



Agnes Scott College Decatur, Georgia Habitat

SCHOOL

Agnes Scott College is a private, 4-year school with less than 1000 students located in Decatur, Georgia.

ABSTRACT

The Agnes Scott Arboretum is an interdisciplinary tree tour through the campus of Agnes Scott College, located in Decatur, Georgia. At 18 locations, whether using a mobile device to tour the campus in person, or at a desktop taking a virtual tour, visitors will encounter a tree topic inspired by the liberal arts curriculum of the college. Through the use of QR codes and a website, along with mobile sites, we provide the opportunity for the Agnes Scott Arboretum to grow for a future of education and protection.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

The main goal of the Agnes Scott Arboretum is to engage the members of the campus and the surrounding community with multiple perspectives on the trees they pass every day. The college has already benefited from the creation of the arboretum by building an awareness of the campus trees and building a team to document and protect them. The college is currently applying for Tree Campus USA through the Arbor Day Foundation, which helped us to reevaluate our protection and maintenance plan for all trees on campus. In addition, we have written a Campus Tree Care Guide and created a Campus Arboretum Advisory Committee to advise on and carry out the care of our trees. We are going to continue to update and grow our website so that it will become a source of information and inspiration reaching our community as well as a larger national audience.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

The website and mobile site are up and running and can be accessed via this link (<http://arboretum.agnesscott.edu/>). The plaques with the QR codes will be installed at the 18 locations during the summer of 2012. This QR code will take you to our main mobile site, but on each plaque will be a different QR code that will take visitors directly to that specific location on the tour. Viewers can check back with the website and see that as the seasons change so will website color schemes.



Each of the 18 locations provides elaboration on a different topic related to our trees, and to trees in general. Visitors learn about a variety of topics, including: Robert Frost's many visits to Agnes Scott College and his inclination to write about trees, trees as providers of carbon sinks and wildlife habitats, the role trees play in providing us with mindfulness opportunities, native tree species in Georgia, and the trees planted on campus in dedication and memory of Agnes Scott community members. Along with learning more about trees through reading our website, we also included audio clips for a different facet of discovery. A different member of the Agnes Scott community recorded each audio clip to continue the interdisciplinary theme.

Challenges and Responses

One of the first problems we ran into was deciding how we would display our arboretum. In our first charrette, we discussed creating pamphlets that would allow for interaction with the trees (i.e. space to sketch, take bark rubbings, a square window cutout to look through to focus your attention on anything from an individual tree to an individual leaf to a collection of trees.) Ultimately, we decided that a technological approach would be best for our project for its immediate accessibility and for future updates. If a tree dies or we want to change the topic at any of the locations, a website and mobile site will allow us to do so easily in comparison to a pamphlet that would need to be reprinted.

Another obstacle was our lack of a designer. Instead we had a “homegrown” team: we had professor/tree enthusiast who volunteers for the local non-profit organization Trees Atlanta, along with the ITS staff member who was the force behind building our website and mobile site, and the student leader to organize, manage and fill in any needs for research and inspiration, but no designer to continuously tell us color palettes, layouts, and fluidity. We were able to recruit pro bono work for the arboretum logo and, we were put in contact with a creative services associate from our Office of Communications and just in time to help us put the finishing touches on our website. We were appreciative of everyone’s volunteered time that allowed this project to launch.

The most difficult process has been the researching and ordering of the plaques for campus. The QR codes can only be printed on a limited type of plaque because the company must have the technology to engrave them onto the material. This also causes the plaques to be more expensive. The funding has slowly come along and we will be able to purchase the plaques and install them by this summer 2012.



Campus Climate Action: Your School’s Carbon Footprint

Through the protection and maintenance of our campus’ tree canopy, we are directly reducing carbon dioxide. The college signed the American College & University Presidents’ Climate Commitment to be climate neutral by the year 2037. Our arboretum will help us achieve this goal. It will also help us inform students and others of the important contribution that trees can make to reducing carbon footprints.

Commentary and Reflection

This project grew from the idea of an adjunct classics professor and tree enthusiast, Jim Abbot. Initially he proposed the update of an earlier tree walk on campus. With the help of the Office of Sustainability, the idea of updating the existing tree tour branched out to include the help of a core group of faculty, staff, and students under the leadership of Sustainability Intern and NWF Fellow, Kimberly Reeves ’12. After working on this project, as well as serving as an Urban Watch intern at Fernbank Museum of Natural History in Atlanta, Kimberly found a better connection with trees. They are no longer just a conglomeration of leaves or what she seeks to escape the Georgia sun; rather she sees the individuality of each tree and the characteristics that make them unique. This new outlook has helped her in her efforts to want to reconnect her campus community with the trees that they are surrounded by, but may know little about. This campus of only 100 acres in a dense urban area has more than 1,700 trees.

