



# VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University  
**VCU Scholars Compass**

---

Community Engagement Institute

2015

---

May 14th, 10:15 AM - 11:45 AM

## Community-Engaged Research with Students: Partnering to Advance Local Dialogues Around Community Development

Meghan Z. Gough

*Virginia Commonwealth University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cenrinstitute>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

---

Downloaded from

[http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cenrinstitute/CEnRInstitute\\_2015/agenda\\_may14/4](http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cenrinstitute/CEnRInstitute_2015/agenda_may14/4)

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Community Engagement Institutes at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Community Engagement Institute by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact [libcompass@vcu.edu](mailto:libcompass@vcu.edu).

---

**Location**

VCU ASPIRE, 835 W. Grace St., Richmond VA

**Disciplines**

Higher Education

Page Intentionally Left Blank

# CEnR with Students: Modeling responsible community partnerships

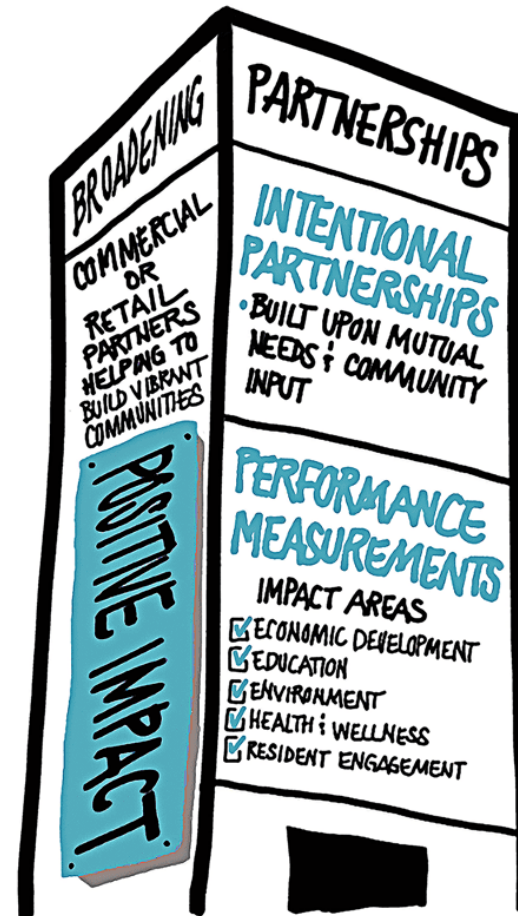


# Community engagement continuum

		Duration of Activity	Involvement		Impact	
			University	Community	University	Community
Civic Engagement	Connect	One-time; occasional	Driven by students, faculty or staff in response to an expressed need.	Recipient or client of resources or expertise. Limited responsibility, accountability or authority for the activity.	Students are exposed to new environments and situations. Builds relationships between university and community.	Immediate needs are met through assistance with tasks or activities.
	Cooperate	Dedicated period that may extend through the semester.	Typically driven by students, faculty or staff based on deliberative consultation with a community partner.	Shared responsibility in designing the activity, with some accountability for its execution but limited authority.	Students deal with concepts related to social or economic conditions and some level of problem-solving. Research opportunities may exist.	Systemic issues that undergird needs are exposed and dealt with at an introductory level. Community assets are deployed in the activity.
	Collaborate	Long-term commitment that extends beyond a semester.	Comprehensive investment of time and resources by faculty, students and/or staff in design and execution. Opportunities for multidisciplinary exchange and student leadership roles.	Fully invested in designing the project. Specific responsibilities for its execution. A clear role of accountability and authority for the activity.	Students and faculty grapple with systemic issues and problem-solving working alongside community leaders. Research is a likely outcome.	Transformational outcomes that address systemic issues are possible. Community assets are activated, spurring capacity-building and ownership. Project deliverable is relevant and practical.

# Responsible partnerships with the community

- What *do* responsible partnerships look like?



