

Community-University Partnerships in Small-Town Idaho: Addressing Diverse Community Needs through Interdisciplinary Outreach and Engagement

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Abstract

Traditional towns in the Intermountain West, platted in the late 19th century as railroad shipping or resource extraction centers, are experiencing significant changes as they develop more diverse economies. Small towns often lack adequate resources to address comprehensive planning and design on their own. However, universities, through interdisciplinary outreach and engagement, utilizing service-learning, can offer design, planning, economic development, and other strategies, concepts, and policies to foster sustainable development. This paper addresses the challenges of 1) developing an interdisciplinary organizational structure, 2) establishing positive community-university relationships and, 3) matching academic outcomes to community needs as the institution shifts from faculty-initiated service-learning projects to an interdisciplinary partnership model for outreach and engagement. The theoretical and philosophical dimensions raised by the challenges are illustrated by three community-university partnership case studies in Intermountain West communities.

Introduction

According to geographer William Travis (2007), growth in the Intermountain West is “an amenity gold rush” (p. 22). Between 1990 and 2000, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho were the five fastest-growing states in the nation, a trend likely to continue. However, as communities transition from resource extraction economies of the old West to post-industrial economies of the new West, they are confronted with a new palette of environmental issues related to population growth and consumptive land use patterns (Apel & Glenn, 2009). Mining, timber, and agricultural communities in the emerging new West often suffer from loss of economic vitality, aging housing stock, brownfield sites, decaying infrastructure, and poor aesthetic character. Many communities, located at the interface between fragile ecosystems, growing populations, and shifting economic realities, often lack the resources to adequately deal with land use planning and design challenges.

Beginning with a review of community-university partnerships, this paper presents three case studies and the interdisciplinary partnership model for outreach and engagement at the University of Idaho (U of I). More detailed sections explore partnership relationships, academic and service outcomes, and the prospect of exporting the community-university model to other institutions. We make the argument for an interdisciplinary outreach and engagement model that focuses on multiple partnerships both within and outside the university to comprehensively address communities’ design and planning needs. Addressing different stages in the planning process,

from visioning to policy development, requires matching appropriate skill sets of academic programs with the needs and abilities of community partners. During our 20-year history of working with transitioning communities, we have found that they face a host of economic, environmental, infrastructure, social, and governmental problems. A long-term strategy is generally needed to prioritize and schedule partnership projects (Reardon, 1999; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011). For example, out-of-compliance wastewater treatment systems must be updated before new housing or tourism efforts are initiated. Since the professional expertise to be contributed by the university partner differs according to the development sector, a sequence of courses and faculty from multiple disciplines is often necessary. In addition, the community often needs months to debate alternative planning proposals, acquire permits, or revise ordinances before successive projects can be undertaken. The next section provides a general overview of community-university partnerships.

Community-University Partnerships

Universities and communities have a long history of collaborative partnerships for economic, aesthetic, and infrastructure improvements (Barnes, Altimare, Farrell, Brown, Burnett III, Gamble, & Davis, 2009; Reardon, 1999; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011). These partnerships began a period of professional activism in planning and design disciplines during the 1960s in response to ill-conceived urban renewal and other significant infrastructure projects (e.g., interstate

highways, flood protection). Milestone partnership projects include the University of Chicago's Neighborhood Initiative (Wiewle & Lieber, 1998); the University of Maryland's Urban Community Service Program (Baum, 2000); Howard University's Community Association (Martin, Smith, & Philips, 2002); the University of Illinois' comprehensive and long-term East St. Louis Action Research Project with residents of the city in 1987 (Reardon, 1999); and the rural, design-build program to assist impoverished communities throughout Alabama by the late Sam Mockbee of Auburn University (Oppenheimer Dean & Hursley, 2002).

American university presidents are embracing the idea that their universities "should be engaged in problem solving for the broader society and the state and local community" (Myers & Banerjee, 2005, p. 126), with an understanding that the partnership should be mutually beneficial (Baum, 2000). Outreach and engagement are integral to the mission of land-grant universities, which were created to "provide equal access to education and service to communities" (Kellogg Commission, 1999, p. 1). U of I's mission explicitly states the institution's role as "a land-grant institution committed to undergraduate and graduate-research education with Extension services responsive to Idaho and the region's business and community needs" (University of Idaho, 2009).

However, the character of the community-university relationship in university mission statements is often vague. The dynamic between professional experts in universities and citizens in communities led to criticism that universities were too unaware, dated, and disorganized to address social problems in constructive ways (Kellogg Commission, 1999). For example, Bringle and Hatcher found that some university outreach programs treat "communities as pockets of needs, laboratories for experimentation, or passive recipients of expertise" (2002, pp. 503-504). This criticism is confirmed by surveys demonstrating that citizens have an increasing wariness of the motivations of professionals and their practices. Professions (e.g., law, engineering, architecture) have had a checkered history of public regard in the United States. Although professionals are licensed by the state or professional organizations to ensure that practitioners have achieved a level of technical competency and will offer their services for the betterment of society, research indicates that many citizens view the professions as self-serving monopolies of particular market sectors (Fischer, 2009). While university outreach activities are not profit motivated, citizens may be justifiably suspicious of career development, research, and service-learning initiatives by design, planning, engineering,

and other professional degree programs.

