



2009-2010 Green Jobs Training

University of North Florida
Jacksonville, FL

Sustainable, Organic Gardening in Urban Environments

SCHOOL

University of North Florida, Public, 4-year, 16,641 students, Jacksonville, FL

ABSTRACT

This program is a multidisciplinary, Community-Based Transformational Learning Opportunity (CBTLO) which offers approximately 15 University of North Florida (UNF) students the opportunity to actively engage in educating participants at the Clara White Mission for the Homeless on environmental sustainability issues as they relate to inefficient food production. The program is a partnership between the University of North Florida and the Clara White Mission for the Homeless in Jacksonville, Florida. Associate Professor of Economics, Dr. Chris Johnson will be the point of contact; and UNF Environmental Center Project Assistant, Mr. Derrick Robinson, will help to oversee the implementation of the program as Project Coordinator. UNF Environmental Center Project Assistant, Ms. Colleen Herms will be providing onsite technical supervision of the program as Project Master Gardener. Ms. Ju'Coby Pittman, Clara White Mission CEO, has committed the full support of Clara White in providing the needed space, audience, and any additional resources in which they are able to provide. This project is important to the Environmental Center's Mission, and UNF's mandate for the center:

“The Center will respond to the pressing need for research relevant to environmental issues, help design thoughtful planning processes, encourage responsible stewardship, and help prepare the next generation of environmentally literate society leaders.”

UNF students from various disciplines will design and implement a sustainable organic garden at the Clara White Mission, in connection with this agency's Culinary Arts training program which involves approximately 40 participants ages 18 and up. UNF students will interact with program participants as they implement the garden and develop a detailed plan of how the Clara White Mission can use organic gardening to sustain their various food assistance programs. These students will have gardening training, along with the skills needed to help non-profit organizations with food assistance programs create business models that incorporate sustainable food supply practices. Along with these benefits, Clara White will also have a tool to teach sustainable gardening and food resource methods to all users. Program participants will be equipped as environmental stewards once transplanted back into their respective communities. Clara White also provides job placement for their culinary students. With the induction of this program, culinary students will be ready for retail food service positions where they can transfer their knowledge of food origins and organic gardening to the workplace, to the point where the firm which employs them adopts more sustainable practices. The overarching goal of this project is to create environmental education and community development from the bottom up. Currently, the program has received \$9,000.00 in funding, which has been used for cost of recruiting student participants, labor cost for master gardener, supplies (gardening tools, compost, seeds, transplants, educational materials etc.), and construction of the onsite 40' x 50' garden. With the large supply of local farms in the area, as well as restaurants looking to be more sustainable, we feel this program will help with the supply of a knowledgeable labor force in sustainable food supply chains.

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GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

The goals of this program is to provide a sustainable, organic gardening component to the Clara White Mission's existing Culinary Arts Training program using students from UNF, who are also learning skills on how non-profit organizations function especially as it relates to providing humanitarian aid domestically to homeless populations. The overarching goal of the CBTLO is to educate the homeless and impoverished population of Jacksonville on the availability of resources to make environmentally responsible and healthy food consumption choices. At the same time the CBTLO goal for university students is to allow them the opportunity to use their education in a real world application involving research, technical understanding, and effective communication skills. The project seeks to create environmental awareness among lower income populations by helping them understand the importance behind organic gardening and empowering them with the knowledge and skills to implement a sustainable community garden with minimal environmental impact. By achieving this goal, lower income populations will have greater food consumption alternatives that are not always readily available through the limited offering of neighborhood convenience stores and markets. This project increases environmental stewardship most directly among the Culinary Arts program participants at the Clara White Mission for the Homeless. The program helps prepare homeless individuals for independent lives by training them for careers in the Culinary/food retail industry. By promoting the use of organically grown foods and teaching program participants how to implement their own sustainable gardens, this project should enlighten these individuals on environmentally friendly food production and motivate them to take this knowledge with them into their respective communities as they graduate from the program and pursue their own careers. Ideally the targeted population in the Culinary Arts Program would have further incentive to learn, retain, and redistribute education obtained through the program, especially at the next place of employment after graduation from the program. UNF students will also have skills in creating business models for non -profits, which can show them the viability of environmental sustainable practices at their firm.

