A Holistic View of Sustainability and Community
Engagement in a Masters Program Culminating
Experience

Connie Ulasewicz and Gus Vouchilas

COMMON
GROUND

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL, ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY is peer-reviewed, supported by rigorous processes of
criterion-referenced article ranking and qualitative commentary, ensuring that only
intellectual work of the greatest substance and highest significance is published.

Typeset in Common Ground Markup Language using CGPublisher multichannel
typesetting system
http://www.commongroundpublishing.com/software/

A Holistic View of Sustainability and Community Engagement in a Masters Program Culminating Experience

Connie Ulasewicz, San Francisco State University, California, USA
Gus Vouchilas, San Francisco State Univeristy, California, USA

Abstract: This case study was motivated by masters candidates who chose to pursue an integrative, hands-on learning model for their graduate level culminating experiences. As advisors to their work that integrated community engaged scholarship and sustainability, we were inspired and motivated to create a model culminating experience for other masters degree candidates with a holistic view of sustainability, in which environmental, cultural and economic issues are rooted within the experience. Our aim is to create an innovative approach to address the culminating experiences for graduate students where they have the opportunity to engage in some of the most challenging issues of social, environmental and cultural sustainability within the community. One of the core principles of The Association of American Colleges and Universities is to educate students for personal and social responsibility. There is no greater responsibility at this moment in time than for a more practiced based learning model where the university and community together engage in practice to meet the needs of our citizens. Allowing students to think and reason with regard to ethical and moral issues of sustainability and develop skills where they can effect positive change is at the root of our model.

Keywords: Masters Culminating Experience, Community Engaged Scholarship, Social Responsibility, Ethical and Moral Roots of Sustainability

Introduction

MASTER'S DEGREE STUDIES are the foundation for the expansion of theories, concepts, and practice that result in a Culminating Experience (CE) often associated with a written research document or thesis. At San Francisco State University, one of our strategic plans is to offer, "high-quality post-baccalaureate education widely recognized for its intellectual value and contribution to society" (University Strategic Plan, 2005). An objective of this goal is that the University supports faculty and graduate student, "scholarship, professional practice, and creative endeavors that contribute to knowledge within and across disciplines and also serve the community" (University Strategic Plan, 2005). We strongly support these goals with the premise that the Masters student CE be a process of actively engaged scholarship where students are part of the learning process and the research they partake in seeks substantive and sustainable betterment of communities.

The task of developing a research project can be one of the most challenging aspects of sustaining students in graduate education. The student is being asked, to develop an idea into a question whose answer will contribute to a body of knowledge. For many, it is the first time in their academic career, that the work is completed independently rather in a

COMMON GROUND

structured classroom environment. The first stage of investigation often begins when the student is directed to explore the written thesis, examples of the outcome of graduate work that can steer the student toward the same method of inquiry that they are reading about. The thesis process of inquiry generally can be described as one where the student researcher collects and analyzes data and reports their findings in a standard five chapter format that is considered a tool for assessment. The thesis is actually the culmination of the research process and is one acceptable means of completing a Masters CE.

An alternative means to begin the investigation would be to have students work through a self-exploration tool to assist in their own inquiry and sustain their interest as they develop a project that they can invest in. The emphasis would move from asking and answering a question to one of self reflective analysis with focus on both the process and outcomes. The community is an ideal source of opportunity for this type of engaged research.

The importance of community in higher education and discussions of scholarship for the common good have gained considerable attention over the past two decades (Boyer, 1990, Driscoll & Lynton, 1999, Checkoway, 2002, Ward 2002, National Campus Compact, 2011 & Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2011). Although there are a number of research methods considered community based (Savan and Sider, 2003), the root of the processes is ultimately the search to bring about positive change through holistic means and processes. Through community engaged graduate research, there is an expectation that change will bring about growth resulting in tangible and sustainable outcomes as they relate to local and global environment, culture, and economy. Environmental as well as political and economical agendas are necessary in educating today's youth (Stables, 2009). Boyer (1990) wrote regarding the importance of faculty and students conducting research that shaped and expanded the public good. We are inspired by his vision and others, of graduate research having a richer meaning, moving beyond fundamental knowledge and bringing about more integration with the shifting needs of society (Kupiec, 1993). Our work further strives to support San Francisco State University president, Robert Corrigan's, mission to highlight increased levels of civic engagement among students, and faculty, based on the values of equity, social justice, and community engagement. The essence of community engagement is at the heart of the university's strategy and sets the tone for creative learning, research, and growth for students, faculty, and staff.