Similarly, experts offering community services can be confused and frustrated when citizens question or reject their technical proposals. The expectation that expert knowledge confers some authority within the community decision-making process is a serious partnership shortcoming (Fischer, 2000). A balanced dialogue that places technological proposals within the context of ethics, economics, and political realities is a better model for community-university partnerships. The Danish consensus conference is one model where a layperson panel is presented with a technological proposal and recommends policies or actions to decision makers and other citizens (Grundahl, 1995; Danish Board of Technology, 2011).

The limited concept of the university as a technology transfer entity is far too narrow to satisfy the aspirations of community partners. Even the call for universities to embrace a two-way process of working in partnership with a focus on urban-oriented issues only addresses the shift from agriculturally dominated economies to diversified economies (Apel & Glenn, 2009; Overton & Brunkhardt, 1999), but not necessarily deliberative, democratic processes.

When university outreach capabilities match the needs expressed by community partners (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002), a balance between academic scholarship and the creation of planning and design products in communities is more easily met (Myers & Banerjee, 2005). The older partnership literature identifies successful partnerships as those built on overlapping goals and achievable outcomes that focus on improving community situations (Baum, 2000; Martin, Smith, & Philips, 2002), while newer paradigms include facilitation of community building and participatory democracy (Boyle & Silver, 2005; Fischer, 2009; Ostrander, 2004; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011).

The first step in encouraging a more democratic participatory process is expanding who participates. Second is interaction through a range of learning, communicating, and advocating opportunities. Third is meaningful impact through prioritization, criticism, advice, and evaluation (Fung, 2006; Barnes et al., 2009). Each of these aspects of deliberative democracy is discussed later in relation to the case studies.

Effective partnerships with small towns through university outreach and engagement programs face a number of challenges that are compounded by a range of service-learning goals. In this paper we address these challenges. The first is building an organizational structure and contributory expertise to respond to the diverse needs and capabilities of

Table 1. Community Characteristics

	Cascade	Sandpoint	Plummer
Population, 2009	8,370	984	972
Per Capita Income, 2009	\$19,766	\$16,395	\$19,723
Poverty rate, 2009	17.6%	17.7%	12.1%
Economic History	Timber	Timber/agriculture	Timber/agriculture
Class Projects	Bypass Mitigation, 2002 Comprehensive Plan, 2006	Land Use Ordinance Update, 2008	Comprehensive Plan Update, 2009

small towns (Fischer, 2009). In particular, we describe the U of I’s interdisciplinary model for outreach and engagement, making the argument that this model is critical in order to address the diversity of community design and planning needs and to maintain long-term commitments, sustain relationships, add value through new projects, and secure grant funding. The second challenge is establishing positive partnerships between university administrators, faculty, and students and elected officials, interest groups, and citizens. The third challenge is matching the academic outcomes to the expectations of the communities. We discuss the management of this challenge through the interdisciplinary organizational model, partnership relations, and student service-learning experiences.

In order to ground the theoretical and philosophical dimensions raised in this paper, our discussion is supported with examples from community-university partnerships in three Intermountain West communities. The case study communities are briefly described in the following section.

Case Study Communities

Between 2002 and 2009, U of I faculty partnered with three communities in Idaho: Sandpoint (Bonner County), Plummer (Benewah County), and Cascade (Valley County). Each community has experienced significant economic shifts from natural resource to recreation and service-based economies. Partnering with the university helped both students and citizens identify historic preservation and infill strategies for revitalizing historic districts and maximizing the sustainable use of natural assets. Table 1 lists characteristics of each community.

Sandpoint (Community-University Projects Fall 2002 and Fall 2006)

Sandpoint, touted by *Outside Magazine* (2004) as one of America’s top-10 small towns, is located on the shores of Lake Pend Oreille in Idaho’s Panhandle (Figure 1), at a nexus of a transcontinental railroad and popular recreational opportunities.

