

Scott County to partner with University of Minnesota to solve problems

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Scott County's proposal for the Resilient Communities Project identified 14 potential projects, including increasing participation in rental-assistance programs.

Photo by Tory Cooney

Students and faculty from the University of Minnesota will help find ways to turn Scott County's vision for the future into a reality.

http://www.swnewsmedia.com/jordan_independent/news/scott-county-to-partner-with-university-of-minnesota-to-solve/article_c30ed600-763a-5014-9db0-2d7cd96f20e4.html

This support will come through research and planning assistance, provided as part of the Resilient Communities Project. Scott County's selection for this program was announced April 19.

The project will build on issues identified by the county during its 2040 planning process, Scott County Planning Manager Brad Davis said.

"The timing is perfect," he said. "This is a unique opportunity to move right from plan creation into plan implementation with all of the great university resources at our side ready to assist."

The university's Resilient Communities Project will partner with both Scott and Ramsey counties during the 2018–2019 academic year, marking the 6-year-old program's first time working with two partners at the same time.

The program, which operates within the university's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, connects students with local government agencies to "learn about their communities' needs, conduct research and develop solutions," according to a news release.

"We're very excited about our upcoming collaborations with Scott and Ramsey Counties," said project director Mike Greco. "Each community brings to the table a unique set of issues and projects. Working with staff, residents, and other partners in these communities will provide U of M students with incredible experiential learning opportunities, while increasing each county's capacity to remain resilient in the face of rapid economic, social, and environmental changes."

Scott County's proposal identified 14 potential projects, including:

- Investigating self-serve libraries.
- Planting edible landscapes.
- Diversifying agricultural production.
- Managing hazardous waste.
- Improving early childhood education.
- Fostering employer-assisted housing.
- Increasing participation in rental-assistance programs.
- Planning for autonomous vehicles.

- Promoting active living.
- Investigating service costs in rural areas.

The program will begin with staff defining the scope and purpose of individual projects, which will then be matched with specific university courses to be offered this fall and next spring. Participating classes cover a wide range of programs and disciplines, including architecture, planning and engineering, business, environmental sciences and the humanities.

“This is a wonderful opportunity for Scott County to have access to the resources and cutting-edge research the University of Minnesota can share,” said Scott County Board Chairman Tom Wolf. “This partnership will allow us to examine policy, project, and program initiatives — identified by our community — in a well-defined and collaborative way.”

Work will begin in September and students will present their findings and recommendations at the end of the semester.

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Tory Cooney is an enterprise reporter with a love of features writing. She is vivacious, resourceful and enjoys cooking, quilting, snowshoeing and Post-it-notes.