# Practicing CEnR with students: selected approaches

1. Meet student learning goals *and* community needs
2. Design a process for continuous co-learning
3. Maximize participation of and leadership by community
4. Coordinate closely with community on student work
5. Invest in long-term relationships

# Examples from practice @ VCU

- Urban planning programs traditionally provided services to communities: *the expert – client relationship*
- New interdependent roles and responsibilities:
  - Student/researcher
  - Community partner
- Community partnerships:
  - Highland Park
  - Fairmount/East End







**1. MEET STUDENT LEARNING GOALS  
*AND* COMMUNITY NEEDS**

---

N O R T H   H I G H L A N D   P A R K

---

QUALITY OF LIFE PLAN



Prepared for the Honorable Councilwoman Ellen Robertson and the North Highland Park Community  
By: VCU Master of Urban and Regional Planning Program  
Spring 2011 Studio I - URSP 761  
Instructor Dr. Meghan Z. Gough





## Active Living

We will work with the community to **redefine** existing neighborhood **public spaces** and enhance future opportunities to establish new spaces that will reinforce the **physical activity** network of Fairmount. These spaces will provide an anchor of shared experiences between all different groups of people. By using innovative and **safe** physical settings in each of these spaces, residents will integrate these activities into their daily life style. Supplying first the residents' needs for safe places for **physical activity**, will not only give a **place for activity**, but also will create **social benefits**.



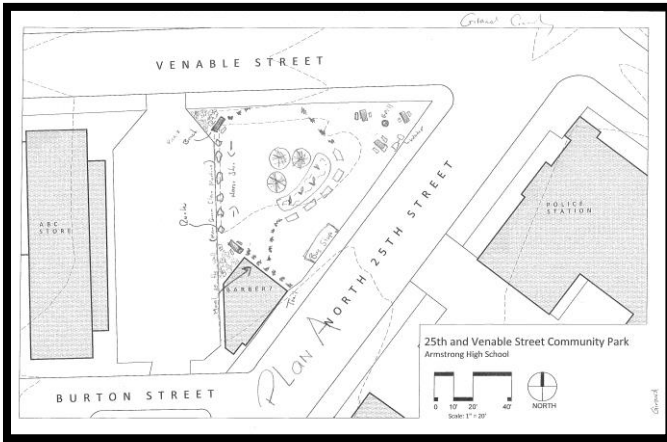
## Healthy Eating

We will **work collaboratively** with those in the Fairmount area to **comprehensively understand the current food situation** in the neighborhood while working towards **improving and expanding** upon existing nutritional infrastructure. This will be realized through various **physical and educational measures identified and implemented by the community** that will offer all residents the opportunity to **maximize their health benefits** through a more complete and active neighborhood health and nutrition system.

## Critical Connections

It is important to establish a **vibrant and inviting social environment** that includes a fair and **adequate transportation network** for the neighborhood. This would work to not only **engage citizens**, but also affect someone's desire and ability to be a functioning **member of the social network** of Fairmount. This will provide suggestions to **maximize social cohesiveness** and thus forms the fabric of a tighter knit, healthier community and encourage community **investment**.







