



University of Michigan Provost's Teaching Innovation Prize

2015 WINNER



RICHARD NORTON
Associate Professor, Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning
rknorton@umich.edu
PAUL FONTAINE
Program Manager, Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning
ELISABETH GERBER
Professor, Ford School of Public Policy
GAIL HOHNER
Managing Director, College of Engineering
PATRICIA KOMAN
Senior Program Manager, School of Public Health
JIM KOSTEVA
Director of Community Relations, Office of Government Relations

Sponsors:

Office of the Provost

Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT)

University Libraries

Generating Multidisciplinary Synergies Across Community-Engaged Courses

Innovation Description

In U-M's decentralized academic setting, a huge challenge for community engaged learning is that students and faculty from multiple disciplines sometimes work with the same community without ever being aware of each other's projects. Changing this dynamic by coordinating across programs is not easy, but the payoffs are profound. When practicums from different schools deliberately focus on a single site, students develop a capacity for collaborating thoughtfully with peers from other disciplines, and communities benefit from better-rounded analyses and proposals.

The Michigan Engaging Community Through the Classroom (MECC) initiative is the brainchild of four units (urban planning, public policy, public health, and engineering) that began meeting in 2011 to identify pre-existing, community-based courses that could be oriented toward clients within a shared geographic locus. MECC offers a companion course that dovetails with the units' own courses and periodically brings subsets of students, instructors, and clients together for multidisciplinary meetings. For example, the fall 2013 *Collaborative Community Development Project for the Willow Run Area* provided a framework for seven student teams to engage with each other and area stakeholders. (See Examples of Teaching Innovation below.)

Students are transformed when they are placed in situations where they have to question the reach and limits of their own disciplinary training and communicate those possibilities and limitations to others. With a better understanding of alternative disciplinary approaches to complex and interrelated problems, U-M students will be well prepared to recognize, value, and work productively across the cultures and crafts of allied professions.

Student Comments

"Exposure to unfamiliar frameworks, such as the 'people first' paradigm of urban planning, quickly illuminated our differing approaches and increased the final quality of our work."

"Having to consider the affected community holistically lent us an insight into the history and story of the problems we sought to solve."

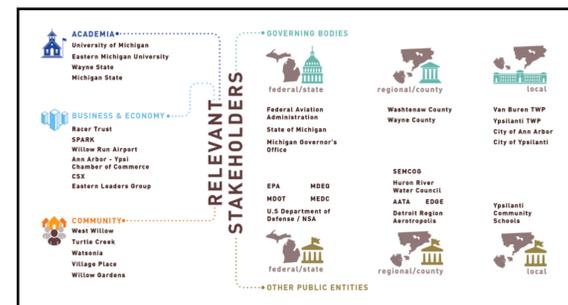
"We had prepared a presentation delineating the multiple types of wetlands and their respective floral content. Ready to field questions on the technical content and research path forward, we instead were bombarded with questions regarding the accessibility of any system to the public [and] the potential regulatory issues associated with a water system in close proximity to an airport. We were completely unprepared to answer any of these questions. Throughout the semester, however, we learned to tailor our presentations to the relevant audiences—tweaking slides, depth of explanations, and even presenters based on who had established relationships with different invested parties."

"We connected with the community, explaining the impact and financial ramifications of our research, and we also won an international award on a technical white paper detailing the entire process and results of our work."

Examples of Teaching Innovation



Past, present, and future images relevant to redeveloping Willow Run.



Stakeholder analysis for the 2013 Willow Run site, which was subject to multiple political jurisdictions.

Home Unit of Student Teams	Fall 2013 Willow Run Projects http://tinyurl.com/kx8jmt
engineering (2 teams)	1. GIS models of re-orienting airport's runways 2. 10-year financial model of airport's revenue and cost streams, given investment in solar panel field
public health	Health Impact Assessment systematically identified and quantified potential positive and negative health impacts of changes proposed by engineering and urban planning teams
public policy	Identified comparable U.S. redevelopment cases and shared best practices with stakeholders
urban planning (3 teams)	3 separate scenarios proposed for site: 1. node for advanced transportation solutions 2. renewable energy technology research and manufacturing center 3. focal point for regional waste mining

Teams participating in the first iteration of MECC demonstrate the initiative's multidisciplinary approach.