This paper offers a CE model and worksheet designed to engage faculty and students in graduate study research. The worksheet is to be used as a guide for the entire Culminating Experience and clarify, through self-reflection and observation, the community's needs around basic issues of cultural, environmental and economic sustainability. This inquiry further offers an investigative method to sustain the student through their Masters Culminating Experience as it brings about a commitment on the part of the student to make a difference through doing (Boyer, 1990).

Literature Review

Graduate Studies Pedagogy

Traditional thesis writing is considered to be the final stage of master's level graduate studies, and still there exists some ambivalence at this stage for the student. In fact, thesis writing "is considered as a source of some of the most severe problems in university studies, both

at the individual and the department level" (Ylijoki, 2001, p. 21). Ylijoki notes that thesis writing may be required, despite student interests or specific orientations. She further notes that each student's experience is individual and distinct as developed through personal life situations.

The disparities found in student impressions of thesis writing point to the need for CE's that augment traditional graduate research, seek creative solutions, and which enhance the value of the experience for the student. Education "can occur through self discovery, reflection, and embodied experience" (Bowers, 2005, EcoJustice Dictionary, Education), each of these being vital to graduate level development and enhanced through community engaged scholarship. De Tray (2005/2006) writes regarding the critical role engaging with the community in service lends to developing students with a much more caring nature and the link between the caring self and actually building community. He attributes his ideas to that of John Dewey (1923, p.40) who wrote about students acquiring, "a social sense of their own powers, when they engage in the world beyond the traditional classroom."

Academic investigation and research lead to theory and practices within education (Junyent & Geli de Ciurana, 2008). Theory and practice can then be further enhanced and lead to additional opportunities for student inquiry. Savan and Sider (2003) note that universities and colleges bring theory and a technical knowledge which when integrated with a community, can lead to successful working relationships. As a pedagogic methodology, community engaged scholarship promotes the integration of a service component that meets the objectives of the academic institution, the student Culminating Experience, and the community (Cashman & Seifer, 2008). Imagining America, a consortium whose member colleges and universities are committed to being leaders in public engagement, defines this learning style in their mission as, "mutually beneficial campus-community partnerships that advance democratic scholarship and practice" (Imagining America, 2011). Though there exist many definitions and methods which attempt to describe and prescribe frameworks aimed at functional and effective community research, the most vital characteristics can be found through a creative and meaningful synthesis of ideas which lead to a symbiotic outcome for all participants.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching describes community engagement, "as the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Carnegie Foundation, 2011). Students have the ability to directly participate in the process of meeting the agreed upon learning outcomes through a cycle of action and reflection. They become immersed in the practice of doing, and the process of reflection deepens their understanding of existing theory. Savan (2005) notes that given more extensive community engagement with partners, there are greater opportunities for new projects and partnership development. The combined creative work of the student, community partner, and academic institution will then be sustained for others to see and the cycle of engagement continues. Student/Community research engagement may result in the development of innovative products that may be manuals, curricula, video presentations or websites that document their findings (Jordan, Seifer, Sandman & Gelmon, 2009).

