By fostering belonging, connection, and resilience, we help students move from crisis toward stability and a future filled with possibility.

During the 2024-25 academic year, the William B. Turner Center for Servant Leadership:

- Received a \$3,000 grant for the Care Services Fund from the Fort Benning Spouses Club.
- Filled 344 requests for 149 individual students experiencing food insecurities through the Food Pantry.
- Utilized approximately \$4,340 to support the Food Pantry.
- Worked with 11 different students experiencing housing insecurities.
- Utilized approximately \$3,260 to support students experiencing housing insecurities to cover various academic and living expenses.

A RECENT ASSESSMENT FOUND THAT 1 IN 3 COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCE FOOD INSECURITY, A FIGURE THAT HAS BEEN GROWING SINCE THE PANDEMIC.



SOURCE:
SWIPE OUT HUNGER REPORT,
MARCH 2024



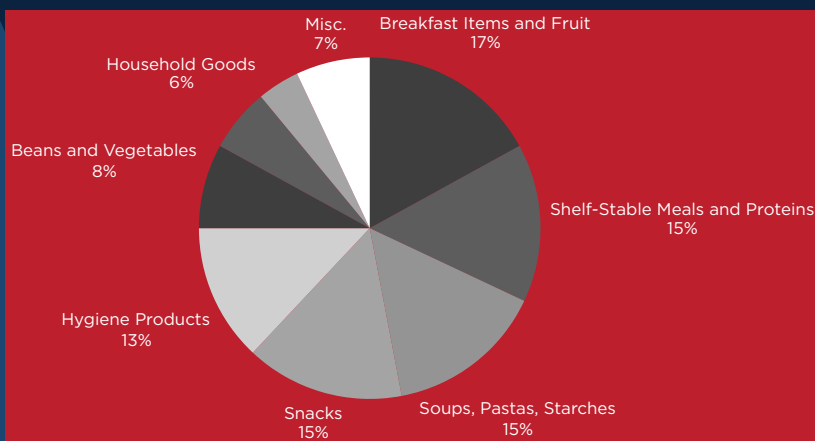
In a survey by The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs, 14% of students attending four-year colleges were affected by homelessness.

From a broader perspective, preliminary research has indicated that every University System of Georgia institution has been affected by homelessness in some way. The most noteworthy schools include: Savannah State University, Kennesaw State University, Georgia State University, Georgia Southern University, Dalton State College, and Columbus State University.

Source: USG Foundation Website,
Food and Housing Insecurity Scholarship Award Page

USG FOUNDATION
SERVING THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

MOST REQUESTED FOOD PANTRY ITEMS



STAFF PROFILES



Cortney Wilson

In her role as the Director of the William B. Turner Center for Servant Leadership, Cortney teaches many of the academic courses offered in the undergraduate Servant Leadership Program, works collaboratively with other departments on campus that offer student leadership development opportunities for all CSU students, and oversees the campus's Embark Program and its Food Pantry.



Laura Pate

As the Assistant Director for the William B. Turner Center for Servant Leadership, Laura is a key figure in the undergraduate Servant Leadership Program. She teaches several courses but also plays a crucial role in coordinating all of the program's engaging activities and events. Her dedication and organizational skills are instrumental in the success of these initiatives.



Theresa Donahoe

Theresa joined the Center for Servant Leadership in February 2023 as the Care Services Coordinator, a newly established role at CSU. In this capacity, she provides critical support to students in need, including access to food, temporary housing, and other essential services. Theresa works directly with students to help them navigate the complex challenges faced by vulnerable populations, ensuring they feel supported and empowered throughout their academic journey.



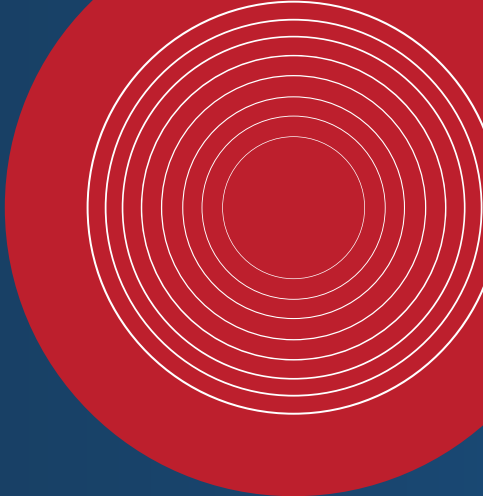
Paige Abney

Paige joined the Center for Servant Leadership staff as a student assistant in January 2023. Paige is an active member of the undergraduate Servant Leadership Program and is majoring in Theatre Education at Columbus State University. Paige is a member of Alpha Psi Omega, a theatre honor society at CSU and has volunteered regularly with Clubview Elementary and Thrive Senior Living while in the Servant Leadership Program. Paige is from Cumming, Georgia, where she graduated from West Forsyth High School in 2022.



Charlie Hearn

Charlie joined the Center for Servant Leadership staff as a student assistant in January 2023. Charlie is a member of the undergraduate Servant Leadership Program and is majoring in Theatre Education at Columbus State University. He is also a member of Alpha Psi Omega and Honoris Causa within the Honors College at CSU. Charlie is from Columbus, where he graduated from Columbus High School in 2022.



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