Sandpoint sprouted along the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1893; however, flooding in 1894 forced relocation to higher ground nearby. Anticipating the arrival of the Great Northern Railway, L.D. Farmin, a station agent for the railway, purchased 160 acres on the west side of Sand Creek for a new town site. Farmin’s plat, an eight-block grid configuration, was planned as the commercial heart of town and continues to serve as Sandpoint’s downtown. Farmin’s “Main Street” was a wagon road that cut across the gridded street system at an angle connecting the heart of the emerging commercial district to the Great Northern Railway’s depot at the western edge of town. The wagon road evolved into a boulevard with a streetcar. Railroad infrastructure and vast forests enabled Sandpoint to develop into a thriving timber town. Throughout the 20th century

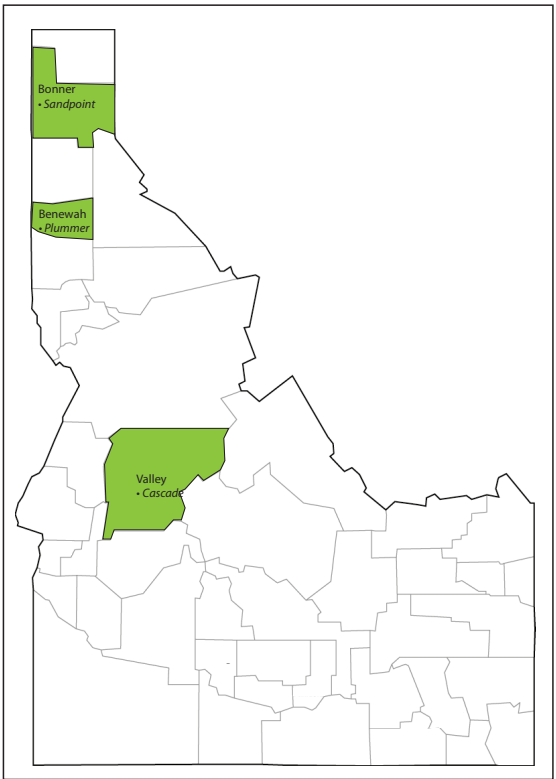


Figure 1. Map Showing the Case-Study Towns

natural resources propelled development of timber, mill, and tourist industries.

As a booming recreational amenity town and transportation crossroad, Sandpoint faces population growth and transportation challenges. During the past 10 years the city annexed new subdivisions in Bonner County, quadrupling its land area since 1972. The North American Free Trade Agreement of 1994 has increased rail and truck traffic from Canada that passes directly through downtown Sandpoint, compromising community connectivity and local mobility. Traffic congestion threatens quality of life and undermines the ambience of First Avenue, the town's historic main street. To help improve traffic flow, the Idaho Department of Transportation (IDOT) is constructing a bypass along the original Northern Pacific right-of-way. The bypass, under construction since 2002, creates a barrier between the town and the waterfront.

Plummer (Community-University Projects Fall 2007 to Spring 2008)

Plummer, located on the western edge of Benewah County in northern Idaho, is surrounded by rolling wheat fields and forested foothills.

Plummer's one square mile town site, platted in 1909, was established at the junction of two railroads in the middle of the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation. The town was incorporated as the Village of Plummer in 1910. By 1912, 800 residents lived in the town. Plummer's early economy was largely supported by timber harvesting and milling. After World War I, the town suffered from the economic downturn (Wetter, 1962). By the mid-1900s, the economy shifted toward agriculture, although the town still has a lumber mill. A fire in the early 1970s destroyed the majority of the buildings on its main street. Since the catastrophe, the town has struggled to define its central business district due in part to its main street being an east-running highway that is a primary transportation route for trucks bringing logs to the mill. The other possible main street is also a significant north-south highway. The town has had weak land use planning, adopting its first comprehensive plan and land use ordinances in 1995.

Cascade (Community-University Projects Fall 2008 to Summer 2009)

Cascade is located in central Idaho, 75 miles north of Boise. The town is nestled in the Long Valley between Cascade Lake reservoir and the north fork of the Payette River. Surrounding the broad, flat valley are steep, forested mountains.

The town of Cascade was originally a six-block

plat created by W. Patterson in 1913 after the Oregon Short Line Railroad was constructed. Businesses and residents of nearby towns that were not served by the railroad moved to Cascade. Local businessmen raised funds and constructed a courthouse to secure the county seat for the town. The town's first lumber mill was built in 1923 and the Bureau of Reclamation constructed the dam for Cascade Lake reservoir in 1946. During World War II, Cascade was a shipping hub for antimony and tungsten ore (City of Cascade, 2004).

The Long Valley once provided a wide range of agricultural products, largely supplanted today by seasonal cattle operations. However, the primary economic activity in the region was milling lumber. The Boise Cascade sawmill closed in May 2001, forcing the community to search for a new economic base. Federal and county government has always provided some financial and economic stability. Planning challenges in Cascade include a legally insufficient comprehensive plan, outdated zoning ordinances, new commercial development occurring outside of the core downtown district, and uncoordinated county planning.

The following section examines the U of I's evolution from faculty-initiated service-learning projects to an interdisciplinary partnership model for outreach and engagement.