## 2. DESIGN A PROCESS FOR CONTINUOUS CO-LEARNING





- Co-develop the process on Day 1 with an advisory board



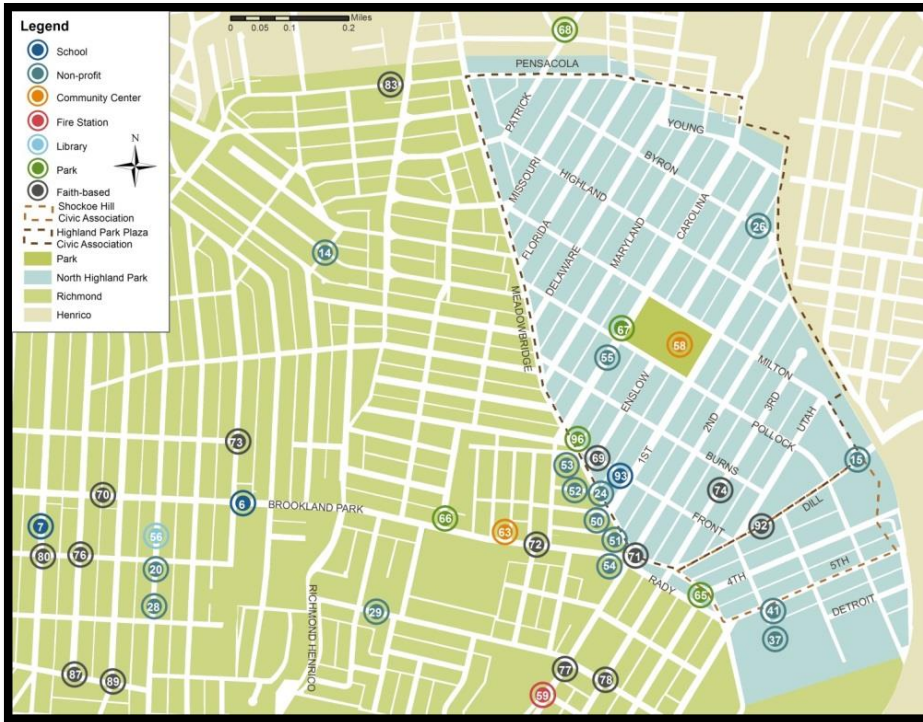
- Form student-community teams

- Be in the community with your partners



- Recognize community partner schedules





- Understand the community together

Results of an asset mapping process in Highland Park.

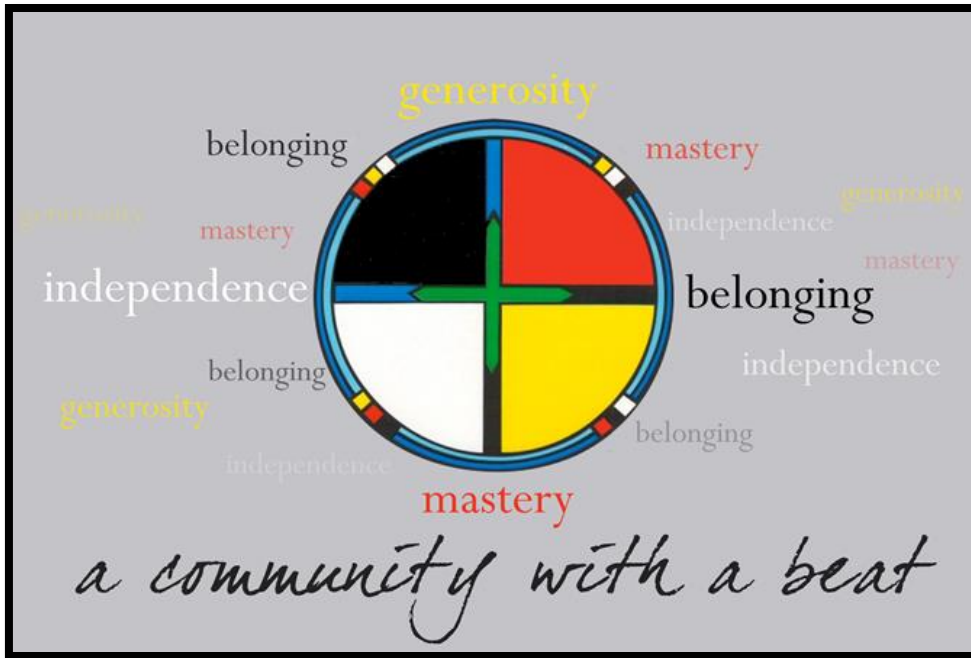




## Student reflection journal entry:

This [civic association] meeting had a strong impact on me because it made me realize that, **while the studio class thinks our ideas are great and that are going to strongly benefit the community, that is not always the case.** While at this meeting, we presented the residents with the idea of pop up farmers markets at the corner stores. Here we explained that this will bring in fresh produce to the neighborhood and would encourage individuals to go for healthier foods as opposed to the chips and sugary drinks. A member of the association spoke up and disagreed. **She said, "if they don't know how to make it, what's the point?"**

- Understand the community together



The Circle of Courage highlights four universal needs for greatness and resilience: belonging, mastery, independence and generosity.



