



## **Delgado Community College**

### **New Orleans, Louisiana**

### **Habitat**

#### **SCHOOL**

This project occurred at Delgado's City Park Campus in New Orleans, Louisiana. Delgado Community College is a public two-year institution that has an enrollment of 19,258 students (according to Spring 2011 Office of Institutional Research data).

#### **ABSTRACT**

Delgado Business & Technology Instructor Fred Tuhro incorporates an environmental initiative into his classroom by putting students' business and marketing skills to work in order to "Save Our Pond." Each semester Business and Marketing students conduct research on environmental technologies and on the local ecology. Using service learning as a teaching/learning method, students design and conduct a marketing campaign to raise funds for the Save Our Pond project. Working with area environmental agencies, students use funds to make educated purchases of equipment and native plants that are necessary to restore the natural ecology surrounding Delgado's City Park Campus and provide a stable habitat for local biota, such as fish, birds, and turtles.

#### **GOALS AND OUTCOMES**

##### **Goals**

The goal for this ongoing service learning project led by Business Instructor Fred Tuhro is to apply the learning objectives of his Intro to Business course to an ecological initiative at Delgado's City Park Campus. Students studying business simultaneously work to restore the natural habitat surrounding the campus, working alongside the Army Corps of Engineers and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Planning for the project began in 2006 with the goal to reverse the ecological damages caused by the breaching of the levees during



Hurricane Katrina to the City Park Campus pond. Since initial planning, business faculty and students have continued to research, to raise funds through marketing campaigns, and to test new ways to sustainably restore the habitat surrounding Delgado's City Park Campus, 'Our Pond'.

## **Accomplishments and Outcomes**

While the overarching goals to re-create the habitat at Delgado's City Park Campus have remained the same, the immediate goals have changed each semester with each new classroom of students. Fundraising began in the Spring Semester of 2009 with a 50/50 raffle. The total proceeds were \$2,333 and project proceeds went to the purchase of native fish and plants. Most recently, the class used the funds raised during a spring 2011 semester's 50/50 raffle to purchase a windmill that uses wind power to sustainably help regulate algae growth across the pond. This upcoming fall semester, the funds will be raised and used to propagate and re-plant native Southern Louisiana wetlands plants. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has been instrumental to the success of the Pond Project, providing consultation and water testing services to the college. Donations have also been collected from The Army Corps of Engineers and Delgado SGA. Since 2009, the project has raised \$17,287 in fundraising and donations.

## **Challenges and Responses**

One challenge that this project encountered is familiar to many instructors: Student engagement. Because this course attempts to tie an environmental/ community service project into a Business course, students that did not previously have an interest in environmental issues were not engaged in the project, and therefore the course. On the other hand, the inclusion of the fundraising habitat project helps the majority of students to see the ways in which their chosen course of study can be applied to real community and environmental issues.

The project also encounters challenges year to year with decisions on what to purchase and on how to make educated and sustainable choices. A committee of Business & Technology, Biology, and Horticulture faculty meet with representatives from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to discuss and conduct educated purchasing. Sometimes the items purchased fail to serve their purpose, as did the barley bails that were set-out on the water to clean up intense algae-buildup in parts of the pond; however, outcomes in these situations inform decisions for the following year's purchases and further research on solutions.

## **Commentary and Reflection**

As in all service learning projects, the strength of this project lies in its partnerships. The project partners with courses across the college, creating multi-disciplinary partnerships to benefit the City Park Campus habitat and classroom learning outcomes. Working across the disciplines adds depth to the project and allows students in a diversity of courses to get involved.

## **ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

### **Leaders and Supporters**

While it is the Intro to Business Course that organizes the fundraising campaign, the project partners with faculty and students in Marketing courses, Horticulture, and Biology. Intro to Business is taught by Instructor Fred Tuhro. Both Biology Instructor Dr. Jeffery Smith and Horticulture Instructor Bettie Abbate are integral to keeping the project moving forward, providing input and volunteer time.

### **Funding and Resources**

Funding for project development comes from the proceeds of the Save Our Pond fundraising campaign. Over the years, the Pond Project has accepted donations from Student Government Association and the

Army Corps of Engineers. Consultation was voluntarily provided by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Delgado faculty. Labor is provided by student and faculty volunteers.

### **Education and Community Outreach**

This project is presented in the college paper at the close of every semester. The results of the project are also presented in the Delgado Service Learning quarterly newsletter that is sent out to all faculty, students, and community partners.

### **National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program**

The Campus Ecology program Online Case Study Database has given much inspiration for this ongoing project. The database lends some great insight into ways of broadening the scope of this project, incorporating it into a larger campus greening and sustainability initiative.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

#### **Contacts**

Fred Tuhro, Instructor in Business  
Delgado Community College  
(504) 671-5141  
ftuhro@dcc.edu

Case study submitted by: Angela Lorenzo, Service Learning Coordinator, Delgado Community College, aloren@dcc.edu

### **MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL**

#### **Campus Sustainability History**

While the college currently lacks a sustainability office, the Office of Service Learning has engaged students college-wide in projects that address the environmental concerns facing southern Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. In early 2011, in response to the B.P. Oil spill disaster, Delgado's Office of Service Learning hosted a one-day conference that addressed environmental initiatives in service-learning, "The Environmental Classroom: Awareness and Restoration through Service Learning". Representatives from colleges and community agencies across the Gulf Coast region were invited to speak on pressing environmental needs facing the area, and ways community service learning can address those needs. The Office of Service Learning at Delgado Community College also helps to coordinate an ongoing Horticulture project to prevent further coastal Louisiana wetlands erosion. Students propagate wetlands grasses that are planted quarterly on the sand dunes of Grand Isle and Elmer's Island.

**Image credit: Fred Tuhro, Instructor in Business, Delgado Community College**