



SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

**LAUREN SHINHOLSTER, MARGARET ROOYAKKERS |
MERCER UNIVERSITY**

FROM TRUST TO TRANSFORMATION: AN INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP ON CULTIVATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

ABSTRACT:

Sustainable campus-community partnerships should be built on trust, reciprocity, and shared purpose. This interactive workshop explores strategies for cultivating authentic partnerships that advance both student learning and community impact. Through dialogue, reflection, and practice, workshop participants will examine principles of equity-centered community engagement, discuss barriers to reciprocity, and identify approaches that move us beyond transactional models of community engagement and toward lasting, trust-based partnerships.

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Shifting Foundations: Modern fundamental changes in how communities form, change, and represent themselves.

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.

Gauging the Waters: Using research and assessment to course correct or gain deeper insight.

BIO:

Lauren Shinholster is the Associate Director of Engaged Learning at Mercer University. Since joining Mercer in 2017, Lauren has worked to connect academics and student life through civic engagement and student mentorship. As a former community educator for the Safe Routes to School program at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, Lauren brings a public health and equity lens to fostering collaborations that strengthen both student learning and community well-being. Lauren was the recipient of the Gulf-South Summit's 2025 Award for Outstanding Practitioner Contributions to Service-Learning in Higher Education.

Margaret Rooyakkers is a dedicated higher education professional with a B.S. in Public Health and an M.Ed. in Higher Education Leadership from Mercer University, where she now serves as Assistant Director of Service and Civic Engagement. She advises MerServe, Mercer's service programming board, and Mercer Votes, the voter engagement board. Through the Center for Engaged Learning, she actively collaborates on service-learning initiatives. Currently pursuing her PhD in Education at Mercer, Margaret is passionate about empowering students through service and civic engagement.

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