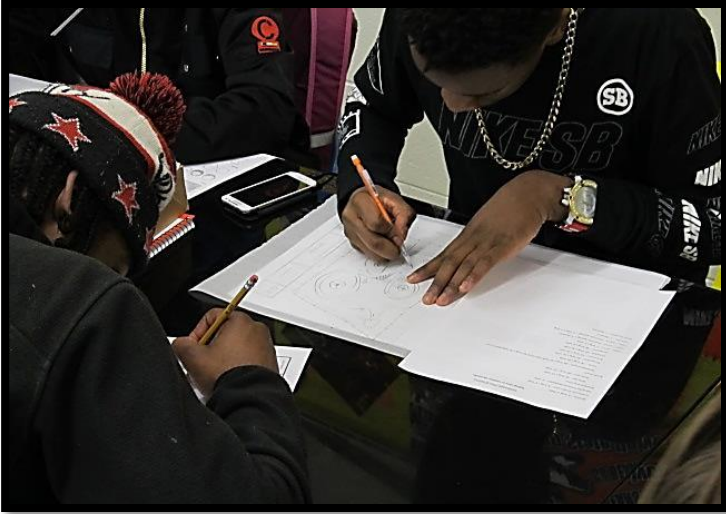
### **3. MAXIMIZE PARTICIPATION OF AND LEADERSHIP BY COMMUNITY**



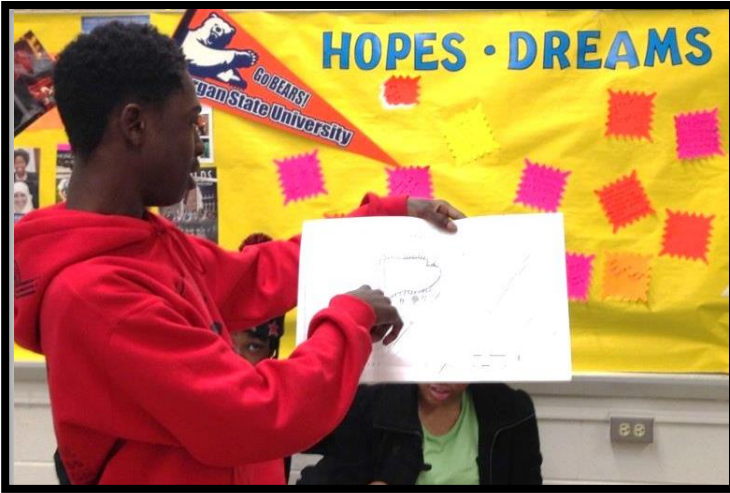
- Recruit diverse community advisory boards members
- Know who will guide the future process







- Reflect on the necessary tools – and incentives – to lead



- Recognize the skills brought by each partner

### Student Reflection Journal:

Miss Diane also pointed out to me that we are raising leaders here, we're not just coming in and being the leaders and to her, that's what is most important.





www.groundworkrva.org

16 March 2015

Green Team Members Jalisa & Giraud  
Armstrong High School  
2300 Cool Lane  
Richmond, VA 23223

Mayor Jones,

As students of Armstrong High School, we are currently members of the Green Team through GroundworkRVA. By being a part of the Green Team, we aim to transform the community into a better place. We seek to do so by taking an ordinary site in Church Hill and making it extraordinary.