Faculty-Initiated Projects—An Expertise Model

The U of I has a track record of community-university partnerships beginning in the late 1980s, particularly through its design programs. Projects that provided architecture and landscape architecture students with service-learning opportunities were conducted in dozens of Intermountain West communities. The partnership between the U of I and Sandpoint is an example of a faculty-initiated relationship. In 2002, Sandpoint's city planner, who knew the architecture faculty personally, engaged students and faculty to develop concepts for mitigating the impact of the impending IDOT bypass and to take advantage of new opportunities afforded by its construction. Student teams helped the town envision a new visitor's center at the intersection of downtown and the bypass off-ramp, a new pedestrian bridge connecting the visitor's center to the city beach park, enhancement of a boardwalk along Sand Creek, an expanded civic center, and a new master plan for the marina.

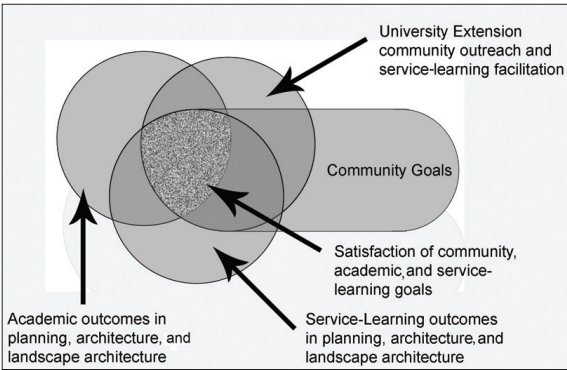
Between 2002 and 2006, Sandpoint continued gaining national exposure as a mountain amenity town. Publicity translated into spiraling growth rates and rapid inflation of real estate prices, threatening

to displace long-time residents. In 2006, the city planning office and parks and recreation director invited an architecture professor to organize a second round of service-learning studio projects for architecture and landscape architecture students to support a comprehensive planning process. Planning and design concepts were developed in the following areas: parks and recreation, affordable housing, downtown revitalization, city beach and marina, city facilities and public space, and redevelopment of a former mill property.

Since 2006, several recommendations have been implemented and others are under way. While the Sandpoint example highlights the success of a faculty-initiated service-learning project, its impacts can be limited. It takes time to build relationships with community leaders and citizens, and once faculty and students move on to another community, new relationships must be built. Many faculty-initiated opportunities develop through individual faculty networking at regional conferences and professional associations. Without a structure to support them, faculty-initiated partnerships can atrophy since they are often dependent on the charisma, expertise, and networks of individual faculty. Furthermore, faculty-initiated projects have focused on design solutions, with limited ties to other programs or university Extension. To build on the design programs' successful faculty-initiated projects, while addressing some of their limitations, the U of I made a strategic commitment to interdisciplinary outreach and engagement in the mid-2000s.

Institution-Initiated Projects—An Interdisciplinary Model

In 2007, the U of I reorganized and expanded its community outreach and engagement efforts by creating the Building Sustainable Communities Initiative (BSCI). The BSCI has three parts: an interdisciplinary master's degree in planning and community design, a community engagement component, and a professional training program.



Through the BSCI, an interdisciplinary partnership model was developed, which includes participation from eight colleges and U of I Extension (Figure 2). This university-wide platform added faculty expertise in planning, economic development, engineering, political science, health, hazards, and law to the traditional architecture, landscape architecture, and Extension outreach activities. Greater expertise expanded the number and types of communities that the university could partner with, but necessitated coordination at an institutional level. The interdisciplinary model builds on the faculty-initiated project model, while still providing room for those types of projects where applicable. Table 2 illustrates the wide-range of outreach capabilities available to communities through the interdisciplinary model due to the increase in contributory capacity. Key to the BSCI's success is its direct link to U of I's strategic plan.

Interdisciplinary Model Initiation

In 2006, the U of I adopted outreach and engagement as a goal in its 2005-2010 Strategic Plan. Shortly thereafter, the president formed a team to identify ways to meet the goals. The first BSCI director, a team co-chair, made the community engagement arm of the initiative a showcase for the university's new commitment to community-university partnerships. A key aim of the initiative was to increase university engagement with communities through an interdisciplinary structure.

Before the university sought out community partners and projects, it focused on strengthening links within the institution. This relationship building started with the BSCI proposal. The co-chairs of the proposal brought together faculty with contributory expertise from across campus. Eight colleges made faculty line commitments to the initiative, and a Landscape Architecture Department faculty member was given an Extension specialist appointment, which provides an important link between campus and off-campus faculty.

Extension strengthened its community development focus throughout its system. Extension Community Development specialists address community challenges ranging from rapid population growth to economic and social change. The expanded community development focus coincided with an Extension program called Horizons Community Leadership to Reduce Poverty, funded by the Northwest Area Foundation, aimed at reducing poverty and achieving sustainable prosperity in small towns and reservation communities.