Integrating Sustainability into CE Development

Sustainable development is reliant upon three fundamental perspectives, those of economy, ecology, and society (van Dam-Mieras, Lansu, Rieckmann, and Michelsen, 2008). "Education for sustainable development (SD) requires approaches to teaching and learning that enhance knowledge and understanding, promote ethical and critical reasoning, and motivate and equip young people to participate in community affairs" (Holmberg, Svanström, Peet, Mulder, Ferrer-Balas, Segalàs, 2008, p. 272). Pedagogy is then crucial to sustainability education (Holmberg et al.) and is among the most fundamental underpinnings of student advancement, growth, and development while creating a strong sense of community and awareness.

Education for sustainable development aims toward amelioration of environmental as well as social equity issues and is reliant upon the empowerment of individuals to address them (van Dam-Mieras et al., 2008). The Decade of Sustainable Development (2005 - 2014), in which UNESCO is the lead agency, calls for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) which seeks, "to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning" (UNESCO, Education, The Decade of Sustainable Development).To this end, it is incumbent on educators, to inspire creative means through which to involve students, recognizing that they are seeking new approaches toward engaging with their local communities and toward fostering relationships which can expand and develop in new and meaningful ways. "Universities must function as places of research and learning for sustainable development, and as initiators and poles of activity in their communities and nationally" (Junyent and Geli de Ciurana, 2008, p. 764).

Source of Inspiration for CE Model

The following descriptions offer a summary of two graduate student advisee CE's that were the inspiration of the concepts set forth in this paper. Their work helped clarify the need for a CE model that can be used in the development of research ideas that engage the community. Both students were earning a Master of Arts degree in Family and Consumer Sciences, an umbrella discipline with underpinnings in health, safety, and welfare of individuals through the study of nutrition, family structure, apparel design and merchandising, and interior design.

Figure 1: *Sustainable Window Display*

Graduate Student #1 - This student, in the Apparel Design and Merchandising sub-discipline, conducted a study which integrated sustainability through window design (See Figure 1). As a result of her practical experience in merchandising, she understood the extent to which there exists both environmental and economic waste in current window and store design display processes. Her sense was that visuals can easily and creatively be designed through (sustainable) reused, redesigned, reworked, and upcycled props. Her CE included the design and creation of two store windows on campus, one created with all sustainable props and one with all new (and generally unsustainable) props. Window designs in the campus bookstore were observed by members of the campus community who chose to voluntarily complete a survey which sought perceptions of each window in order to better understand how sustainable props are perceived and how they may impact consumer behaviors.

Figure 2: *Phase 1 of Idea House in El Paso Texas*

Graduate Student #2 – This student, in the Interior Design sub-discipline completed his CE which includes the design and construction of the first phase of a sustainable house in the colonias of El Paso, Texas that is designed and is being built in stages as an "Idea House" (See Figure 2). His approach is one which brings environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability concepts to the local community. His work in the design stage includes both research based, as well as experimental solutions to sustainable building methods. The CE will include recommendations for materials and methods based on his overall findings. As an Idea House, the space will be open to the local community (at specific times) who will be able to see and learn about sustainable building approaches available to them.

While advising each of these Culminating Experience field studies in the Family and Consumer Sciences, we gained a greater sense of the richness and importance that community integrated and sustainability inspired scholarship brings to masters student research. Engaged scholarship that actually treats the community as a peer, can enhance the value of the work for the student as there is a linking with academic knowledge and community based application of the knowledge (Kecskes, Collier & Balsem, 2006). Orr's (1991) applied notion of active engagement in scholarship supports our goal of developing a framework for a student inquiry method, which can be the basis for the entire Culminating Experience. Our framework sought to address the following needs:

1. Offer an investigative tool to sustain the student throughout the entire research process.
2. Provide a roadmap for the unified integration of environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability.
3. Serve as guide for an interdisciplinary and intercommunity research approach.
4. Offer an approach toward viewing the dynamics involved in community engagement through all stages of the Culminating Experience and beyond.

