



SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

DR. JULIANNE O'CONNELL | MCBEE INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

BRIDGING FOOD INSECURITY PATHWAYS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CAMPUS ECOLOGY APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ABSTRACT:

This dissertation overview explores how institutional stakeholders and students at Appalachian State University navigate food insecurity—a critical barrier to student success and belonging. Using campus ecology theory, the research examines intervention design and experiences across institutional and student perspectives. Findings highlight town-gown partnerships between App State and Boone, as well as the gaps between stakeholder assumptions and student realities. This research underscores the need for human-centered, relationship-driven approaches that reduce stigma and foster community.

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Blockage and Clearance: Physical, infrastructural, financial, or organizational barriers or portals to community engagement.

Convergence and Intersections: How increasing or decreasing hyperconnectivity can impact community engagement.

BIO:

Julianne O'Connell, PhD. earned her degree in higher education from the McBee Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia. Her leadership experience within MIHE includes the Higher Education Student Society and the Public Service and Outreach Committee. She was the recipient of the 2022 Douglas Toma Excellence in Scholarship and Service Award. From 2021-2025 Julianne served as the managing editor for the Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement. She now works as the Program Coordinator for the Campus Kitchen at University of Georgia. Her research interests pertain to student support services and basic needs security.