University – Community Collaboration to Advance Sustainability

Institute on the Environment Frontiers Series

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2 questions

How can we build long-term capacity to produce sustainable solutions + resilient institutions?

How can we foster innovation in engagement and cross-disciplinary collaboration in universities?
New model for University – Community Collaboration

Resilient Communities Project connects U of MN + communities to advance sustainability and resilience

1-year community partnership – RCP as matchmaker

Match community projects with U of MN graduate courses
Resilient Communities Project

Initial support from Institute on the Environment + Center for Urban and Regional Affairs

Initiated by Sustainability Faculty Network
U of MN Sustainability Faculty Network

**Grassroots** collaborative of 60+ faculty from diverse disciplines engaged in sustainability education

- Identify compelling programmatic + curricular opportunities
- Create opportunities for interaction
- Meet student + faculty needs/interests
Network + RCP

Initiated RCP program

Interviews + discussion → Implementation Strategy

Priority to provide experiential learning for students

Ready supply of faculty
How does it work?

Initial 2012-2013 pilot partnership with City of Minnetonka

14 projects, 23 courses, 8 colleges

RCP as facilitator, matchmaker, troubleshooter, quality controller, promoter...

- College of Continuing Education
- College of Design
- College of Education & Human Development
- College of Food, Agriculture, & Natural Resource Sciences
- College of Liberal Arts
- College of Science & Engineering
- Humphrey School of Public Affairs
- Law School
How does it work?

RFP for 2013-2014 community partner

Application identifies potential projects, stakeholders/partners, + resources

7 proposals, $20k-$160k match, 200+ projects

North St. Paul selected as next partner
Sustainability + Resilience

**sustainability**
connecting across environmental, economic, and social systems; long-term perspective

**resilience**
adaptive + responsive to changing circumstances; requires collaboration and interconnectedness
Minnetonka Projects
Stormwater management
Water + energy conservation
Mid-priced housing options
Transit-oriented development
Conservation development
Rooftop gardens
Parking regulations
Transportation demand management
Water resources planning
Neighborhood identities
Post-development impacts
Density + housing options
Village center connections
Housing program evaluation

U of MN Courses
Neighborhood Revitalization
Building & Site Integration in Sustainable Design
Housing Assessment & Analysis
Land, Environment, & Energy Law Clinic
Principles & Methods of Evaluation
Urban Hydrology & Land Development
Pollution Prevention
Methods for Natural Resource & Environmental Policy
GIS in Environmental Science & Management
Design Thinking for Action
Urban GIS
Networks and Places
Housing Policy
Managing Urban Growth and Change
Land Use & Transportation Capstone
Environmental Communication
Evaluation Problems
Ecology of Agricultural Systems
Environmental Planning, Policy, & Decision Making
North St. Paul Projects
Live/work housing
Living streets and capital improvements
**Green energy initiative**
Neighborhood identities
**Fiber optic network development**
Community identity and branding
**Downtown revitalization strategies**
Civic engagement and communication
Environmental education
Redevelopment-ready community
**Public art and public history**
Master redevelopment plan
Silver Lake trail connection
Community gardens and local food
**Staff development and retention**
Development of underutilized parcels
Aging in place
Energy conservation initiative

Additional Course-Based Capacity
Distance education opportunities
Tree preservation policy
Stormwater management
Greenway corridor development
Reengaging community organizations
Active living and community health

Additional Student Capacity
Individual capstone projects
Professional papers/honors theses
Research assistantships through CURA
Resilient Communities Project

Multiple intersecting opportunities + trends

Community motivation to promote sustainability + respond to changing conditions

Growing student interest in sustainability + resilience, seeking “real world” experience

Faculty expertise in sustainability + resilience, seeking “real world” projects

Reduced university + community resources

Focus on university-community engagement

Increasing demand + awareness of need for sustainable + resilient approaches
Resilient Communities Project

Potential to make **significant progress + infuse energy** in city’s move toward sustainability and resilience

Fall 2013

Summer 2014

complete 12–20 locally-relevant projects

+ advance internal conversations
+ collaborate with external partners
+ advance cross-departmental + cross-disciplinary engagement
+ promote community as a leader in sustainability + resilience
What is different?

Multiple projects over a sustained period

Efficient access to full range of experts across the UMN

Potential to engage (internal + external) partners

RCP staff content expertise in community sustainability – ongoing coordination + follow up + media

For UMN – it’s opt in
2 questions

How can we build long-term capacity to produce sustainable solutions + resilient institutions?

How can we foster innovation in engagement and cross-disciplinary collaboration in universities?
Building capacity

Communities

Fostering internal/external collaboration, integrate local perspectives with sustainability expertise
Impacts beyond the partner community

Universities

Training the next generation of sustainability practitioners
Building experience in community-based work for students + faculty
Fostering innovation: engagement

Facilitating sustained engagement
   Not just “one-off”, expert-informed + context-driven
Building long-term communities + university relationships
Driven by broader goal of advancing sustainability + resilience
   Bigger than local projects + student/faculty engagement for students + faculty
Fostering innovation: cross-disciplinary collaboration

Sustainability + resilience requires cross-disciplinary focus

Significant barriers in universities
  Tuition models, college focus, promotion + tenure

Call for strategic investments that respond to critical challenges
Lessons

Sustainability Faculty Network critical to quick start
  Supply, legitimacy, cross-disciplinary organizing

Evaluation is essential – track outcomes

Lack of affiliation limits resources + support
  Recognition, communication, + finances

Lack of affiliation creates flexibility
  Work with innovators, cut across collegiate boundaries
Prospects

Exploring internal + external funding sources

Emerging network of programs – shared resources, capacity building, project database, funding

Communications – media + other audiences
Prospects

Advance the practice of sustainability + resilience

Advance engagement + cross-disciplinary connections

Allow innovators lead our institutions
  Leadership + compelling story are essential to comprehensive change
  RCP + communities + students + faculty
Thank you!

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