

Drury's Center for Community Studies Finds Planning Solutions for Cities

Since 1984, **Drury University's** Center for Community Studies has helped nearly 80 communities, governments and not-for-profits with design and planning issues. In some cases, such as Webb City, the work of the Drury students helps a community receive grants and funding. "We prepare communities so they can apply for that funding and they can go to an architecture or planning firm and tell them what they want for their community," says Jay Garrott, director and professor of the Center for Community Studies.



Drury's Center for Community Studies is a required course for fourth-year architecture students in the five-year Bachelor of Architecture program. Each semester, small student groups travel to communities, listen to the community's goals, and then the students devise plans to reach those goals. The plans are then presented to the community in the hopes that they can be used to make the desired improvements. The plans include written recommendations, schematic drawings, photographs, presentation boards and a PowerPoint presentation. A six-student team typically works 30 hours a week on each project over the course of a 15-week semester. That's 2,700 hours of in-kind work.

This semester students are working in three communities: Joplin, Brookfield and Willard. In Joplin, students are working with the city to find a way to link some historic sites to neighborhoods and the downtown core. In Willard, students are working with the park board to help the city create an identity and a sense of place through the parks system. In Brookfield, which is 250 miles north of Springfield, the community has asked for a Main Street revitalization study.

Garrott says, "The biggest hindrance for small town development is visioning. The final recommendations that come from our students are long-term visions and they are a tool by which the communities can generate their visions." The Drury Center for Community Studies charges just \$500 for this service, which covers supplies, mailings, travel and other administrative costs. Everything else required is provided at cost that the Drury Center for Community Studies bills to the community or organization. After each study, a full accounting of costs goes to each community. Many architecture schools run similar programs, but Drury's is unique because it gives far more control to students in running and administering the projects.

Drury has also partnered with the University of Missouri Extension Office to prepare the communities before the Drury students arrive. To maximize impact for the communities, MU Extension can continue to work with the community after the Drury students have completed their project, assisting to develop an entrepreneurship and action plan.

"The community projects develop citizen-scholars. The Drury students are seeing that what they're learning in the classroom has an application with a greater meaning than just academic," says Jeff Barber, an architect with the University of Missouri Extension Office. Barber is a 1991 alumnus of the Drury Architecture program and participated in a similar project with St. Charles during the spring of 1990. To view a video on the Missouri Extension

Web site about Drury's efforts in Webb City, go to the following link and find the story dated 09-03-08: <http://www.umsystem.edu/ums/news/video/index.shtml#downtown>

A print story detailing Webb City's DREAM Award can be found at the following link: http://www.joplinglobe.com/joplin_metro/local_story_291185335.html