Extending the Academic Teaching-Service-Research Model to the Undergraduate Education Abroad Experience

Nathan Crook
OSU Agricultural Technical Institute

D. Rose Elder
OSU Agricultural Technical Institute

This paper demonstrates how the Ghana Research and Education Abroad (GREA) program directors integrate the teaching-service-scholarship academic triad into the undergraduate education abroad experience. To do this we have created a unique combination of student-led formal and informal teaching situations, student-directed rural development work, and student-defined opportunities to conduct original field research, all to strengthen undergraduate learning.

The Ohio State ATI Ghana Research and Education Abroad (GREA) immerses associate degree-seeking students in a month-long experiential learning program by conducting rural development in towns near Ho, Volta Region in eastern Ghana. Over the past 15 years, undergraduates and faculty members from Ohio State ATI have traveled to Ho on the Ohio State ATI GREA to interact with local agriculturalists and community leaders. Students learn cultural practices and gain a deeper understanding of community issues through study and face-to-face conversations with local leaders and community members about the various roles, obligations, and expectations of local leaders. Together, faculty, students, and community members assess local needs, develop modes of knowledge and technology transfer, and collaborate to implement joint projects.

GREA's mission is to provide a high quality, extended experience that allows students to develop a sense of world citizenship by engaging with peers and faculty across the curriculum at Ohio State ATI and with Ghanaian farmers, students, teachers, traditional leaders, religious leaders, regional leaders, businesspeople, and rural development officers.

Preparation for this experience starts well in advance of travel and involves many students, faculty, community, and international partners beyond the travelers. Most importantly, this dynamic program allows

students to personalize their experience by exploring, engaging, and developing areas of research, teaching, and service according to their own interests. This program's innovative approach earned it the 2018 Andrew Heiskell Award for Innovation in International Education by the International Institute for Education (IIE, 2018, p. 1). Inaugurated in 2001, the Heiskell Award honors "the most outstanding initiatives being conducted in international higher education" (IIE 2018). The GREA program is also the recipient of the 2018 Ghana Education Community Award for Education Excellence (EDUCOM) as International Collaborators of the Year (Neogenics, London/Accra).

This paper demonstrates how we, the program directors, integrate the teaching-service-research academic triad into the undergraduate education abroad experience. To do this we have created a unique combination of student-led formal and informal teaching situations, student-directed rural development work, and student-defined opportunities to conduct original field research, all to enhance undergraduate learning. To place each learning experience neatly into teaching, service, and scholarly activity is difficult. Due to the nature of teaching and learning, some of these categories overlap.

Methodology

This paper documents the process of interactions among faculty members, undergraduates, and Ghanaian leaders and community members to create a dynamic learning situation. It demonstrates how the faculty members use this process to mentor, observe, encourage, evaluate, redirect, and assess students in the areas of teaching-service-scholarly activity prior to, during travel, and following travel. Moreover, faculty members at Ohio State ATI collaborate across disciplines to develop and support innovative, high quality projects. We will also show how Ghanaian leaders and townspeople interact to provide verbal assessments, specifically Dickson Asase, our Ghanaian coordinator, who takes the GREA group through a two-hour evaluation process looking towards continuous improvement of the program. Throughout this process, students engage in self-assessment through writing papers and discussing their experiences verbally and in blogposts. Upon their return, faculty members continue mentoring students as they prepare papers for publication and presentation. Students present papers and posters at local, regional, and national conferences where other scholars weigh in on the high quality of

their work. Lastly, the awards the program has won further attest to the value of GREA's work.

