Dear Friends,

The Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC) enjoyed another successful year in 2013-2014 thanks to the support of University of Iowa faculty, staff and students and our wonderful community partners: Cedar Rapids, Muscatine and Washington, IA. The 2013-2014 academic year was the most active to date for the IISC with over 170 students across 9 different campus departments completing 25 projects with over 50 community partners. Brief project descriptions are included in this report, but I encourage you to visit our website at iisc.uiowa.edu to read full project reports and learn about the outstanding work completed by UI students.

The commitment and cooperation of our community partners is essential to our success. They provide valuable support to UI students and faculty, while coordinating projects that reflect their community needs. Please read the sections for Cedar Rapids (pg. 3), Muscatine (pg. 7) and Washington (pg. 11) to see the staff that worked so devotedly with us over the year. In addition, the IISC would not be possible without an outstanding roster of UI faculty, staff and students. Their energy, creativity and commitment to better the lives of Iowans is evident in every project.

The Provost’s Office of Outreach & Engagement, led by Associate Provost Linda Snetselaar, continues to provide leadership and guidance, along with our Faculty Director Chuck Connerly and the entire IISC Advisory Board. Finally, our dedicated IISC staff ensure that the daily work of the IISC continues to progress.

We are thrilled to be working with three new excellent community partners for the 2014-2015 academic year: Decorah/Winneshiek County, Iowa City and Sioux City. I encourage you to follow our projects’ progress via Facebook, Twitter or our website, or contact any of the IISC staff for more information. The mission of the IISC to enhance the sustainability of Iowa’s communities while transforming teaching and learning at UI requires collaboration among all of us, and I look forward to your continued involvement and support.

All the best,

Nick Benson
Director of Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities
MISSION STATEMENT

The Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC) is a campus-wide effort at the University of Iowa to enhance the sustainability of Iowa’s communities through projects that match community needs with the expertise and resources of faculty and students.

DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY

Individual community engagement projects emphasize one of three sustainability components: social responsibility, economic prosperity, or environmental stewardship. This results in a holistic approach to address sustainability in each community.

The projects outlined in this report are listed by sustainability category and color-coded according to the circles on this chart. Look for these corresponding colored dots next to each project title.

2013 – 2014 BY THE NUMBERS

30 COMMUNITIES

25–30K HOURS

9 DEPARTMENTS

250 PROJECTS

50 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

170+ STUDENTS
CEDAR RAPIDS

The Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities partnered with Cedar Rapids for the 2013 - 2014 academic year. Cedar Rapids has done tremendous work to recover and re-develop after the devastating flooding in 2008 that inundated much of the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. The IISC worked with the City of Cedar Rapids and several local non-profit organizations, such as the Czech Village/New Bohemia Main Street District and Brucemore Historic Estate. Projects focused on economic development, cultural development and sustainability assessment.

Thank you to our Cedar Rapids community partners, including Assistant City Manager Sandi Fowler, Czech Village/New Bohemia Main Street Director Jennifer Pruden, and Brucemore Historic Estate Executive Director David Janssen.

4 DEPARTMENTS
6 PROJECTS
60 STUDENTS
“The urban and regional planning students wowed not only our local community, but also a statewide audience with their professionalism and dedication to helping communities tackle the challenge of determining whether or not a SSMID is right for them.”

—Jennifer Pruden
Executive Director
Czech Village/New Bohemia Main Street District
Health Campaign Promoting Community-Building with MOAIs for the Blue Zones Project™

Public Health graduate students worked with the Cedar Rapids Blue Zones Project™ staff to enhance engagement in MOAIs (groups of individuals who form social networks to support healthy behaviors) among target demographics in Cedar Rapids. In particular, students worked to target high school students, the aging population, and faith-based organizations around walking and cooking MOAIs. Students conducted focus groups with target populations and developed new communication campaigns for Blue Zones Project™ staff to use in their work.

URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNING
Evaluation/Development
iGreenCR Program

The iGreenCR was developed in 2011 as a coordinated strategy to promote Cedar Rapids’ sustainability efforts. Students conducted research to evaluate community awareness of sustainability and the current iGreenCR program. Students identified metrics to measure success and publicize the efforts to the community.

ARTSSHARE
Czech Village/New Bo Window Wonderland Arts Display

In collaboration with ArtsShare, graduate students in the School of Art and Art History worked with local businesses in the Czech Village/New Bohemia Main Street District to design window displays for the holiday season. This year’s project, dubbed the “Window Wonderland,” was developed to encourage holiday
shoppers to purchase gifts locally in the Main Street District. A friendly competition among businesses with window displays resulted in a record number of voters. Czech Village/New Bohemia Main Street District is an example of a sustainable and livable neighborhood in Cedar Rapids, where residents can live, work and play within walking distance of each other.

**JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION**

Using Marketing and Technology to Promote Brucemore Historic Estate

Communication students researched the Brucemore Historic Estate—Iowa's only National Trust Historic Site—to develop and implement a marketing plan. They focused on current and prospective membership, direct competition, and current policies and practices. Students used their findings to create a comprehensive report and both electronic and hard copy materials for promotional use.

**URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNING**

Attracting and Retaining a Quality Workforce in Cedar Rapids

One concern facing Cedar Rapids employers and community leaders is the struggle to attract and retain a quality workforce. Anecdotally, leaders believe this is because of a lack of quality housing, minimal nightlife, and a lack of shopping and other amenities. This project evaluated the current workforce of Cedar Rapids and determined the gap between supply and demand in the labor market. Students sought to understand factors that influence the ability of a city to attract and retain new workers by holding focus groups and collecting data. A particular focus of the project was attracting and retaining young professionals (workers under 40). Students surveyed other cities with strong young professional workforces to propose steps that Cedar Rapids can take to become a more attractive place for young professionals.

**URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNING**

SSMID Planning, Creation & Implementation

A self-supported municipal improvement district (SSMID) would create the necessary funds to maintain recent streetscape improvements to the Czech Village/New Bohemia Main Street District in Cedar Rapids and allow staff to move forward with new development. Students conducted research on how to best create a SSMID. Students held public meetings and worked with staff to acquire the necessary support to pass a SSMID. From this research, a SSMID tool kit was developed, which includes materials to educate all Iowa communities on the benefits of a SSMID. A sub-section of this project identified additional financing mechanisms for the district. Students developed a sustainable financing plan for the area to diversify funding sources, grow the budget, and allow for increased staff, community services, marketing and project financing.

“This is the first thing on my resume for every job application and has been the thing people most want to talk about in interviews or professional conversations.”

—Cedar Rapids Urban Planning Student
MUSCATINE

The Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities partnered with the community of Muscatine for the 2013 – 2014 academic year. Muscatine is a community of 23,000 located on the Mississippi River in eastern Iowa. In its process of completing a comprehensive plan, Muscatine's Community Improvement Action Team worked alongside the IISC to develop projects that implemented goals and objectives of the master plan.

Thank you to our Muscatine community partners, specifically the Community Improvement Action Team led by Rich Dwyer and Gary Carlson.
“The IISC and Muscatine Partnership program has brought a breath of fresh air to our community. The students came in with fresh perspectives and creative ideas to help open our eyes and minds to so much more that we could be doing.”

—Rich Dwyer
Community Improvement Action Team Co-Chair
Students developed a bike and pedestrian master plan to help improve the connectivity of Muscatine transportation and recreation infrastructure. The students’ final report evaluated current infrastructure and created a plan to improve connectivity between walking and biking trails, sidewalks, streets, bus routes, and points of interest in the community. Students also created a mobile wayfinding app that offers a 360 degree tour of Muscatine’s points of interest.

Graduate students in the College of Public Health worked with the YMCA, Sunset Park After School Program, and local preschools to develop health intervention projects that focused on reductions in childhood obesity through behavior change counseling. The interventions included training on motivational interviewing, clarifying values, and moving families toward action. This project complimented work being completed by the Blue Zones Project™.

IISC was excited to partner with the Iowa State University College of Design and PLACE program for the research and design of a sustainable dog park. Students surveyed best practices for dog parks in similar communities and recommended amenities including water, water features, ground covering, benches, pavilions, fencing, walking paths, waste control among others. A 3D model and landscape designs of the proposed dog park were completed by the team.

The City of Muscatine aimed to increase recreational opportunities by expanding its existing trail system. Students completed engineering plans for constructing new trails. Tasks included identifying the layout, designing the cross-section of the trails, designing structures for waterways and ravines where necessary, and designing and locating ancillary structures to support trail activities.

Mad Creek traverses the east side of Muscatine and is prone to flash floods. The City wanted to research a regional storm water detention plan for properties north of the current flood structures. Students completed a regional hydrologic and hydraulic analysis of the watershed north of Muscatine. Tasks included estimating storm water runoff under present and future development scenarios, locating a detention facility to reduce impact of flooding on properties, and designing an outlet structure and routing of the discharge.
“I was provided with hands-on experience [...] through the process of developing an intervention plan and passing it off to the stakeholders for implementation.”

