

LINKING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES TO URBAN AGRICULTURE IN THE TWIN CITIES



Mary Rogers, PhD

The New Ag Education Paradigm

The change needed today is a refocusing on the undergraduate curriculum and student experience so that the agriculture graduates of tomorrow will have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of a changing workplace and world . . . Among the competencies that students should develop are teamwork and working in diverse communities, working across disciplines, communication, critical thinking and analysis, ethical decision-making, and leadership and management.

- The National Research Council (2009)

Participation in service-learning increases student attitude toward self, school and learning, civic engagement, social skills, and academic performance
(Celio et al, 2011)

When compared to non service-learning control, students report increased comfort working across diverse groups
(Smith and Grossman, 2014)

Field-based learning in Food Systems shown to make classroom studies personally relevant
(Galt et al., 2013)

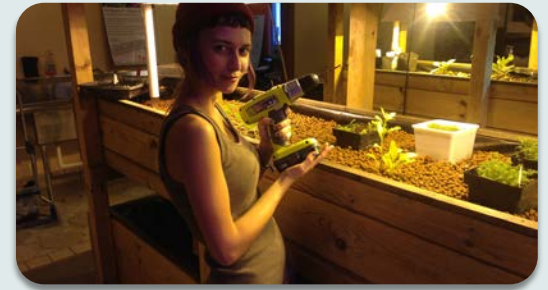
Food
Systems
Major



Freshman
Seminar
(Mary Rogers)



For Credit
Internship



Capstone Course
(Julie Grossman)

Integrated experiential learning opportunities

Our Food Systems major is intentionally designed to allow students to integrate systemic and systematic skills at multiple points in their undergraduate careers.

Food Systems Major

- Students learn about the interconnected set of biological, technological, economic, and social activities that are essential to society
- Tracks:
 - ▣ Organic & Local Food Production
 - ▣ Consumers and Markets
 - ▣ Agroecology
 - ▣ Individualized



Goals of Freshman Seminars

- **Community, shared learning and intellectual growth**
- Faculty need to engage and connect with students
- Subject should be meaningful and accessible
- Encourage discussion and writing
- Develop skills (analysis, research, speaking in class, contacting the prof., using the library, writing...)



Outcomes of Freshman Seminars

- Higher retention rates
- Increased graduation rates
- Increased student satisfaction with university life
- Increased levels of student/faculty contact
- Greater student commitment

“I like having a voice in this class. It is small and all of us students are asked about our opinion a lot. We get a chance to talk and be heard”

Why Urban Agriculture?

- Familiarize students with the community
- Reinforce community-university partnerships
- Expose students to different modes of production
- Expose students to different missions and goals of community-based food systems



Complex Issues

- ❑ Food security
- ❑ Public health
- ❑ Social justice
- ❑ Ecological health
- ❑ Economic vitality

Challenges: Land issues (availability, ownership, contamination...)

“the most important word in *community garden* is not *garden*”



HORT 1905: Growing Food & Building Community: Urban Ag in the Twin Cities

- **LEARNING OUTCOMES:** describe, identify, list, explain, recognize and create...
- **DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES:** self-awareness, appreciation of differences, independence, and responsibility



HORT 1905: Growing Food & Building Community: Urban Ag in the Twin Cities

STRATEGIES:

- Extensive field trips and class visits
- 3 hours 'volunteer' service activity w/community partner
- Concept mapping
- Urban Ag Policy panel with local experts
- Racism in the food



Racism in the food system

- “I grew up in a predominately white community. We had no diversity, so I am interested in knowing what is acceptable and what is considered offensive”
- “I've dealt with racism before and I think the only way for people to realize that there is racism going on is to hear REAL experiences”
- “Sometimes I feel like some people take the things I say into offense or they take it too seriously and make it into a bigger problem”