Interdisciplinary Collaborations

Because of Ohio State ATI's unique status as a specialized, associate degree-granting, regional campus, GREA draws upon the strengths available to us through the College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) and The Ohio State University. Ohio State ATI is co-located on the Wooster campus with the Ohio Agriculture Research and Development Center, which is the agriculture research station of the larger land grant university. We benefit from the expertise on the Wooster campus and the statewide network of alumni, extension officers, and faculty members of CFAES. Additionally, the GREA program directors engage in networking with scholars across the Midwest through the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign's International Research Studies Lab and the Midwest Institute of International and Intercultural Education based in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and internationally through the International Arts and Society network. Many of the projects the GREA team undertakes in Ghana exist because of regional, international, and interdisciplinary conversations that happen through these organizations.

Another advantage is Ohio State ATI's compact size. At Ohio State ATI, faculty members interact across disciplines on a regular basis. We are housed together rather than in separate buildings across campus. Faculty members develop relationships, review each other's teaching and research, and attend presentations about each other's projects. These connections allow us to reach out and embrace the opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. Because the faculty members are working in an interdisciplinary way, GREA students learn to do the same.

GREA students acquire the tools to investigate complex problems, like subsistence marketplaces and food security, from many angles. Given the relationships the faculty members build, experts are more accessible to students. For example, in 2016-17 two of Dr. Crook's Community Leadership classes of 60 undergraduates collaborated with Dr. Uttara Samarakoon's 14 greenhouse students to conduct research in hydroponic greens production. The following spring, two greenhouse students and three community leadership students, who were previously involved, replicated and tested their research in dry season food production in small-town Ghana. Further, in 2018, Dr. Ujor's biogas production students built digesters and provided

slurry for horticulture students to formulate nutrient solution for hydroponic greens production. The goal of this trial was to see if we could produce a more sustainable nutrient solution with biowaste.

While Dr. Samarkoon and Dr. Ujor did not travel to Ghana, they and many others help to build the competency of the team. Their investment and expertise provided the foundation upon which the GREA travelers built.

Teaching Situations

In keeping with the ancient Latin principle, docendo discimus, "the best way to learn is to teach," GREA offered students learning opportunities through teaching in numerous settings. Prior to travel, students took a three-credit hour, semester-long course, in which they learned about arts, history, culture and social aspects of Ghanaian life. Individually, they chose areas to study, such as drama, short stories, architecture, and woodcarving. They studied aspects of anthropological and sociological methods and development issues. Then, they took turns sharing what they had learned with each other. When they explained their independent web and lab research, they tested their ideas and practiced their teaching style with their peers. They learned to refine their ideas and prepared for teaching in various settings that we will discuss below.

When they traveled to Ghana, students earned an additional three credit hours by engaging in long days, from 6 AM-9 PM, of fast-paced educational activities. GREA scheduled the day in three parts. In the morning, the team engaged in undergraduate-faculty research projects, microloan and savings (MLS) meetings, herd health treatments and immunizations, and teaching enrichment classes at a junior high school. In the afternoon, they pursued arts experiences, including drumming, dancing, and Èwè language workshops. The Èwè are the dominant ethnic group in the Volta Region. In the evening, students attended lectures by locals on Ghanaian life or engaged in book discussions, blogging, photo essays, and planning sessions.

Students read academic texts and articles, led discussions and wrote blogposts, and determined the best ways to apply what they learned in the field. Of course, students also dialogued with local experts in traditional teaching settings. By participating in conversations with community opinion shapers and leaders, the very people who are responsible for maintaining the integrity of their communities, students better understood the context of knowledge transfer and development work. In this way, students learned

the community's values and needs from the community itself. They also learned that knowledge transfer is multidirectional.

For this project, GREA relied on a broad network of Ghanaians to create our international, interdisciplinary team. GREA travelers learned traditional customs from kings, queen mothers, and councils of elders and interacted according to royal protocol. In another setting at its nation headquarters, the director of Voice Ghana explained how his non-government organization worked on behalf of people with disabilities. Students learned about gender issues from three women with different perspectives, those of a university professor, the head of the women's desk for the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and an international church leader. They learned about issues facing the Muslim community from the paramount chief of the Zongo, the Muslim neighborhood. They held a conversation with an atikewola, a traditional healer and herbalist, in his sanctuary. What they learned from these experiential learning and lecture-discussion situations better prepared them to adjust the teaching they would do in their new surroundings.