Figure 2. U of I's Interdisciplinary Partnership Model for Outreach and Engagement

Interdisciplinary Model Structure

The BSCI has a director, a program manager, and an administrative assistant, in addition to the Extension specialist (landscape architect), and an executive committee composed of faculty from participating colleges. By developing this structure, the BSCI made a strategic commitment to long-term partnerships with communities. This structure improves on efforts by individual faculty in developing relationships by 1) ensuring institutional commitments of time and resources, 2) coordinating efforts to build value through multiple projects, 3) sustaining relationships into the future, and 4) formalizing partnerships with memoranda of understanding (MOUs).

Forming Community-University Partnerships

Crafting community-university partnerships takes dedication by all the partners. This section emphasizes how projects are identified and partnerships are formed. It also addresses the roles and relationships between various partners including citizens, faculty, and students.

Community-university partnerships are initiated

in different ways. Ideas may come through Extension faculty who bring community needs to the landscape architecture Extension specialist, who then relays them to the on-campus faculty through the BSCI’s executive committee. If community needs align with the initiative’s goals, faculty expertise, and academic objectives, staff from the university visit the community, meet with local leaders, and form a partnership based on a set of criteria tightly linked to the university’s strategic plan (Table 3). Alternatively, long-term partnerships may also grow out of short-term, faculty-initiated projects in which the community has other needs that may engage different academic departments.

Once the community and executive committee decide to form a partnership, the program manager prepares a contract outlining the proposed projects and commitments from university participants (faculty, staff, and students) and community participants, who could be the mayor, city or county commissioners, and community group leaders. This contract outlines key roles, responsibilities, and university and community financial contributions.

Table 2. Outreach Capabilities of Selected Courses and Programs

Programs & Courses Products	Extension/ Horizons	Landscape Architecture & Arch Studies	Advanced Landscape Arch. Studies	Planning Introduction Course	Planning Studio	Internship	Contracted Studies*
Data Collection	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Facilitated Visioning Meeting	x	x			x		x
Leadership Training	x						x
Surveys		x		x	x	x	x
Planning Workshop	x	x	x		x		x
Regional Context	x			x			
Asset Mapping	x			x	x	x	
Community Site Analysis	x	x					
Master Planning		x	x			x	x
Architecture Prototypes		x					
Landscape Prototypes		x	x				
Central Business District		x			x		
Transportation Studies					x	x	
Economic Feasibility Studies					x	x	x
Comprehensive Plan					x		x
Land Use Plans					x		x
Zoning Ordinances					x		x
Form Based Codes		x			x		x
Design Development		x	x			x	x
Infrastructure Design		x	x				x
Sustainability Audits			x			x	x
Construction Documents			x				x

*Contracted studies: A faculty/student team takes on a community project outside of class for a specified amount.

Community Engagement

In the model the university partner shares responsibility with community leaders and other stakeholders in recruiting partner participants (Fung, 2006). Participants are self-selected with encouragement from newspaper, radio, and poster announcements. However, we seek additional participation that may yield a better representation of the public through surveys. We also engage in targeted recruitment of participants to establish representation from a range of age, income, and ethnic groups.

Citizens and their elected officials are not only the recipients of technical services; they also provide critical local knowledge for students and faculty. This is perhaps the most poorly understood dynamic of the engaged university and its service-learning programs. In some instances, university faculty assume they know the solutions to particular problems and that community participants should defer to their technical judgment. However, it is becoming more

accepted that technical and social spheres coproduce knowledge (Fischer, 2009). In the case study examples, community knowledge was solicited, especially in the visioning, programming, progress review, and evaluation stages of project development. In fact, the faculty fosters deliberative public discourse, which in some of the communities was rare due to dysfunctional political entities, economic stresses, and lack of meaningful participatory opportunities. Democratic participatory opportunities are intangible but important outcomes of community-university partnerships. Our experience is that Extension faculty are in a strategic position to mediate between university expertise and community values and goals in a participatory setting given their location in the partner community.

Discrepancies between academic and community outcomes can be minimized when partnerships are initiated with a true understanding of partner benefits. Extension faculty in Cascade and Plummer worked for 18 months with Horizons participants

Table 3. Partnership Criteria

Assessment Level	Criteria	Description
Community Self-Assessment	Community Need	Community has identified a critical need that requires outside assistance.
	Community Readiness	Participated in one of a number of state-wide processes (e.g., Horizons) and has identified vision and goals.
	Community Leadership	Community elected leaders support the project.
	Community Partners	Key community contact is working with additional partners on the project Presence of an Extension faculty person.
	Regional	Potential to work across jurisdictional boundaries to demonstrate a regional approach.
	Community Commitment*	Community can contribute resources to the project (e.g., paying expenses, providing in-kind contributions, staff/volunteer time).
	Under-represented Populations*	Has the potential to involve under-represented residents.
Planning and Design Program Outreach Committee	Fit with Program Learning Outcomes	Community needs meet the learning outcomes set forth for the program, the class/studio, student projects.
	University Resources	Faculty can contribute expertise and insight into project and guide students in their work.
	Application*	Has scholarly and/or creative application—for the place, the state.
Both	Visibility/ Significance*	Addresses critical need of regional/state-wide significance.