It is important to note that this framework does not serve the purpose of redefining community based, community engaged, participatory, or otherwise engaged forms of research. It is intended to give rise to a research format which guides the path to creating a CE that offers a creative approach to 'thinking' through the process of problem solving through activity and interactivity on the part of the student, the faculty, and the community. This framework also seeks the integration of sustainability through creative channels that can be structured through the CE process itself. The framework discussed is illustrated in a model which highlights the key facets leading to a holistic approach to graduate studies (See Figure 3).
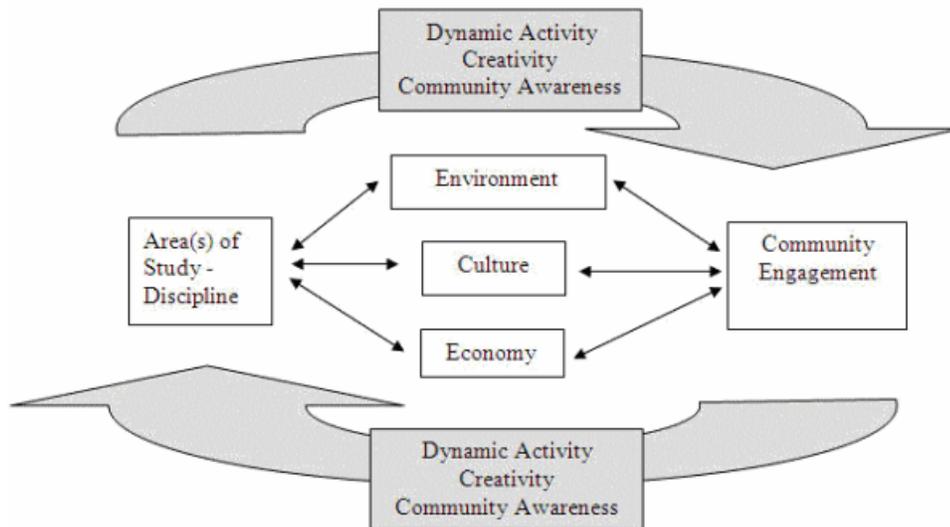
Figure 3: *Model for a Sustainable and Community Engaged Culminating Experience*

Graduate students begin their Culminating Experiences, considering a topic or area of study within their discipline. Our model suggests that the student consider the Culminating Experience within their area of study throughout the entire process, thereby engaging in a creative progression of dynamic activity and reflective analysis with, and within, the community which in itself then becomes the Culminating Experience. Together the student and community may choose to focus on the environment, culture or economy as they begin their engaged scholarship, but the goal is to focus on the integration of these three perspectives. This process of engagement will sustain the graduate student as they actively participate in the creative activity of problem solving. We also suggest that, the student will be able to return to the discipline or study area, with newfound knowledge regarding the community and its needs, as well as viable solutions to problems. Their findings can be researched and developed in further studies or by other students who seek community engagement.

Our ultimate goals are to build on the work of others (Boyer, 1990, Driscoll & Lynton, 1999, Checkoway, 2002, Ward 2002) and to create an innovative and sustainable approach for inquiry into the Culminating Experience for graduate students. Our aim is to offer a process for engaging in some of the most challenging issues of environmental, cultural and economic sustainability within the community.

Explaining the Worksheet

To help students and faculty with this inquiry and investigation into the CE, a 2 page descriptive worksheet was developed (See Appendix A). This worksheet is intended to help students develop an understanding of community engaged research, how to address the areas of sustainability as defined in the model, and, whether or not this is the type of research the student wishes to engage in or to further explore. For some students the worksheet develops into the CE process. The tool is appropriate to all University disciplines and can be used as an interdisciplinary springboard through thorough documentation of the research problem or question.

Faculty may choose to use the worksheet within research methods, community engaged research, or any foundation courses in which graduate students begin to consider the Culminating Experience.

There are 4 phases in the CE process that follow the initial self motivation for community engaged research. The completion of each phase comprises the CE. Below are explanations for each phase with examples of the approaches from the previously mentioned graduate students.

Phase 1 asks the student to research a community of interest and/or community organizations or partners that they are interested in and who they can engage with, seek advice from, or network with to develop community connections. The student will engage in a cursory exploration of questions that relate to sustainable issues or problems of culture, economy and environment within the community partner or organization. The analysis may consist of written, audio, and visual formats as approved by the college or university.