Experts as Teachers

Learning from local experts in their distinct environment is one of the greatest advantages that students encounter. Traditional education components included lectures, field trips, and workshops. In lectures with both GREA faculty members and Ghanaian experts, students learned arts, culture, language, geography, and history. They learned Ghanaian perspectives from Evangelical Presbyterian University College professors and international perspectives on sustainable rural development, agriculture and global issues exploring Robert Paarlberg (2010). They honed their skills in anthropological methods for field research using Glaser and Strauss' Grounded Theory (2004). GREA travelers experienced geography and history through field trips to significant points of interest like Mt. Adaklu, the highest point in West Africa, Kolor Game Production Reserve, Kakum National Park, a rainforest and animal preserve, and Wli waterfall, the highest waterfall in West Africa that forms a portion of the border with Togo. They learned about the realities of the Atlantic slave trade while visiting the Cape Coast Slave Castle, the busiest point of departure for enslaved Africans. As an exercise in contrast, the beautiful setting of this castle masks some of the most heinous acts in human history. They learned about Kwame Nkrumah, the architect of African independence and his

commitment to Pan-Africanism, while visiting his tomb. They tested their bargaining skills at the Accra Craft Market. They ventured into Togo to deliver books and school supplies to an underfunded school. Each afternoon, students studied with local cultural preservationists to learn and practice Èwè drumming, dancing, and language. They worked with artists to weave traditional kente cloth, designed and printed batik fabric, and built local drums. From these interactions, students began to understand that Ghanaians strive to keep their traditions alive, to maintain cultural stability, while attempting to take advantage of the benefits of modernization they see all around them, such as smartphones, SUVs, secondary and tertiary education, and white collar jobs (Elder, Crook, Smith, McClain, Crook, & Hardesty, 2018, p. 27). Further, the experts modeled teaching styles to assist the students in their development as teachers.

Teaching to Learn

Because of the narrow scope on agriculture-related studies at Ohio State ATI, the GREA faculty members focused on identifying, developing, and expanding students' teaching abilities and special talents, skills, and expertise in agriculture, horticulture, and environmental studies. As a way of sharing their academic interests, students taught in a number of settings, including formal settings like Rising Star Academy, Ghana Education Service (GES) Junior High Days at Kpenoe Junior High School, Ho Model School, Ziavi Junior High School, a GES Regional Teaching Conference, and informal settings through interactions with farmers in rural communities.

For Rising Star Academy, a local kindergarten through junior high school, GREA students worked in pairs to develop enrichment plans in their areas of competency, built a relationship with one class of 20 students, and taught 18 class hours over a month. Undergraduate students taught subject areas like leadership development, topics in agriculture and broader science areas, such as hydroponics or growing plants without soil, experiments in science like using a potato as an electric conductor, small scale animal husbandry like raising chicken, exploring the solar system, human health like nutrition and tooth care, and humanities areas, such as architecture from A-Z, poetry, cartooning, play-writing, the Wild West, conversational Chinese, Morse code, and conversational Spanish.

A new aspect of GREA in 2018 was the culmination of a three-year collaboration with the Ghana Education Service (GES) Ho District and Communities of Thinking (CoT), an education, technology, and music

development non-profit organization, which introduced project-based learning (PBL) strategies to junior high students and teachers in the Volta Region. The introduction was rolled out in four parts, three days of junior high student and teacher involvement in PBL projects and a daylong workshop for 120 teachers from across the Volta Region. Print, radio, and digital promotions for these days promised experiential Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, and Math (STEAM) PBL activities. (See Figure 1) The PBLs focused on areas of rural life that could spark JHS students and teachers to develop their own goals and plans in rural development. In the workshops, the students and teachers participated in a GREA-designed PBL after which they worked through the steps to create their own PBL projects that would meet the requirements of the GES curriculum. The GES Days and Teacher workshop were very well received and contributed to GREA winning the national GES award for "International Collaborators of the Year" at the 2018 Ghana EDUCOM awards.

