UGA Special Collections Libraries Student Docent Program

Overview

In spring 2027, the University of Georgia's Special Collections Libraries will recruit a new class of participants for the Student Docent Program. Our goal is to recruit UGA undergraduate students who are committed to contributing to public programming for visitors of all ages. Participants in the program will develop skills in archival research, public speaking, and community outreach. They will also gain valuable work experience in both archive and museum settings.

We will accept applications through January 15, 2027. In-person interviews for selected applicants will be scheduled from January 18-22. Candidates selected for admission to the program will be notified by Monday, January 25, 2027.

Requirements

Applicants to the program should be currently enrolled undergraduate students at the University of Georgia who can commit to participating in the program from January 2027 – May 2028.

Applicants must be available to attend weekly trainings from 10:00AM – 12:00PM on the following Fridays: February 5, 12, 19, 26; March 5.

To apply, visit:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeR-Dh0LA1xKrDpHKT9iZu-6L-rpJ7fo8HqK-nLGh7kM7AjUg/viewform

Training Scope/Schedule

Training sessions will take place at the Special Collections Building on Fridays from 10:00AM – 12:00PM on the following dates: February 5, 12, 19, 26; March 5.

Led by members of the Special Collections staff, early content sessions will largely focus on the mission, collections, and work of the three libraries housed at the Special Collections Building: the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection, and the Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies. Trainees will become more familiar with these libraries and the items on exhibit in their respective galleries. Subsequent sessions will provide information about the building itself, the storage vault, research policies and procedures, and acquaint trainees with the various event and classroom spaces, their equipment, and ongoing and upcoming programs and events.

In addition to building content knowledge of the libraries and exhibits, docents will receive instruction on how to engage with visitors, create tours for specialized groups, and handle difficult questions.

Participants should be comfortable with public speaking at the outset, but subsequent instruction and practice should help to enhance their ability to create engaging tours for the public

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the required time commitment for the Student Docent Program?

Trainees must commit to attending the 5-week training period, concluding with a public checkout tour in mid-February. If you miss a session, you may bring your case to the attention of the Docent Coordinator for consideration. Once trained, student docents will be responsible for writing tour content, assisting in public programming and events, leading tours and fieldtrip groups, and working in the reading room. For a full breakdown of requirements, see the below table:

2027-2028 Student Docent Requirements

Weekly Training Sessions (10 hours)	Student docents will be available to attend 5 weekly training sessions throughout February and March 2027. In the final training session, docents will lead a hack tour stop which they create from scratch, delivering it to a live audience!
Tour Stop Writing (8 hours)	Student docents will write and submit one tour stop in the spring semester, due by April 28. Student docents will write and submit one tour stop in the fall semester, due by November 19.
Monthly Student Docent Meetings (8 hours)	Students will attend monthly student docent meetings to continue training, share and practice tour content, discuss upcoming events, and provide feedback for other student docents.
Field Trips (20 hours)	Student docents are expected to assist with facilitating 10 field trips during the academic year, including Experience UGA 8th Grade Field Trips. Field trips are typically scheduled between 9:00 – 12:00 on Tue/Wed/Thur.
Events and Public Programming (20 hours)	Student docents will attend and assist with public programming and events each semester, including public tours, Family Days, curator lectures, film screenings, and other events. These most often take place between 5 – 9PM on Tue/Wed/Thur.
Reading Room Desk Shifts (Weekly)	The reading room schedule is coordinated each semester. Docents will consult with the Public Service Coordinator to schedule weekly, 2-hour desk shifts. Docents are expected to work at least 1 2-hour desk shift per week but can take on additional shifts if desired. Note: Student employees cannot exceed 20 hours of work each week.

Can I use my experience in the Student Docent Program to fulfill an internship requirement?

A student may choose for the Student Docent Program to apply for an internship requirement and will work with Jan Hebbard to include additional hours in their schedule to fulfill internship requirements.

If a training session is missed, a docent trainee must:

- Contact the Docent Coordinator (in advance, when possible) to notify them of the absence and to obtain session materials
- Prepare for and be tested on this material at the next training session

What is the required reading for docent training?

Participants will receive a digital docent handbook, containing overview information on the Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscripts Library, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, and the Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection, as well as information on the exhibits currently on display in the galleries of the Special Collections Building.

Additional information will be added to the handbook as needed (ex. changing exhibitions). Participants will be responsible for reviewing this information on their own and will be tested during subsequent sessions. The notebook will also contain a set of optional readings focused on docent training and tips for giving tours drawn from outside sources.

How do we know when you are ready to give tours?

At the start of training, all trainees will be given a tour script to memorize. Throughout training, participants will take quizzes on the tour content. Quizzes will serve as a litmus test -- helping us to understand what information has been retained, what delivery systems worked or did not, and what if any follow up training might be needed. In addition, we will practice giving tours before each student docent leads a public tour in mid-October.

How much will I be paid as a student docent?

If accepted to the program, you will complete the training sessions as a volunteer. That will include 10 hours of training; 1 public tour; plus, additional time outside of classes to study your material and research and write one tour stop (due November 21st). In total, we anticipate you will volunteer approximately 20 hours of your time during this phase of the program.

Docents will be eligible to lead guided tours, work in the reading room, and assist with public programs in spring 2026. **Docents will be paid $12.00/hour**.