Currently, there is a lot on 25th Street and Venable Street that has been complained about for numerous years. Right now the space looks abandoned and neglected. There is trash, empty space, a vacant building, and a standing bus stop for bus riders. The space currently has grass, a rail separating the lot between the space and the liquor store, a concrete area, and some greenery that has not been taken care of. We are tired of looking at this space and there is room to improve the lot.

We ask that you support the Green Team members to turn this area on 25th Street from pavement to extravagant. We request that you come out and get an understanding about what we are going to do. On March 31st at 5:30pm at The Family Resource Center (2405 Jefferson Ave) we are having a workshop to show you and the community our ideas for the space. We welcome you to also bring your ideas so that we can make this work.

Sincerely,

Jalisa & Giraud

Green Team Member

Groundwork RVA  
409 E. Main Street, Suite 200,  
Richmond, Virginia 23219







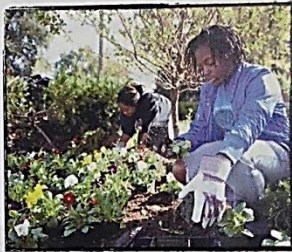
## 4. COORDINATE CLOSELY WITH COMMUNITY ON STUDENT WORK



# Community Greening & Beautification Workshop

MEET. LEARN. ENGAGE.

Bring your family, friends, and neighbors! Everyone is invited and encouraged to join us in Fairmount's Community Greening and Beautification Workshop, led by neighborhood youth. With the support from community leaders and local organizations, it's time to get your community involved. Come learn about innovative and creative projects, that could happen in your neighborhood to encourage a safer, healthier and active community.



Be the leader your community needs!

## Contact Information

Spencer Norman  
Workshop Coordinator  
normans2@mymail.vcu.edu

Childcare will be provided!

What:  
Community Greening & Beautification Workshop

When:  
March 31st ~~2014~~ 2015  
5:30pm to 7:00pm

Where:  
East District Community Resource Center

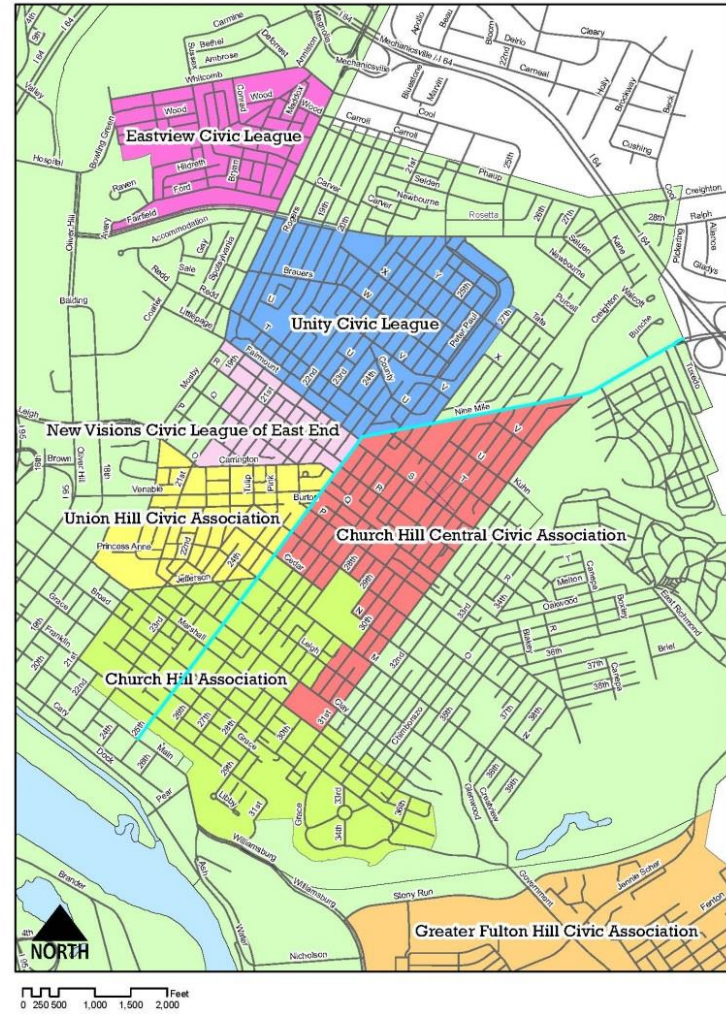


Storefront for Community Design



- Maintain frequent communication – during *and in between* academic semesters

- Speak at community and district meetings
- Present updates in collaboration with partners