How would an Arboretum benefit your campus? Not only are you bringing important topics to the attention of your communities, but also you are highlighting the incredible natural resources that provide us with mindfulness (sitting in silence), the joy of climbing (reaching for the next branch), memories (oranges, reds, and yellows in the fall), and life (breathing fresh air). Even if you are not a liberal arts college, this gives you the opportunity to find the interconnectivity within your university. And if the only thing that someone takes away from the Arboretum project is that they notice that one tree they pass on the way to work every day and not just the day in the spring when it blooms, then we have done our job.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

What we refer to as the “A-Team” collaborated to create the Agnes Scott Arboretum and make it a truly interdisciplinary tour of our campus trees. The entire team is listed below with the **three team members** who went above and beyond, giving their time, talents, and leadership to make this project possible highlighted in **bold**:

- **Jim Abbot, Visiting Assistant Professor of Classics**
- Beth Hackett, Associate Professor of Women’s Studies and Philosophy, Chair of Women’s Studies, Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning
- Susan Kidd, Director of Sustainability
- Julia Lutgendorf, Creative Services Associate, Office of Communications
- John Pilger, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Biology, Co-director of Environmental and Sustainability Studies
- Martha Rees, Professor Emerita of Anthropology
- David Reeves, Arboretum logo creator/designer
- Lock Rogers, Assistant Professor of Biology
- **Kimberly Reeves, Class of 2012, Sustainability Intern**
- **Tammy Roundy, Web Developer, Information Technology Services**
- Nell Ruby, Associate Professor of Art and Chair
- Justine Schwartz, Sustainability Fellow 2010-2012

Many other community members were integral to the success of the arboretum. We had help finding all the dedicated trees on campus, revising our description for each location, recording our audio portion of the tour, and managing our funds from the Agnes Scott College Innovation Fund and the Fellowship from the National Wildlife Federation.

Funding and Resources

We used Wordpress.com for our website production and a free website to generate QR codes, so there was no cost on the technology side. We also had everyone working on the project volunteer their time and talents. The only thing we had to pay for were the plaques, which cost us up to \$2,500 for 18 individual plaques. We are starting an arboretum fund for future protection and maintenance of our trees, but we will not be able to use the money for our current need. Along with our Fellowship through National Wildlife Federation that helped pay for the time and effort to establish the arboretum, we had financial support of \$500 from the Agnes Scott College Innovation Fund, which is a competitive program to promote innovative ideas that will help Agnes Scott better achieve our core mission of educating women to think deeply, live honorably, and engage the intellectual and social changes of our time.

Education and Community Outreach

Since we just announced the arboretum, we are in early phases of outreach. We hope faculty will adopt the arboretum and help make it even more interdisciplinary providing research and classroom opportunities for their students. For future phases, we would also like to reach out to local organizations and school groups to provide tours and help scout groups receive badges and belt loops through learning about trees and their natural habitats. Our arboretum will be a great way for current students to invite even their relatives who are too far away to visit to experience Agnes Scott's beautiful campus on a virtual tour, for prospective students to have a resource to get to know the campus better, and for alumnae to reconnect with a campus they know so well.

National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program

National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program played a major role in the completion of our arboretum project. Without the funding and the focus, we might still be at the drawing board coming up with how we should reach our campus community through reconnection with our trees. Having a commitment to NWF and a deadline of graduation 2012 pushed our team to complete tasks and have a clear vision of our end goal. We used the following NWF Campus Ecology resources: consultation with staff, online case study database, email blasts, fellowships, Campus Ecology blog.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Contacts

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Case Study Submitted by: Kimberly Reeves, NWF Fellow 2011-12, Agnes Scott Sustainability Fellow, kreeves@agnesscott.edu

MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

Since signing the ACUPCC in 2007 and committing to become carbon neutral by 2037, Agnes Scott College has made strides in sustainability. The Office of Sustainability works in conjunction with nearly every department on campus, from buildings and grounds, to student life, to waste management, food services, and beyond. Sustainability is truly becoming integrated into campus life. More information: www.agnesscott.edu/about/sustainability.

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