*Tied to University of Idaho Strategic Action Plan Goal Three: "Outreach and Engagement"

in study circles, leadership training, visioning, and action team formation. In both communities, the Extension faculty served as a facilitator and mediator. The result was citizen groups with considerable practice in public discourse and decision-making. Especially for communities beginning a planning or design effort, the extended visioning activities established an effective venue for other units of the university outreach organization to build upon. In both communities, students took ideas that came from the visioning processes and crafted them into real-world solutions.

The city of Plummer, in conjunction with the Horizons team, completed an updated comprehensive plan in summer 2007. Main goals were to guide growth toward existing development while maintaining the town's rural character and to create a distinct and bustling downtown core (City of Plummer, 2007). With a new comprehensive plan, the city needed to update its 1995 land use ordinances. The Extension faculty in the area contacted the U of I planning program to assist the town in developing a land use ordinance that would implement the goals of their comprehensive plan.

Goals identified by the Horizons action teams for Cascade were to create a regional riverside park at the former mill site, improve the city park, and revitalize the downtown core. Citizens in Cascade, through Extension, requested the University's assistance for the development of a broad range of planning and design concepts. The multi-year engagement with Cascade resulted in many products and service-learning opportunities for students (Table 4). In both communities, due to the Horizons program, citizens were capable of judging planning and design proposals for consistency with their values and priorities. The program effectively enhanced the community-university partnerships in Plummer and Cascade.

Faculty Engagement

Both on-campus and Extension faculty are critical to the success of community-university partnerships. Extension faculty live in the communities and interact with residents and elected officials on a daily basis. They have a keen sense of community power dynamics and social capital, assisting campus faculty with relationship building. Furthermore, they communicate and disseminate project progress through the press and other outlets.

Prior to bringing in students, campus faculty meet with community leaders to determine the scope and focus of class projects. This step helps to determine the type and amount of community support and university resources needed to complete

projects. The semesters or years of university involvement are estimated and a project sequence is outlined. The costs associated with field trips as well as the printing and binding of final products is written into the MOU.

Student Engagement

Students play a major role in the community-university partnerships, ranging from their solicitation of residents' ideas and goals to the production of design concepts and draft planning documents. Before setting foot in a community, students prepare for their service-learning experiences. Faculty, who have undergone service-learning training, bring in speakers and assign readings about the community, from current affairs to historic accounts. In the case of Plummer, students read histories of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and heard presentations from Extension, Anthropology, and Education faculty who had worked with the tribe and town of Plummer.

Another method for orienting students is developing a regional atlas. The atlas is produced during the fall semester, prior to the intensive service-learning studio course in spring. The atlas project familiarizes students with the biophysical, cultural, historic, social, demographic, economic, and political aspects of the community/region. To produce the atlas, students conduct primary and secondary data collection, analysis, and synthesis. The primary data are collected during a field trip taken mid-semester, where students are paired with community members. In addition to writing their own sections, students share their work with the class and write a conclusion that outlines the major planning, design, and economic development challenges and opportunities facing the community/region. The atlas project provides students with a rich background prior to conducting design and planning projects in the community. In this way, students, when developing land use ordinances or master plans, are able to be socially, culturally, and environmentally sensitive to community and/or regional contexts.

To ensure that students conduct themselves in a professional manner, faculty review community engagement etiquette and professional associations' codes of ethics and have students complete the National Institution of Health's Protecting Human Research Participants certificate.

Student/Community Interactions

During the spring studio, students visit the community to gather citizen goals and criteria for projects, tour the community, and take photos. Based on the aspirations of the citizens, the students

Table 4. Outreach Activities in Cascade, Idaho, 2007–2009

Date	Course/Program	Project
2007–2008	U of I Extension	Visioning, training facilitators, leaders, poverty reduction goals, strategies and actions
Spring 2008	Landscape Architecture Studio	Brownfield redevelopment of the former mill site
Summer 2008	College of Art and Architecture internship	Extension projects in Cascade and data collection
Fall 2008	Introductory Planning Course and Extension	Atlas
	Landscape Architecture and Architecture Studios and Extension	Master planning and design prototypes for buildings and landscapes
	Landscape Architecture Studio	Riverside Regional Park master plan alternatives
Spring 2009	Landscape Architecture Studio	Refinement of Riverside Park Master Plan
	Planning Studio and Extension	Regional Amenity Plan and Cascade Comprehensive Plan Update
Summer 2009	Landscape Architecture Internship	Graphic production of Riverside Park Master Plan
	Planning Internship	Community Garden
	Landscape Architecture Studio	Living Machine® Landscape and Technical Drawings

develop work plans. Both community contacts and faculty approve work plans before students begin their projects. The second visit takes place at mid-semester, when students give public presentations of draft work for feedback from the community. They incorporate this input into their final drafts. At the end of the semester, students may return a last time to give final presentations and deliver their reports or design concepts.