—Muscatine Social Justice Student
WASHINGTON

Washington, a city of 8,000 people situated thirty minutes south of Iowa City, has invested significantly in its community infrastructure over the last 10 years. A beautiful downtown square complete with a new streetscape and a LEED-certified public library illustrate the vibrancy of the community. Washington began to build upon these improvements through partnering with the IISC to enhance the City’s marketing and tourism efforts, develop new recreation areas, and bring public art downtown.

Thank you to our Washington community partners, including Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Michelle Redlinger, Public Library Director Debbie Stanton, and City Administrator Brent Hinson.
They dug up information I was unaware of, compiled it with comparative research, and delivered it to us with advice, comparisons, and tools to implement a strategic PR campaign that will prepare us to pass a hotel/motel tax in our community.

—Michelle Redlinger
Executive Director
Washington Chamber of Commerce
WASHINGTON PROJECTS

CIVIL & ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING
Wellness Park

In 2012, the City of Washington adopted a Comprehensive Plan that calls for the location of a “wellness park” that would provide space for organized recreation, multi-use open space, tennis courts, and ample parking. Students in the capstone senior design course were asked to produce three alternative design possibilities for a wellness park. The designs had to include recreation fields, an access road, a walking trail, ancillary structures, a pedestrian bridge, a YMCA facility, and a proposed location for a new water tower. The wellness park designs were presented to the City of Washington along with a 3D model and animation of one of the plans.

SCHOOL OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE
Enhancing Children’s Resources at the Washington Free Public Library

Graduate students worked with the Washington Free Public Library to address goals related to the library’s long-term development plans, with particular interest in the Children’s Area. Projects included evaluating the potential creation of a parenting collection and reclassifying and rearranging the Children’s Area to make it a more inviting environment for children and families.

JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION
Animal Shelter Public Relations & Fundraising Campaign

Students in a fundraising and philanthropy communications course organized ideas for a non-profit animal shelter’s fundraising campaign. Using research on the latest trends in fundraising and philanthropy, students evaluated the shelter’s past special events, marketing campaigns, and donor interests. They applied concepts and trends to organize new events, update marketing pieces, and developed a donor campaign with creative ideas and key messages to better position the shelter to receive support.
CIVIL & ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING
Regional Storm Water Control

The City of Washington desired a comprehensive approach to storm water management that blends facilities into the natural environment and increases the value of the surrounding land. Students completed a comprehensive hydrologic assessment of the northwest watershed in Washington and presented three alternative designs to mitigate flooding over West Main Street. Students had to estimate the amount of storm water runoff under current and future development scenarios, choose a location of a detention facility, and design an outlet structure, the route of the discharge, and aesthetic enhancements of the basins as focal points of the proposed parks. This comprehensive plan will help preserve natural areas and protect plant and animal habitats, increase value of adjacent land, enhance the park system, and reduce flooding.

MARKETING INSTITUTE
Community Branding

Students worked with the Washington Chamber of Commerce to rebrand Washington as an attractive place for visitors and residents alike. Students created an activities guide that provides information on area events, where to eat and visit while traveling, and recreational opportunities. Students also helped create a brand identity for Washington, including creating the tag line “Discover a Classic,” and a Brand Standards Guide to be used when creating new marketing materials.

ARTSSHARE
Washington Free Public Library Mural Painting

In collaboration with ArtsShare, Erin Rappleye, a graduate student in the MFA program, designed a 2-story mural on the back of the Washington Free Public Library. This mural is a part of a larger effort to provide public art and enhance the downtown. The mural is expected to be completed in the Summer 2015.

JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION
Hotel/Motel Tax Strategic Communications

Washington is one of a few Iowa communities that does not have a hotel/motel tax, which would tax guests who stay at the city’s hotels. The taxes generated would be put into a fund for community improvements, which could be parks, tourism attractions, and other amenities. Students researched similar communities in Iowa with a hotel/motel tax and created marketing materials for the general public to promote adoption of a hotel/motel tax.

“I liked that we got to be really creative with the project. I felt like our class had some freedom to do what we wanted, and the client really appreciated that creativity.”

—Washington Journalism Student
THE IISC HAS IMPACTED 14 IOWA COMMUNITIES SINCE 2009.

Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council
Decorah & Winneshiek County*
Charles City
Dubuque
Oskaloosa
Anamosa
Cedar Rapids
Iowa City
Muscatine
Columbus Junction
Washington
Burlington
Wellman

*Decorah is also a past partner from 2009

current partners past partners

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