The CBTLO addresses three of the five strategic goals set forth in the EPA's Strategic Plan: Strategic Goal 5 (Compliance and Environmental Stewardship), Objective 5.2 (Improve Environmental Performance through Pollution Prevention and Innovation), and Sub-Objective 5.2.1 (Prevent pollution and promote environmental stewardship by government and the public). The short-term effects are minimal. However, the medium and long-term effects are where the larger impacts will be felt. The CBTLO attempts to reduce, conserve, or offset energy usage as measured in BTU's, reduce water usage, and help to reduce the amount of priority chemicals in waste streams over the long term, through bottom up information dissemination and stewardship. However, these are *a priori* expectations making the quantifying of these goals very difficult as it relates to our expected offsets, however we are monitoring inputs/outputs for an input/output analysis and compare that to the food cost savings experienced by the mission for the feeding program where the garden yields will be used. We hope over the next few years to continue the program at the present level at least, but there is growth potential to a larger area within the urban core that could allow us to see far greater offsets that can be made more readily quantifiable. However, even at the current level of participation, over a three-year span we anticipate 120 UNF student participants, 360 Clara White Culinary participants, and countless others receiving some indirect benefit from the training program through out the surrounding community.

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Accomplishments/Outcomes

Presently we are still in the implementation stage of the project. We have met our goals for the amount of expected participation. Our goal for student participation was for approximately 15 UNF students, and 20 culinary students for Clara White. We have 5 UNF students enrolled in the class: 1 Economics, 1 English, 1 Nutrition, 2 Photography. The class is a 3-credit Directed Independent Study class that each student takes with a professor in his/her discipline. There are a total of four professors involved in the project representing 3 of 5 colleges at UNF. (Coggin College of Business, College of Arts & Sciences, Brooks College of Health) Along with students participating for college credit, we also have ten student volunteers, as well as one faculty member volunteer. We have done pre-assessments of the participants (UNF & Clara White) that we will compare with post-assessments to understand the value or effectiveness of the program. This is the first official semester of the project (Fall 2010), and the only semester in which funding was provided through the Transformational Learning Opportunity funding provided by UNF's Department of Undergraduate Studies and Academic Affairs. We also received funding through a UNF Environmental Center Seed Grant awarded Spring 2010. With the support from UNF provided so far, as well as the support of the Clara White Mission, we anticipate similar participation results for the next 8-10 semesters. However, we are still applying for other funding opportunities that would allow the project to expand and sustain into the future.

Challenges and Responses

Major challenges that we have faced have been funding. Even though our program has been able to maximize the effectiveness of our budget, funding to sustain the program in the future. Another obstacle was the way the course was designed to fit UNF's curriculum. The class is not course generating, however, UNF has Directed Independent Study (DIS) courses designed for undergraduate students to work on research or take specifically designed classes, such as ours. However, after experiencing the initial class of students, the decision was made to build a course with the project incorporated as a service-learning component. The reasons for this decision had many premises, one of which was to test whether there would be increased awareness and student participation in the project if associated with a specific course, department, and/or professor. However, this will be fully determined as the Fall 2010 semester progresses.

Campus Climate Action: Your School's On-Campus Sustainability Projects

Many of the students who have engaged our project are also involved with the on campus organic gardening program, UNF's VERB Garden. The VERB was started in Spring 2009 through the efforts of Katrina Norbam organizing other interested students and putting them to action. A few of those who have helped with that project since its inception have become empowered and wanted to take part in this opportunity as well. One UNF student is trying to work with Physical Facilities to create a composting program for UNF's Dining Services. The Clara White CBTLO will be used as an end user facility for the final compost product. This will generate massive reductions in waste contributed by UNF's Dining Services if enacted. However, the Clara White CBTLO will have to prove to be successfully sustainable before UNF's Physical Facilities will feel completely comfortable with committing to the composting program. Hence, the importance of the programs continued success and everyone's continued support. By creating one successful training program, we help to potentially improve campus sustainability efforts as well.