## 5. INVEST IN LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS





## Richmond City Council

The Voice of the People

Richmond, Virginia

**The Honorable Ellen F. Robertson**  
Councilwoman, Gateway 6th District

June 17, 2011

Dr. Niraj Verma, Ph.D.  
Director and Professor  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs  
Scherer Hall, Suite 501  
Richmond, VA 23284-2028

Dear Dr. Verma,

I would like to thank you for the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs' generous contribution of services to the City, and specifically the 6<sup>th</sup> District through the Highland Quality of Life Plan and Commercial Revitalization Plan prepared by classes of Dr. Meghan Gough and Dr. John Accordino respectively. As an alumnus of the School of Urban Studies and Community Development, VCU's priority of discovering solutions to many complex issues facing Richmond has most directly influenced my career choices.

The schools dedication to working in the community and providing services to Richmond plays a critical role in the transformation of neighborhoods like Highland Park. The wealth of Highland Park is being uncovered in this university-community engage-

Highland Park is one of the most underserved communities in North Richmond. The "Quality of Life" Plan is correct and on point in recommending the establishing of a collaboration of community organizations, city representatives, and faith based leaders. In addition, I strongly encourage continual inclusions of the University. My experience proves that the absence of the University engagement in partnering with the implementation of community plan leaves underserved community with a lack of resources and skilled leadership to realize the outcome vision in the Plans. I must say, the students of Dr. Meghan have not left the community. The commitment has extended beyond class work requirements, to continual works to carry out the Plan's initiatives and resident guided projects. More of this is needed. I welcome an opportunity to explore this need for faculty and student involvement in Plan Implementation and how it mutually benefits both the University and the community interests.



## Richmond City Council

The Voice of the People

Richmond, Virginia

**The Honorable Ellen F. Robertson**  
Councilwoman, Gateway 6th District

### 2010 GATEWAY 6<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

#### **Dr Meghan Z. Gough**

Assistant Professor

Virginia Commonwealth University, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, Sustainable Communities Institute - Studio I Class

In honor, recognition, appreciation and celebration of her outstanding professional dedication to the citizens living in the Gateway 6th District and for Virginia Commonwealth University's ongoing efforts on behalf of sustainable communities that is helping to make our great city of Richmond an even better place to live, work, learn, love, play, visit, and raise a family.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto given under my hand and presented the 11th Day of December, two thousand ten of the Common Era, in the two hundred twenty-ninth year of the City of Richmond, in the two hundred fifty-fifth year of the Commonwealth of Virginia and United States of America.

The Honorable Ellen F. Robertson  
Councilwoman, Gateway 6th District  
Richmond City Council

Richmond City Council | Richmond City Hall | 900 East Broad Street | Richmond, Virginia 23219

# Considerations for moving forward

- Engage (more fully) community partners as co-participants in the research project.
- Commit to longer-term research/education projects.
- Ensure reciprocity.
- Examine cultural norms within our disciplines/curriculum that pose barriers.



# Small Group Discussions:

## *modeling responsible partnerships*

1. What are ways in which researchers can learn about the values, ethics and needs of communities with which they plan to work? Why is this important?
2. What are the different types of resources that might be contributed in a community-engaged partnership?
3. What other approaches or policies can help enable responsible university-community partnerships?
4. From an academic perspective: what are the challenges to enabling CEnR with students?
5. From a community partner perspective, what are the opportunities and liabilities related to CEnR with students?