Figure 1: Kpenoe Junior High School Students preparing hydroponic systems at GES days

In rural communities like Kpenoe and Hodzo-Achianse, students engaged in knowledge and technology transfer with farmers. Over multiple years, students have shared their expertise in hydroponics, marketing, animal waste composting, composting toilets, solar dehydration, and energy production. Through these projects, they straddled the teaching-rural development divide. Because production in this area of the world is labor-intensive and capital non-intensive, farmers are ingenious and open to thinking outside their own experience. For their own expanded awareness, students interacted in cultural settings new to them and learned to see beyond their home communities. These activities helped build the students' understanding of diversity of thought and experience as a valued resource.

Service through Applied Rural Development

Over the past ten years GREA developed and improved revolving loan plans, "microloan and savings" (MLS), for 13 groups of subsistence farmers and small vendors. For each group, we raised $1200 to establish a group savings account from which each farmer borrowed $100. The program has extended beyond the travelers and included campus groups like Collegiate FFA at Ohio State ATI, which raised funds for funded three new groups of farmers over the past two years.

We relied on Dickson Asase, our Ghanaian extension officer from the Evangelical Presbyterian Development and Relief Agency (EPDRA), to identify a group of ten prospective participants, mostly women, to form each of these groups. We, then, worked with the group members to discuss their goals and needs (Erskine, 1985, p. 368). First, farmers and traders in the MLS groups borrowed from their account to buy inputs for their own projects. Second, they annually paid back the loan with 10% annual interest. Some groups choose to contribute 25-cent monthly dues, creating further savings. Third, if the farmer or trader repaid on time, GREA matched the interest as a bonus. This strategy slowly grew the group accounts. The following season, each farmer had 20% more available to her.

MLS group members have built capital in more ways than financial. They have worked on each others' farms and hosted community workdays, which built social capital. Other community members have observed the benefits. A Ghanaian driver, Raphael Lumor, who transported us around the Volta Region for many years commented, "I look at the women in your groups, and they are not like other women. They have hope."

In 2006, when GREA learned of the need for health interventions for farm animals through visits in small towns with our extension agent, students and faculty developed a research project to determine whether or not local farmers would take advantage of low-cost or free immunizations and treatments for goats, sheep and chickens. The 2007 GREA inaugurated the project. These immunizations are ongoing in the eight small town GREA had established MLS groups.

GREA community development projects have often overlapped with our research agendas, such as assessing the economic viability of vegetable drip irrigation, dry season hydroponic greens production, preserving crops with solar dehydration, the proper use of Purdue Improved Crop Storage bags to prevent post-harvest crop loss, and aquaponics, the process of growing vegetable and fish in a closed system, each to greater or lesser success.

In 2017, a team of students took the project, "Dry Season Hydroponics Greens for Food Security," to Ghana. Students walked nearly six miles a day checking and adjusting the water and nutrients in farmers' hydroponics boxes. The farmers grew leafy greens for in-home consumption and potential market sale. That same year, another student studied composting toilet technology and built a working model for a disabled farmer and her family. GREA had heard that there had been some community backlash to this technology. When a student followed up on the claim, she didn't find negative backlash. In fact, nearly all the neighbors wanted GREA to help them build their own composting toilets.

In other cases, individual students made significant impacts on the lives of Ghanaians. For example, in 2016, a student raised funds to provide chicken hutches to select farmers in Kpenoe. (See Figure 2) She taught farmers how to train their chickens to return to the hutches at night rather than allowing them to roost in trees and how to prevent and treat common illnesses. This project resulted in farmers collecting more eggs and raising healthier chicks. In their turn, the early adopters served as model farmers who mentored subsequent groups of farmers.