Working with the Plummer city clerk and City Council on new land use codes, students divided into three teams to work on traditional land use categories (residential, commercial, and industrial); the central business district to develop a form-based code that aligned with the city’s traditional western town aesthetics; and a series of environmental overlays focused on protecting undeveloped lands, public infrastructure, and water resources.

Midway through their work, student teams presented draft recommendations for the land use ordinances at a Plummer City Council meeting, where elected officials and the general public provided written and oral input on the draft ordinances. Students incorporated community comments into

their final reports. The city clerk utilized much of the students’ work to develop a draft land use ordinance that was vetted through a public process. The city adopted the code in August 2009.

The Cascade case study is an example of an extensive community-university partnership, where the university made a multi-semester commitment to address a number of design and planning projects. In fall 2008, planning students developed an atlas, while architecture and landscape architecture students prepared master plans and design prototypes for buildings and landscapes within Cascade’s city limits.

Concepts from the fall courses provided citizens with images of how their town could be improved (Figure 3, for example). The atlas and design prototypes formed the basis for spring 2009 landscape architecture and planning studios, which focused on refining design concepts for a riverside park and updating the city’s comprehensive plan. For a full accounting of partnership projects in Cascade, see Table 4.

Student Reflection Opportunities

An integral component of service-learning is ensuring students the opportunity to reflect on

their experiences. It is important for students to understand that not only are they engaging in professional practice and providing a service to a community; they are also increasing their critical problem-solving skills, abilities to adapt to changing situations, and learning to communicate with people of different backgrounds and experiences (Sletto, 2010). Through structured reflection, students are able to learn by thinking about what they are doing (Bonar, Buchanan, Fisher, & Wechsler, 1996).

After each field trip, students and faculty debriefed, discussing topics ranging from specific planning and design needs to small town politics. Students kept journals during the semester, chronicling their experiences. Reflecting on the Plummer project, one student said students appreciated the “challenging projects and the opportunity to apply methods and knowledge gained” from the Plummer studio and others classes. Another explained that students appreciated faculty allowing “students of various disciplines to solve ‘real-world’ problems.” Students appreciated the “organic nature of teamwork” and enjoyed working in communities where they were exposed to a “wide-variety of different people and perspectives” and where they got the opportunity to apply “architecture, landscape architecture, and planning disciplines to community projects.”

Service-learning, particularly for applied disciplines like planning and architecture, is important because professional practice “involves more than a conceptual understanding of the knowledge and skills; it also requires an operational understanding” (Roakes & Norris-Tirrell, 2000, p. 100). Through service-learning projects, students receive occupational competence that complements their conceptual knowledge and skills (Roakes & Norris-Tirrell, 2000). Group and individual reflection opportunities give students the ability to identify and examine the linkages between knowledge and application.

Exporting the U of I Model

For those interested in the U of I’s interdisciplinary partnership model for outreach and engagement, the following lessons learned may be of help.

Contributory Expertise

Perhaps the easiest task, and one of the most important, is to invite faculty with a range of expertise to adopt the concept and methods of engaged service-learning. Adjusting position descriptions, making joint appointments to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, and rewarding faculty for outreach efforts on par with more traditional research productivity is likely



Figure 3. Mixed-use Proposal for Cascade, Idaho

more difficult and time consuming. For Extension faculty, it is important that their job descriptions include community development responsibilities to encourage partnership building. Effective partnerships require faculty to embrace participatory, democratic decision-making and understand that interdisciplinary work and its products will be subjected to the logic of public discourse and viewed through the lens of social and cultural knowledge.

Model Organization

A passionate faculty member can create and deliver useful products to the community and create transformative learning opportunities for students, but long-term and interdisciplinary programs need institutional support and funding (Barnes et al, 2009; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011). Outreach, service, and knowledge transfer are embedded in the mission of land-grant colleges, but other institutions of higher education may need to incorporate these values into the academic culture in order to foster the support and participation of the administrative and academic units. Managing partnerships in many communities simultaneously requires dedicated administrative and staff positions, although faculty should be directly involved in establishing partnerships and in curriculum development.

