

Introducing the South-East Greenway: A Town-Gown Collaboration
An Application for a Campus-Community Partnership Grant

Shireen Campbell, Davidson College

Introduction

The town of Davidson, North Carolina, has experienced considerable population growth in recent years. Between July 2000 and July 2005, for example, Davidson's population grew by over 14%, paralleling the percent growth of Mecklenburg County as a whole during that same five years. In an effort to manage this growth, the town government and staff have focused on effective long-term planning. All new development must be walkable, sustainable, and designed to enhance the existing community. Additional goals include providing housing for all income levels, preserving considerable green space, and connecting neighborhoods through streets, pedestrian paths, and greenways.

Key to the town's vision are greenways, linear parks that connect people's houses with places they need to visit, such as children to schools or adults to local stores. Greenways additionally encourage fitness, conserve open green space, protect the flood plain, and provide plants and animals with habitat that is rapidly disappearing through our county. Davidson's first greenway, the 2.6 mile Southeastern Greenway, will be completed by the end of 2006, with a projected grand opening, "Green on the Greenway, on March 17th, 2007. The Town's Greenway, Trail, and Bikeway Advisory Board, in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Staff and the town information officer, is developing plans for that grand opening.

The Southeast Greenway will only succeed if it is perceived as safe and used regularly. To achieve these goals, the town must provide both a map of and information about features and proper use of the greenway. In collaboration with town staff and the advisory board, students enrolled in Professor Shireen Campbell's Writing for the Community class (Eng. 201) during Spring 2007 will create a draft of this informational and promotional document, to be revised and published in time for use at the greenway's grand opening.

The proposed project, outlined below, fully meets the CCP alliance directives. Creating and designing the public document that guides users through the southeast greenway will provide the students with an authentic off-campus opportunity for service learning, while the greenway itself will encourage community connectivity and support environmental sustainability. Underwriting the costs associated with producing the document through the ACS grant will enable the town to spend its limited resources instead on publicizing and supplying materials for the greenway's grand opening.

Project Description

In Eng. 201, class and group projects require students to research and write beyond the academy for college and community service organizations. This Writing for the Community emphasis attempts to connect what often seem to be separate aspects of student lives--the scholarly and the personal, the academy and the community--as students reflect on their motives for, rewards from, and struggles in providing service to others. The overall project focus for Spring 2007 will be on developing documents and websites about biking and pedestrian information and safety in the Davidson community.

Creating the master greenway document will require participation from all students and take place in stages:

Orientation

Lauren Blackburn, of the town planning department, and at least one member of the Greenway, Trail and Bikeway Advisory Board will meet with the class to describe the overall needs this document will meet. The class will subsequently walk the greenway together to get an overall sense of the trail in relation to the community.

Invention

After the orientation session, groups of students will walk the trail with experts on plant and animal life, interview them about notable features of the trail, then transcribe these interviews and render them into concise descriptions for the brochure. Longer versions of these descriptions will be housed on the pending southeastern greenway link from the town's park and recreation pages. Meanwhile, other students will work with the planning department to generate brief descriptions of the greenway's purpose, guides to use, safety tips, emergency tips, and a map of the trail.

Drafting/Designing

Once all information has been collected, the students will need to combine the various pieces and design one coherent, legible, and useful document. This will require both textual revision and design work, supported in part by a class visit with one of the college's print design specialists. Once the students have completed a revised draft, they will give a presentation on their project to members of the parks and recreation department, the planning department, and the advisory board. Following final revisions, the document will be sent out for printing in time for use at the greenway's grand opening.

Timetable

Spring classes begin on January 16th. This project will occupy the class from mid February (approximately February 13th) to mid March (approximately March 16th). The dates will become fixed once the schedule for the grand opening is finalized.

Expenses: costs and in-kind donations

Consultation

Estimated 3-4 hours donated

An emeriti professor from the Davidson Biology Department and member of the local Lands Conservancy chapter will walk the greenway with student groups and providing information on notable features on the animal, bird, and plant life.

Travel

Gas and mileage donated

Students and professor will take several trips to the greenway trailheads on South Street and Davidson Concord Road. If students do not have vehicles, I will work with the town's Park and Recreation Department to see if they can transport the class in a town vehicle.

Document reproduction

3500 copies

1500.00

Working in consultation with the town information officer, I have priced costs for two-color printing for an 11 x 17 document that will be duplex-printed and folded to become the greenway map and guide. According to the print shop, economies of scale begin at approximately 3,500 copies, so I do not have an estimate on price per copy for amounts lower than 3,500.00

After the initial print run, the town will be able to reproduce the document in-house at considerably lower cost.

If the ACS could fund half the print cost, this would contribute substantially toward the project.

Total request 750.00

In addition to regular contact with representatives of the town staff and members from the advisory board, the class will also meet with the Davidson Lands Conservancy organization to learn more about their program, property easements, and environmental sustainability.

Evaluation/Dissemination

The students will be charged with generating a clear, concise, yet thorough guide to the trail in draft form that the town can then edit and prepare for print. If the students succeed, they will provide a workable draft that requires some--but not extensive--revision. While the greenway's success will not hinge solely on this document, having a clear guide will help publicize the greenway, provide information on its environment, and encourage safe use. Long-term success will be evaluated in terms of statistics on greenway use and safety.

The document will be available in print at both ends of the greenway, at Town Hall, and at other public locations in town, such as the library. More extensive versions of the biological information on birds, animals, and plant life around the greenway will be available on-line. Members of the class will attend the greenway grant opening to see the focus of their project officially launched.