The CFANS Engaged College Team Final Report

Goals and Accomplishments

1. Create extraordinary educational experiences for CFANS students focusing on issues of healthy food supplies, preventing childhood obesity, and protecting the future of the Mississippi River that also have both immediate and long term benefit for the community.
   • Enhanced and extended the CFANS Organic Farm class partnership with organic gardening class at Gordon Parks High School (an alternative high school for at-risk youth) As a part of both classes, the CFANS students spend two days at GPHS and the GPHS students spend two days on the St. Paul campus. This past year the students at both sites constructed a high tunnel together in order to extend their growing season. A CFANS student intern also co-teaches the GPHS course with a GPHS staff member. The following link is a short video taken at GPHS last year. Ahttps://netfiles.umn.edu/users/bbeyers/gordonparks.m2t?uniq=kgqjxy

   The personnel involved at both sites were thrilled with the project and intend for this to be a permanent connection. We are currently working on a grant to fund extending the Gordon Parks work to other sites in the community and to research the effect of the these projects on student health.

   o Created a new course: Learning From Field Experience: The Food System Challenge. This is an interdisciplinary course which will be taught by 3 of CFANS faculty from our grant team and one of our community partner organizations. The students begin the course with an internship “bootcamp” where they spend the day in a local community learning about the food-related needs of the community and then work in teams on potential solutions. (More about this in ‘successes and challenges). During the summer students intern (or serve) in various sectors of the food system (industrial agriculture, community gardens, nutrition, food-related industries, e.g. General Mills during the summer with assignments and virtual discussions. In the fall they have the classroom portion of the course.

   o Created the River Rangers. The River Ranger program connects students with off-campus community partners engaged in river and community stewardship and works to enhance student experience in five areas: curriculum, research, career development, service, and recreational opportunities. The group has established a River Ranger listserv which posts internship and volunteer opportunities related to the river. Since October they have posted over 25 opportunities for student engagement with 15 community partners.

2. Create a transferrable process for how the community and University faculty can partner effectively to create mutually beneficial educational opportunities.

3. Create a system for sustaining and leveraging existing partnerships.
We’ve built relationships with a wonderful group of community partners who are willing to stay with us and, hopefully, become a permanent engagement zone around food access, health, and urban agriculture issues.

We’ve hired a VISTA volunteer to help us sustain these partnerships by arranging regular meetings, researching grant opportunities, creating a database of existing partnership, and many other tasks related to sustaining and leveraging our partnerships.

4. **Provide faculty development in working with communities**
   - 10 CFANS faculty and staff are currently participating in 10 hours of training in working with diverse communities with the Powderhorn Cultural Wellness Center.

Some other grant outcomes:

- One of our community members has become an “endowed chair” in the college and will be teaching a class in the college this fall.
- We extended work at Gordon Parks to Columbia Heights.
- We have extended our partnership with White Earth Reservation to include co-creating a class “indigenous views on Globalization” which includes a “glocal experience” where CFANS students spend a week at the reservation and participating in a 3 week study abroad with indigenous tribes in Ecuador.
- At the end of this month we will submit a grant to the Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute that will extend the partnership between the CFANS student-run farm to the CDC, add a component to the course where the students build Gardens-in-a-box and take them to seniors in the community, and students at both sites will gather recipes and food stories to create a community cookbook.
- We are currently constructing RFPs for CFANS faculty to propose courses with significant engagement
- In June three of the faculty and one of the community members from this team will be attending an AAC&U conference to construct a new course with community engagement.

**A Success Story ------ and our greatest Challenge:**

I will use the same story as an example of both a success and a challenge. On Saturday, May 13 we held our “bootcamp” for our new internship class “The Food System Challenge”. The bootcamp was to be held in the Frogtown Community Gardens and designed with one or two members of Afro-Eco. The members of Afro-Eco agreed to participate early in April. When we contacted them in late April to begin the design of the ‘bootcamp’ experience, we got no response. Finally, a week before the event the CFANS team got together to design a PLAN B, i.e. how they could pull this off without the community. Three days before the event, one of the Afro-Eco members got back to us and we arranged for two community members to discuss different issues with the students. Whew. Plans are finalized and a room is reserved at a local café for lunch and for the students to work on their task “How to sustain community involvement in the community gardens”. The students met in the Peace Garden Saturday morning in the rain, all of us wondering what the day would bring. Well, the two speakers became 12
community members, including (but not limited to) the president of the neighborhood associations (that they referred to as ‘the mayor’), the local state representative, a reverend running for school board, several local urban farmers, and an ex-boxer and one time trainer of Mohammed Ali (only for 2 weeks, but still...) I can’t describe the energy and joy of the experience as we all talked and worked in the garden in the rain. When it came time for lunch, most of the community members wanted to join us, so we arrive at the café with 25 instead of 14 to be told “You don’t fit in the room. It only holds 18.” But, we managed. Students designed their presentations and when it came time for them to give the presentations, he people who had reserved the room after us began to arrive-Afro-Eco. So, additional Afro-Eco members, including Rose Brewer, joined us in the crowded room for the student presentations.

A week later, I think that all of us who participated in this ‘bootcamp’ are still flying high from the experience. It was – and still is - a challenge that the community does not share the U expectations for how and when things should happen, e.g. everything is planned in advance, people look at their email every day, etc. But the experience they can provide for our students is beyond what most academics could envision.

**Advice:** Involve community members in the design of courses with community engagement rather than just asking them to provide the sites for our students’ involvement. Remember that it will take more time and won’t happen on our schedule, but the results will be worth it.

Building trusting relationships with members of the community takes time, but the process can be accelerated by building upon existing relationships. Our engagement grant team included 8 community members. Each of these members had an existing relationship with one of our CFANS team members. The trust they had built with one team member seemed to be extended to the rest of us.

**Grant Spending:**

- Food for 4 team meetings and 1 team retreat: $726.50
- Food and community stipends for community-run portion of new course: The Food systems Challenge: $533.00
- Payment for community members to attend meetings and retreat: $1677.00
- Conference registration and travel for 2 faculty team members to attend SENCER conference on teaching about food through engagement: $745
- Book for VISTA Volunteer: 28.00

**Total thus far:** $3709.50

*Money originally requested from this grant for faculty professional development on partnering with diverse communities through the Cultural Wellness Center has been paid from the budget of our Director of Diversity in order to save these remaining grant funds to pay for VISTA volunteer stipends for this year and next ($6,000.00), for food for upcoming meetings as the team plans to stay together, and*
miscellaneous expenses related to the VISTA position and service learning course. Community members have agreed to continue to work with CFANS without stipends for their time.