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ITGA 2024 Conference Draws Biggest Attendance Yet

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Clemson, S.C. - The annual conference of the International Town & Gown Association (ITGA), hosted by the University of Maryland and the City of College Park, June 5-7, drew the largest attendance with almost 400 attendees from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Represented were businesses, city and county governments, non-profits, colleges and universities, and community members.

“We set the bar high and are proud to have elevated the City of College Park and the University of Maryland in the world of Town & Gown relations,” said Gloria Aparicio Blackwell, Host Committee Chair and Founder/Director of the Office of Community Engagement at the University of Maryland. We showcased our commitment to the conference theme, “The Power of Partnerships: Solving the Grand Challenges Together.”

The theme, inspired by University of Maryland President, Dr. Darryll Pines, featured three substantive tracks:

- “Partnerships for the Public Good,” a nod to exploring the partnerships between cities and universities, included community-based strategies to advance health, public safety and sustainability in communities.
- “Equity, Belonging and Civic Engagement,” with a focus on innovative strategies for enhancing the connection, or sense of belonging, between student and local communities, with an emphasis on boosting civic participation both on and off campus.
- “Placemaking, Housing and Development,” was an exploration on how cities and universities can collaborate to establish vibrant communities that service the needs of employees, students and residents alike.

The three-day event offered more than 60 educational sessions that sparked an exchange of ideas and promoted opportunities for developing professional networks. “The ITGA conference is a place where campus and community come together, inspire the future of communities, and encourage a broad range of discussions and problem solving,” said Cory Peterson, ITGA President and Associate Vice President, Community Engagement and Local Government Affairs at Georgetown University.

Other attractions included afternoon mobile sessions that allowed attendees to enjoy the College Park area and learn more about their history and collaborative partnerships, including the 16-mile light rail project that links communities to the east and west of the UMD campus and a visit to the historic Black Community of Lakeland, a place devastated by urban renewal in the 1970s. Finally, networking activities and “College Park Cash” valued at \$25.00 were given to attendees to infuse money back into the local economy.

[Insert quote here.]

“ITGA and the Host Planning Committee worked hard to ensure the conference was welcoming to all participants with relevant sessions to increase understanding of town-gown relationships,” said Beth Bagwell, ITGA Executive Director. “We’re like a family, and getting together each year allows us to reconnect, network with new colleagues and thought leaders, and find solutions to enhance the quality of life in our communities.”

What is ‘town and gown’?

The term “town and gown” dates to the Middle Ages but is particularly relevant at a time of unprecedented pressures and changes in higher education — and, by extension, in their municipalities.

More about ITGA: The [International Town and Gown Association \(ITGA\)](#) serves as the only global non-profit organization focused on the dynamic between colleges and their host communities. Founded in 2008 and based in Clemson, South Carolina, the ITGA offers members resources, education, networking and solutions to the challenges, emerging issues and unique opportunities found in town and gown relationships. Our members are a diverse group of higher education administrators, elected officials, community groups and campus neighbors who collaborate on issues such as economic development, sustainability, housing, diversity and inclusion, quality of life and civic engagement.