A robust outreach and engagement program based on a diverse set of contributing experts and their students also requires an organization that includes, among others, faculty, administrators, grant writers, and public relations staff. Our model emerged from two desires: to develop more effective ways to improve the quality of life in Idaho communities, and to provide students and faculty with transformative interdisciplinary engaged learning opportunities. University, college, department, and faculty structures emerged from these goals.

Effective Partnerships

Projects of the greatest value to the community and the students involve broad citizen participation and

meaningful opportunities to communicate, interact, and contribute to decisions about the goals, criteria, and technology employed in addressing community planning and design needs. In our experience, the BSCI director and the Extension specialist have the most experience communicating the outreach and engagement values of the university and soliciting the initial goals and scope of community needs. Clarity of community aspirations and university objectives eliminates misunderstandings that are the source of citizen and student disappointments. The aspirations and objectives must be revisited often in long-term partnerships and communicated to each new faculty member, student team, and community group that joins the project.

As we discussed previously, there are multiple pathways for identification of potential partners and projects. Faculty-initiated projects arising from conference presentations, service organizations, and professional networks are a rich source. Local liaisons, such as Extension faculty and municipal or county economic development officers in remote communities, are another. In addition to being adept at matching community needs with service-learning projects, Extension faculty and economic development officers are important promoters and facilitators of positive community-university relationships.

Academic and Service-Learning Outcomes

For students and faculty, participating effectively in an interdisciplinary community-university partnership effort is as important as developing and applying discipline-specific skills. Therefore, assisting students in resolving unexamined values associated with expert contributions, and the social and cultural systems in which they are embedded, is an important educational goal (Sletto, 2010). Furthermore, participatory and democratic public deliberation should be part of the service-learning experience (Sorensen & Lawson, 2011). Preparation for the experience and reflection on the meaning and value of engaged learning enriches student experiences (Bonar et al., 1996; Roakes & Norris-Tirrell, 2000). Acquisition of professional knowledge founded in history and theory is the counterpoint to service-learning. Faculty impart this information to students to ensure a well-rounded education as well as to maintain accreditation. These academic requirements must be explained to partners so that they understand the balance faculty must find between service projects and academic objectives.

Final Reflections

In contrast to faculty-initiated partnerships such as Sandpoint, the Plummer and Cascade case

studies illustrate that the capacity to partner with communities at various planning stages is dependent on a robust and flexible interdisciplinary model of outreach and engagement coordinated at the university level, where a long-term commitment by the community and university is made. This is not to imply that the U of I's interdisciplinary model of outreach and engagement has been perfectly implemented. For example, communication sometimes breaks down and a mismatch between the academic outcomes and community needs and readiness occurs. In a recent assessment of the State University of New York's partnerships with local communities, Doble and King (2011) highlight the pitfalls of complex partnerships including coordination and communication challenges and mission discrepancies. Additional difficulties and disappointments are described below.

First, a layer of bureaucracy may be established between faculty and community partners compromising capacity for direct communication in initial project development. The responsibilities of identifying communities, securing funding, and project definition that was once solely held by individual faculty is now managed by the director and executive committee in partnership arrangements. This reduces the capacity for satisfying personal engagement between faculty, citizens, and their leaders. However, this deficiency is largely offset through inclusive partnership building processes that engage all participants in shaping common project goals.

Second, it can be difficult for individual faculty to be aware of all the activities being undertaken by university units as well as all of the personnel and courses involved. In April 2011, the university created the Office of Outreach and Engagement. The office is developing a tool for tracking university projects and partnerships throughout the state. Coordination by this unit will increase everyone's awareness and highlight the work the university is doing statewide.

Third, university and community schedules do not always correspond. For example, in Sandpoint public presentations in 2006 were not well attended due to conflicting university and community calendars. As a remedy, students gave the city planner digital presentations and a project book that allowed dissemination of ideas to citizens.

A final challenge is that the expanded outreach effort garners significant visibility in the communities, with university colleagues, and with state legislators. Therefore, the quality of the outreach products from service-learning courses

must be fully professional. This adds daunting new responsibilities for the participating faculty since the final project, which contains much student work, must be fully professional. Increasing standards and student requirements only partially resolves the gap. Faculty time to revise, present, and publish student-produced outreach products is unsupported. Program administrators have recognized this shortfall and are now securing funding for post project production.

Our experience in working with communities in economic transition leaves us with the following conclusions: (1) The commitment by the participating higher education unit must be serious because the needs are so diverse; (2) the contributory expertise and organizational structure must be comprehensive and efficient; (3) the partnership must be long-term; and (4) the participatory, democratic process must be honored by all participants.

Our interdisciplinary outreach and engagement model benefits all participants. Students receive transformative service-learning experiences through the application of discipline-specific skills and interdisciplinary collaboration. Faculty gain through enriched teaching and scholarship opportunities. And local communities gain through participatory processes resulting in design and planning concepts that supports sustainable development.

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