

Mountain City Planning Challenge

The University of Tennessee

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PROJECT FOCUS: The University of Tennessee will assess the use of a local planning challenge competition as a tool for leadership and capacity building programs by conducting a challenge in Johnson County, Tennessee.

PROJECT DETAILS:

Course Number, Name, and Instructor:

Course Number and Name: Sustainable Communities, PS 410 and PS 595 (graduate and undergraduate sections)

Course Faculty: Dr. Tim Ezzell

Community Partner(s): Johnson County, TN, Mountain City, TN, and the Johnson County Chamber of Commerce.

Need: ARC's new strategic plan has identified next generation leadership as a regional priority. This project will test the use of a STEM-type student competition in a local development program and help develop a possible public service career development program at UT.

Number and description of planned meetings with the community partner

Students will be meeting with local stakeholders throughout the semester as they conduct the following tasks:

- Meeting with local students and officials to launch the project.
- Meeting with local student teams to help develop challenge plans.
- Hosting a challenge event where student teams present their plans to local officials and expert judges.

Project Overview

The University of Tennessee is currently developing a new concept for leadership education in the state's rural high schools. The concept, Leadership Education and Public Service (LEAPS), would adapt a STEM or STEAM based learning model to the development of public service careers. The goals of the LEAPS program would be to help rural youth explore careers in fields like public administration, public policy, and planning while increasing local capacity and improving perceptions of the public sector.

LEAPS would adapt many tools and approaches used by STEM-type programs. These would include mentoring, summer institutes, internships, and specialized curricula. The program would also utilize another popular STEM component,

student competitions. STEM proponents have found competitions to be a useful approach to engage students in experiential learning activities. For our 2016 ATP project, we would like to test this concept by creating a local LEAPS-type competition, the Mountain City Planning Challenge.

The Mountain City Planning Challenge would partner UT graduate and undergraduate students with teams from Johnson County High School to develop plans for a common local planning issue, such as the vacant downtown infill lot. Each team would develop and evaluate a different concept for the site. One might examine a public use, another a private business development, and a third team might develop an “outside of the box” idea. Student teams would perform a number of tasks during this process. These would include examine case studies and best practices, reviewing local codes and guidelines, estimating costs, and reviewing funding sources.

While students work on their projects, UT students will relate project tasks to leadership development concepts and possible careers in public service. Students will also have the opportunity to talk with career mentors, such as local officials, development district staff, UT Extension and UT IPS staff, and other public sector professionals.

At the end of the semester, student teams will present their concepts before a team of invited judges composed of local and regional leaders and UT faculty and staff. Judges will give students feedback on their projects. Participating teams will receive awards such as UT memorabilia or merchandise and/or free meals from local merchants. UT students will make all arrangements for this event and will recruit judges and solicit prizes.

In early December, a team of students from the UT class will then travel to Washington to present the project and project findings before the staff and leadership of the ARC. While UT does not have the funds to bring local student to the conference with them, they would welcome their participation and would support efforts to secure limited local student/faculty travel funding.

Course Guidelines and Project Goals:

A. Students will develop leadership skills and awareness of community assets that can foster sustainability.

By organizing and conducting a local leadership development program, UT students will not only gain leadership skills, they will also help instill similar skills in local youth.

B. Students will be engaged as active learners and participants in community projects.

UT students will work closely with community leaders and local officials to develop and implement this program. In doing so, they will be actively engaged with the local community.

C. Students will engage in active research to assist communities in creative approaches to sustainability through asset development.

UT students will research similar programs and apply best practices to their project. By increasing local youth leadership capacity, they will help develop a critical local asset.

ARC Goals Addressed

The proposed project will address Goal 5 of the ARC Strategic Plan: *Build the capacity and skills of current and next-generation leaders and organizations to innovate, collaborate, and advance community and economic development.*

Project Outcomes

- Students will develop a better understanding of Appalachian assets and the challenges facing Appalachian communities.
- Students will develop a working partnership with stakeholders in Johnson County, TN.
- Students will conduct a local planning challenge and develop media and draft materials related to project goals and objectives.
- Students will develop recommendations and guidelines to assist other rural communities.
- Students will present these findings at the ATP meeting in Washington.
- Students will prepare and display a poster at the ATP conference in Washington.
- Students will also present findings at another venue. Possible venues include a local community organization, the Appalachian Studies conference or the Tennessee American Planning Association Annual Conference.

Project Impact:

The project will have the following impacts:

- The project will increase the leadership capacity of local youth and introduce them to possible future careers in public service.
- The project will help in the development of a possible high school public service career development program at the University of Tennessee.

BUDGET

Appalachian Teaching Project 2015-2016: Mountain City Planning Challenge

Travel	
Round-trip airfare to Washington for 5 student (\$250x5)	1250
Round-trip airfare to Washington for Dr. Ezzell	250
Washington lodging (3 rooms x 3 nights @ \$150)	1350
Per diem for Dr. Ezzell (4 days @ \$71)	284
Student travel stipends (5x200)	1000
UT minivan travel to Mountain City (240 miles x 2 trips @ .48)	230
Project supplies	136
Total Costs	4500