Figure 2: Vicentia Akpalu and Emily Hardesty with Akpalu's chickens in Kpenoe, VR, Ghana

In addition to independent student research, each GREA cohort designed a group research project. During the 2008 GREA pre-departure class, students studied the 2000 United Nations Millennium Declaration, which touted girls' education as "the first step towards ending poverty and achieving human rights" (Global Campaign for Education, 2005, p. 19). In class discussion they expressed an interest in learning more about the state of girls' education in Ghana. Because the education abroad format allowed for a dynamic learning environment, students were able to propose and direct their own integrated research project. In the space of three weeks, they interviewed more than 60 Ghanaian high school students and 130 women and led a workshop for three-dozen local leaders to determine their interest and commitment to girls' education. This research resulted in a student-faculty produced journal article, "Why Girls' Education Matters More: Collaborative Research in Ho, Ghana." (See Elder, Houston, & Skryzpek, 2010)

Since that first research effort, GREA students have engaged annually in primary research to investigate agricultural and social topics. In 2016, we jointly undertook a storytelling project, where we listened to and interviewed 47 storytellers. (See Crook & Elder, 2016) For our 2017 project, we interviewed 42 famine survivors and wrote an article, "'Life was Sesĕ': Memories of Ghana's 1983 Famine and How Ghanaians Survived," which is in review. In 2018, the GREA team studied "The Changing Role of Traditional Èwè Leaders." We interviewed nearly 30 leaders—togbe (king), queen mama (overseer of women's issues), tsiami (linguist or spokesperson), zikpuitor (stool or throne custodian), and tumfour (war chief). They still hold a significant place in Ghanaian society, and we wanted to understand the roles and commitment of these leaders as well as the expectations of those they serve. Once again connecting with previous research, we looked at how Èwè storytelling represents traditional leadership and projects intergenerational truths that are flexible enough for Ghanaians to interpret and reinterpret for a new day.

Rural development expert, J. M. Erskine concludes, "Action research conducted amongst rural communities is the only realistic means for generating practically relevant theory" (1985, p. 368). Both the students and the local people evaluated their work as beneficial to the community.

Guided Undergraduate Research

It goes without saying that learning is the goal of all GREA projects. In accordance with research from The University of Minnesota Center for Educational Innovation (2018), active learning approaches "range from short, simple activities like journal writing, problem solving and paired discussions, to longer, involved activities or pedagogical frameworks like case studies, role plays, and structured team-based learning" with inquiry and experiential learning at the high end of the spectrum for complexity and time commitment (n.p.) Mick Healey (2005) advocates for students to participate with faculty members as co-learners in research-based, inquiry-based learning that concentrates on process and problems (p. 78). Outlining the best practices for undergraduate research, David Lopatto (2003), recommends,

> *[Students] should prepare by reading relevant literature. They should have the support of a mentor and a learning community. They should have the opportunity to design the*

> *research, and they should experience working independently. When the work is completed, they should have an opportunity for professional quality communication (p. 139).*

Some of the gains from undergraduate research that Lopatto (2004) reports from his survey of 1,135 students from 41 colleges and universities across disciplines include: understanding the research process, how scientists work on real problems, how knowledge is created, tolerance for obstacles, working independently, interpreting results, analyzing data, ability to integrate theory and practice, and learning ethical conduct (p. 273).

For the GREA program directors, engaging students in research meant coaching them in developing their projects, writing protocols for the internal review board, and guiding them through required human and animal subject training. This training helped students understand their responsibility towards informants and to practice appropriate research methods. Faculty members held multiple pre-travel workshops for the student researchers and were available to students for individual conferences over the academic year. Post-travel, faculty guided students to organize and write their research posters and encouraged them through their presentations.