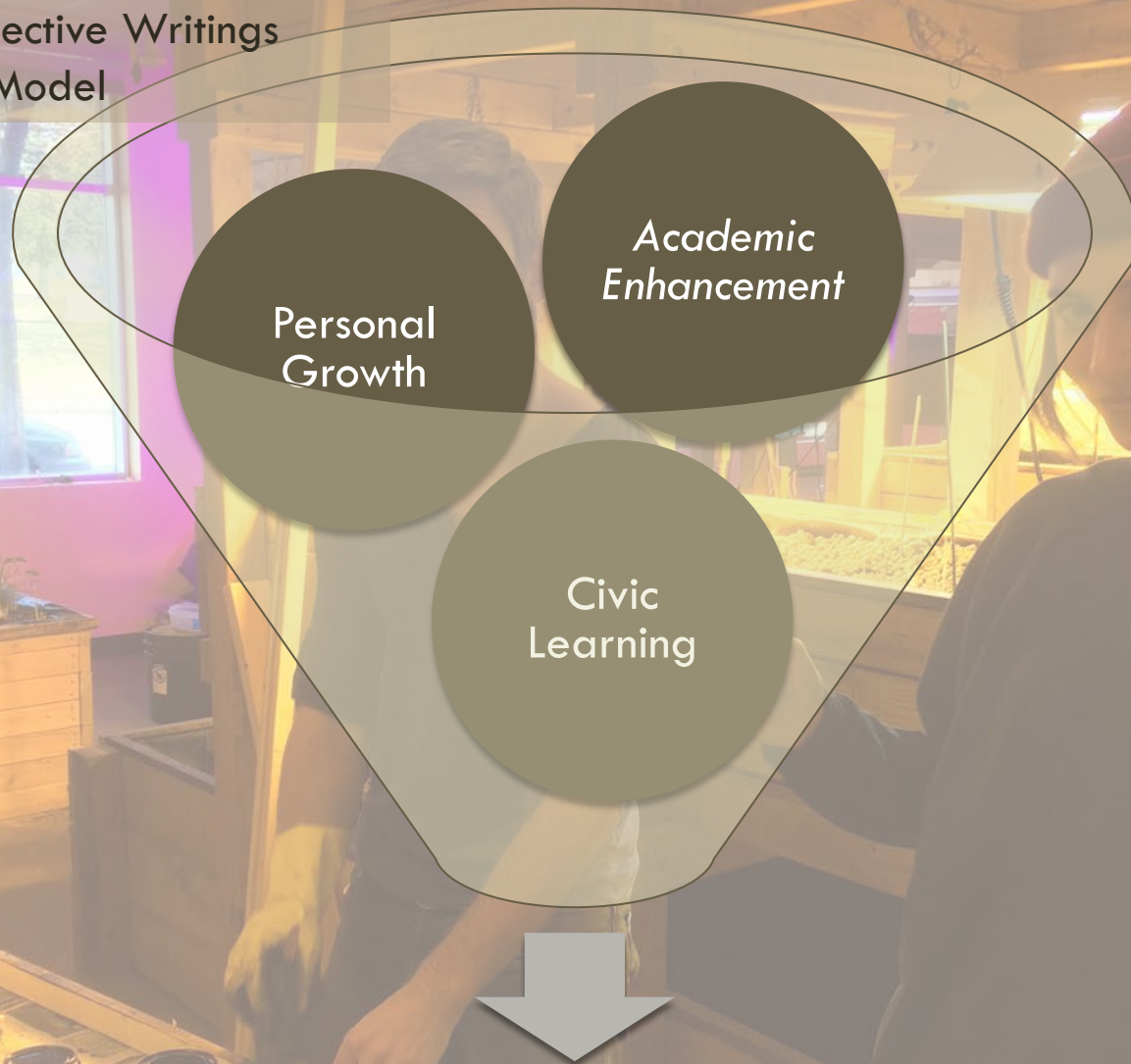
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ASSESSMENT:

- readings and student-led discussion
- Guided service learning reflections
- participation (questions asked at field trips, low-stakes writing)
- final group project—design a business or organization



Assessment: Reflective Writings
using the *DEAL* Model



What did I learn? How did I learn it? Why does this learning matter? What will/could I or others do in light of this learning? (Clayton and Ash, 2011)

Community-Engaged Learning

TIPS for success:

- Compensate community partners
- Create flexible volunteer/service activities
- Communicate clearly
- Allow them to tell their story
- Promote their work
- Celebrate the partnership





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