Commentary/Reflection

When deciding to take on a project, such as the Clara White Gardening CBTLO, one should be sure that there incentives for successful completion of the project are transparent. By this I mean that

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someone should have clear expectations for the return in which they will receive for their contribution to the project. Also, all members of the campus community do not as readily accept many programs when first initiated, especially as it relates to realizing the potential benefit received. That is why it is important to follow your plan out, and complete your objectives. Only then can the true benefits be realized. Be sure to stay motivated and excited, so that those around you will have that same fervor.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

The UNF Environmental Center was the initial support that encouraged the planning and implementation of this project. The initial idea for this project planted by Program Manager, April Moore during the St. Johns River Multidisciplinary Transformational Learning Opportunity (SJRMTLO). This is a MTLO that takes student to stay on a houseboat on the St Johns River (a north flowing river that begins in Melbourne, FL and flows to its mouth in Jacksonville, FL where it reaches the Atlantic Ocean), teaching them about the natural environment surrounding the river, the importance of the river as a resource, the impact of the river caused by regional development, and the importance of sustainability in ones day to day life. The project was also awarded Seed Grant funding through the Environmental Center, which was used to purchase educational materials, do soil testing, and cover recruitment cost. Also the Environmental Center allowed two of its Project Assistants: Mr. Derrick Robinson, Clara White Gardening CBTLO Coordinator and Ms. Colleen Herms, Project Master Gardener the lead way to work on the project, as well as support throughout the process.

The Department of Undergraduate Studies was instrumental to the project be providing funding for the class through a TLO Grant, which also allowed for the class to be accepted as part of the undergraduate curriculum. Dr. David Jaffee, VP of Undergraduate Studies, Professor of Sociology, & Ms. Martina Perry, Coordinator for Undergraduate Initiatives, for their support and encouragement to seek funding for the program through UNF.

Coggin College of Business's Associate Professor of Economics, Dr. Chris Johnson is the faculty point of contact for the project, and has been instrumental in providing support and assistance with obtaining funding, while also providing guidance in helping to make the project a success. He was a significant factor to the program because the program needed to have a faculty member facilitator, he has an extensive background in researching the economics of poverty, income distributions, and urban environments, and he also served as a volunteer at the Clara White Mission every third Sunday well before being approached with this project. He also is pushing for the continued sustainability of the project as course at UNF consisting of a service-learning component.

Funding and Resources

The financing for this project came from two areas. The first funding was awarded through a TLO Grant administered by the Department of Undergraduate Studies through UNF's Academic Affairs Office. The Environmental Center also awarded the project with a Seed Grant, which allowed us the opportunity to allocate time to finding more grants. However, we have not been as successful, but we continue to search for funding sources.

Employer and Other School Partnerships

The project is in direct collaboration with the Clara White Mission for the Homeless, located in downtown Jacksonville, Florida. With the commitment made by Ms. Ja'Coby Pittman, CEO, we will truly make this program a success. The culinary arts training program allows us to truly incorporate our bottom up approach, using students to train students to be environmental stewards on campus and in the local communities.

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Education and Community Outreach

The only outreach methods that have begun so far is through word of mouth in the community, flyers posted around campus to provide student, faculty, and staff awareness about the project, and UNF Marketing & Publications department are working with us on filling some UNF advertisement space at Jacksonville International Airport. The signage will be by the baggage claim, and will be the most exposure that the project has experienced. Local media has not shown interest as of the present, but the buzz is still growing, so that is subject to change.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contacts

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Case study submitted by: Mr. Derrick Robinson, Project Coordinator, d.robinson@unf.edu

MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

[Insert information here:](#) UNF has a Sustainability Committee, which has representatives from multiple departments around campus and whose mission is to increase environmental sustainability in all areas and aspects of campus life. The Environmental Center has initiated a sustainability program by hiring a student to conduct an updated greenhouse gas emissions inventory and sustainability awareness programs. Other greening efforts prior to this project included newly constructed buildings being LEED certified, removal of non-indigenous plant species, designation of Sawmill Slough Preserve, a 300 acre natural area, creation of the UNF VERB Garden, Annual Garbage on the Green Event, Participation in Recyclemania, Annual Anti-Litter Campaign, and an organic civic pride within our campus community to continuously raise the bar on UNF's Green Efforts.

THANK YOU!

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8/20/2010

Derrick Robinson

Date

Your Signature (or, if you are a minor, your Parent or Legal Guardian's signature *)

(*Please print the last and first names of the parent or legal guardian in the space below.

The parent with legal custody of minor must sign if parents are divorced or separated.)

Mail to: NWF Campus Ecology, 11100 Wildlife Center Dr., Reston VA 20190-5362

Or Fax: 703-438-6468 Thank You!

v. May 2009