Over the past two years, GREA had increasing success in research due to strong faculty investment, student interest, and a university-wide commitment to and funding for both undergraduate research and "generation study abroad." In 2016-17 alone, GREA participants received four research grants and made eight presentations at university, regional, and national conferences. Their posters line the hallways of our institute. In 2018, GREA participants earned eight research grants. (See Table 1)

Table 1: Undergraduate Research Presentations and Joint Faculty-Student Publications, Not including Faculty-Only Presentations and Publications

Year	Presentations	Publications	Venues
2018	2 to date	1; one in review, two in process	AURCO, BGSU†
2017	8	--	BGSU, MIIIE, OSUOUR
2016	--	1	NSSA
2015	1	1	OSUURF, NSSA
2014	2	--	BGSU, RSS (Chicago)
2013	3	--	OSUURF, OAS
2012	--	--	
2011	--	--	
2010	--	1	NACTA

†Key: AURCO Association forf University Regional Campuses of Ohio
BGSU Bowling Green State University Undergraduate Research Forum and African Studies Forum
MIIIE Midwest Institute for International and Intercultural Education
NSSA National Social Science Association
NACTA National Association of College Teachers of Agriculture
OAS Ohio Academy of Sciences
OSUURF The Ohio State University Undergraduate Research Forum
OSUOUR The Ohio State University Office of Undergraduate Research

These research experiences deepened the learning and commitment of students and faculty as they created new knowledge for the wider intellectual community.

Conclusion

Ohio State ATI's mission is to prepare individuals to be "technically competent, self-reliant, and productive citizens in a global society" (2018, n.p.). Engaging students in the teacher-service-research academic triad through the Ghana Research and Education Abroad experience allows undergraduate students and faculty to explore academic topics in depth and apply their knowledge in real world settings. The GREA team works from the premise that mentored teaching-service-research enhances the educational experience for undergraduates at the two-year institution, not just for the honor students in elite programs. This type of program is valuable, attainable, and duplicable. It can enrich and invigorate the teaching-service-research of the broader campus.

Over the past 15 years, GREA has contributed to the development of undergraduate travelers into enlightened individuals. Our students bring

their experience and knowledge to bear on the projects in Ghana and to build the effectiveness of this program. A key GREA outcome is that students and faculty make coalitions and collaborations across disciplines. GREA alumni have found careers as social workers, nurses, veterans' services providers, agriculture educators, and community leaders who link to the broader world. It has also changed the lives of the faculty members who have participated domestically and abroad.

We recognize that there are significant challenges that we have not addressed in this article, such as funding, transportation, scheduling, and administrative issues. One immediate area for our future research will determine the adoption rate of rural development projects initiated over the past 10 years.

With the academic triad at its core, the GREA program encourages mutual learning between faculty and students, Americans and Ghanaians, young and not so young, and haves and have-nots to build reciprocal trust, goodwill, and caring. GREA participants come away expressing heartfelt gratitude to our Ghanaian partners, who exhibit the enormous generosity that 12 years ago prompted a student to coin the phrase, "You can't out-give a Ghanaian." This sentiment remains true today. We have learned that international work presents challenges, particularly learning how to create common cause and true partnerships, locate needed supplies, and fund projects to completion and dissemination. At every stage GREA participants learn from and expect each other to give their best.

References

Crook, N. C., & Elder, D. R. (2016). Reading Community Social Agendas in Èwè Storytelling. [Video File]. Retrieved from *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=il4BF85C_mE&feature=youtu.be*

Elder, D. R., Crook, N. C., Smith, C. A. G., McClain, C., Crook, J., Hardesty, E. (2018). Honk, Aria, Whisper, Stomp: Performance in Èwè Storytelling, *The International Journal of Social, Political and Community Agendas in the Arts 13* (1), 25-38. DOI:10.18848/2326-9960/CGP/v13i01/25-38

Elder, D. R., Houston, L. S., and M. Skryzpek. (2010). Why Girls' Education Matters More: A Student Survey in Ho, Ghana, *NACTA Journal* (June): 48-52.

