

Alabama Community Scholars Institute (ACSI)

WHAT is ACSI? ACSI is a multi-day training program that provides participants with the tools, skills, resources, and experience needed to document, present, and promote Alabama's folk and traditional arts or folkways.

WHERE? Previous ACSIs are the following: 2004 in Livingston and Monroeville (the Black Belt project); 2006 in Florence and Muscle Shoals; 2008 in Mobile (Mardi Gras), 2010 Reunion on Mt. Cheaha, and 2013 in Cullman (German heritage and other traditions). June, 2019—hopefully Ft. Payne!!!

WHO attends ACSI? Participants include librarians, archivists, museum professionals, students, teachers, artists, new professionals in the field of folklore, and local leaders of art councils, festivals, historic sites, and tourism agencies. All of them are people and professionals who want to research, document and present various aspects of Alabama's traditional culture—the music, food, crafts, stories, celebrations, work traditions, etc., of their own communities.

WHAT do participants learn: Skills they develop include: identifying master artists, conducting oral history research, documenting traditional culture through photographs, audio recordings, and video; presenting artists through events, programs, publications, and productions such as a documentary films or CDs; or promoting cultural heritage through tourism initiatives like trails and web sites. The last day, they are sent into the field to conduct research. The results of that work are now part of the collections processed through the Archive of Alabama Folk Culture in the Alabama Department of Archives and History, so they are available for research and education.

WHY: Graduates have returned to their communities and conducted fieldwork and other research on a topic of interest, completed exhibits, organized festivals, provided arts in education programs, or worked on other projects resulting in contributions to the folk and traditional arts in their area. Over the years, participants have excelled as leaders in the arts and humanities and many have stayed committed to the Alabama Folklife Association by serving on the Board of Directors, including Russell Gulley.