

are located on the UGA campus. This year, 10 students have worked in service learning positions at UGA, including 3 in plant services, 1 in entomology, 1 in hotel services, 1 at Channel 16, and 4 in the UGA Office of Service Learning.

- **UGA Student Service-Learning:** Providing the opportunity for UGA first- and second-year students to be involved in the unique, educational environment of Classic City High School and allowing them to use their talents and creativity in a wide variety of service-learning projects. UGA students taking this proposed service-learning course would attend weekly seminars with other UGA students doing service learning in additional partnership schools. In these seminars, students would learn mentoring and tutoring skills, plan service projects based on the needs of Classic City faculty, and have conversations with school teachers and administrators about teaching as a career path.
- **Increased parental involvement:** Getting busy parents to attend school meetings is a challenge for most high schools. Usually only a handful of parents attend quarterly meetings at the PLC. A goal is to arrange for student displays and performances and entertainment to attract more parental participation.
- **Counseling:** Increasing opportunities for students to meet with counselors to discuss career planning and overcome various personal or academic obstacles to school completion.

Anyone interested in assisting the partnership in providing any of the aforementioned services to Classic City High School may contact Cramond or Kuss at 706/542-5104 or partners@uga.edu.

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UGA Partners: (L-R) Doctoral student Kathy Kuss, gifted education professor Bonnie Cramond and doctoral student Rebecca Nordin

UGA Study: Why do high-ability students drop out?

BY KATHLEEN DIEZ KUSS

Mark is an energetic boy with an IQ of 139. He had straight-A report cards in early elementary school, with glowing reports from teachers. By the fourth grade, he began failing to turn in assignments, and his grades plummeted. By the ninth grade, he found his course work unchallenging and dull. He no longer wanted to attend school.

That is a typical profile of a high-ability dropout, according to a team of researchers from the Torrance Center for Creativity and Talent Development in the University of Georgia's College of Education.

The team, led by Torrance Center director Bonnie Cramond, is studying school-related factors that contribute to bright students' decisions to drop out of high school. At least 11,000 gifted students drop out of high school each year in the United States, according to recent educational research. But there has not been a lot of research to determine why.

"Most research and interventions aimed at high school dropouts focus on students' skill deficits and lack of motivation as the primary causes of dropping out," said Cramond, a professor of gifted education in the department of educational psychology and instructional technology. "The assumption is that bright students do well in school, and only dull students and/or miscreants drop out. But we are focusing on school-related problems as causes because we think many of the students who drop out are actually very bright."

One of the major benefits to the university

from its partnership with Classic City High School, a non-traditional school for students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out, has been access to research participants. Cramond and her team have had help from the school in identifying participants and scheduling interviews during class time.

"The dropout problem is critical," Cramond said. "We must stop the hemorrhaging of students from our high schools. But the problem begins much earlier — as early as primary school when children are turned off to learning. We have not significantly changed the curriculum in over 100 years, but over that same period, our world has changed dramatically. Highly creative students seem to have the greatest difficulty tolerating the stultifying curriculum and stringent schedule in many schools."

These students' lost potential is harmful not only to the individual but in a greater way to society, according to Linda Silverman, a leading researcher in the field of gifted education.

"This represents a tremendous loss to the students; to the local economy, which can only support a small number of dropouts; and to the world. What symphonies are not written, what diseases not cured, what inventions not created because creative minds reject the stultifying school experience?" asked Cramond.

The belief that the gifted will succeed in spite of dropping out has been shown to be