Erskine, J.M. (1985). Rural development: Putting theory into practice, *Development Southern Africa*, 2:3, 368-382. DOI: 10.1080/03768358508439168

Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A.L. (2004). Remodeling Grounded Theory, *Forum: Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research 5(2*). Retrieved from http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/607/1315

Global Campaign for Education. (2005). Girls Can't Wait: Why Girls' Education Matters and How to Make It Happen Now, *Reproductive Health Matters 13(25),* 19-22.

Healey, M. (2005). Linking Research and Teaching: Exploring Disciplinary Spaces and the Role of Inquiry-based Learning. In R. Barnett (Ed.) *Reshaping the University: New Relationships between Research, Scholarship, and Teaching*. McGraw Hill/Open University Press, 67-78. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1108/09684880710830008

Institute for International Education. (2018). Heiskell Awards. Retrieved from https://www.iie.org/Why-IIE/Awards

Lopatto, D. (2003). The Essential Features of Undergraduate Research, *Council on Undergraduate Research Quarterly 23(1),* 139-142.

Ohio State ATI. (2018). Mission and Vision. Retrieved from https://ati.osu.edu/aboutus/mission-and-vision

Paarlberg, R. L. (2010). *Food Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Paulson, D.R., and J.L. Faust. (N.d). Active Learning for the College Classroom. Department of Chemistry and Biology, California State University Los Angeles. Retrieved from http://www.calstatela.edu/dept/chem/chem2/Active/main.htm

University of Minnesota Center for Educational Innovation. (N.d.) Active Learning. Retrieved from https://cei.umn.edu/active-learning

The current contributing faculty members of the Ohio State ATI Ghana Research and Education Abroad (GREA) have committed themselves to engaging our students in research and creative activities to advance their critical thinking and problem solving skills in order to improve the incomes and life chances of subsistence farmers and petty traders in the Ho environs of Ghana. Mentors include: Dr. D. Elder, GREA

director, (2003- ongoing, Ethnomusicology and coordinator of Humanities and Social Sciences), Ms. Linda Houston, until recently co-director of GREA (2003-ongoing, Professor Emerita English and Agricultural Communities); GREA assistant director, Dr. Nathan Crook (2016-2018, Anthropology); a recent addition, Dr. Edgar Singleton (2018, Director, First-Year Writing); and other faculty as interested and needed, such as Dr. Victor Ujor (2018, Biowaste and Biogas), Dr. Uttara Samarakoon-Basnagala (2017, 2018 Greenhouse Production and Horticulture), Dr. Subbu Kumarappan (2017, 2018 Agricultural Business and Economics), and Mr. Jim Bird (2018, 2019 Business).

Personal Biography

Dr. Nathan C. Crook: Associate Professor of English and Rural Sociology. Dr. Crook is a cultural anthropologist with a primary area of focus on the use of the ephemeral as a communicative device in everyday life. Specifically, he researches and writes about the myriad uses of food as community and communication. In 2013, The History Press published his book, A Culinary History of the Great Black Swamp: Buckeye Candy, Bratwurst and Apple Butter, that explores history, culture, and cuisine in a micro-region of the Midwest. He is the past Assistant Director of the Northwest Ohio Foodways Traditions Collection Project at Bowling Green State University.

With Dr. D. Rose Elder, he co-directs the Ghana Research and Education Abroad program at The Ohio State University - Ohio State ATI. He is a two-time Research Fellow of the International Studies Research Lab (ISRL) at University Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Center for Global Studies. He is a three-time Curriculum Development Fellow of the Midwest Institute for International Intercultural Education (MIIE). Dr. Crook has published numerous short articles on local, regional, and international foods, food traditions, practices, and patterns of behavior with ABC-CLIO, Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor, The International Journal of Social, Political and Community Agendas in the Arts, The Ohio Humanities Council, The Oxford University Press, SAGE, and The History Press.