Gradate Student #1: Established in retail merchandising and was able to make connections with visual merchandisers in the community who were able to provide input on company culture, and economic feasibility of using sustainable display methods.

Graduate Student #2: Reconnected with his childhood community and culture, while reaching out to local builders who were able to provide input on the economic feasibility of using sustainable methods and materials.

Phase 2 engages the student in an articulation process where further documentation will build and result in an outline form of ideas to guide the study or for presentation to the community organization or partner. Together, a statement of the problem or need will be developed. This step requires a great deal of time and introspection – it is first and foremost the point from which the CE process begins to manifest as the student is placed into a position in which she or he will delve into the sustainability of the culture, the environment, and the economy of the community they choose to work with.

Graduate Student #1: Gained an understanding of sustainable display techniques currently being practiced and was able to develop a plan of research through these contacts.

Graduate Student #2: Was able to solidify his design concepts with the information gained from local community research and further developed his plans.

Phase 3 is the stage where the student formally articulates the problem statement(s) and develops an action plan that addresses the cultural, environmental and/or economic sustainability needs or problems of the community or their community partner. The plan is carried out; through continued written, audio and/or visual reflections, the student documents the process and outcomes of the work.

Graduate Student #1: Designed, installed and had campus community participate in data collection.

Graduate Student #2: Worked with local community contractors to build Phase 1 of the Idea House.

Phase 4 consists of the final review, to include a presentation to and with student advisor(s) and community member(s) to assess, evaluate, and reflect on the expected outcomes and value of the experience. The format is commensurate to the area of study and one that best illustrates the process and outcomes of the engaged scholarship. A conversation should ensue to discuss how the needs of the community will continue to develop and how future graduate students may sustain the cycle of engagement.

Graduate Student #1: Presented a sample kit of sustainable visual display materials to be shared with local community and corporate visual merchandisers.

Graduate Student #2: Presented material specifications and an informational brochure for community members to visit the Idea House and learn about sustainable building materials and practices.

Implications

As educators, it is our mission to assist graduate students as they reach their degree goals and to offer an awareness of the fundamental responsibility of education to serve the community. It is essential that the Masters Culminating Experience sustain and inspire the graduate student and be an assessment of their entire process of inquiry rather than a focus on an end result. Our vision is that the completion of one CE would actually continue with another student inquiry or the graduate would continue to volunteer their services or be hired to continue their work within the community or within the community organization. The cycle for engaging in some of the most challenging issues of environmental, cultural and economic sustainability within the community would be self sustaining.

Our model provides a vehicle for developing this method, one of relationship development, and ongoing sustainability within a chosen community. The process offers the graduate student an approach to research that develops through stages of assessment and reflection. Given the flexible nature of the proposed approach, students are placed into positions where their community interactions can bring about the unanticipated need for change in the structure of the research plan, which can be inherently effective as part of the learning process and growth through development. Such development can bring about unanticipated outcomes or address further community needs and connects experiences with the intentional learning required of a Masters Culminating Experience.

References

Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered*. *Priorities of the professoriate*. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. San Francisco, CA: Jossey – Bass Publishers.

Bowers, C.A. (2005). *EcoJustice Dictionary*. Retrieved from http://cabowers.net/dicterm/CAdict011.php

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2011). *Carnegie Selects Colleges and Universities for 2010 Community Engagement Classification*. Retrieved January 2, 2011 from http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/newsroom/press-releases/carnegie-selects-colleges-and-universities-2010-community-engagement-classification

Cashman, S. B. & Seifer, S. D. (2008). Service learning an integral part of undergraduate public health. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, *35*(3), 273-278.

Checkoway, B. (2002). Renewing the civic mission of the American research university. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 6(Suppl.l), 265-294.

DeTray, S. (2005/2006). Service Learning and Sustainability, *International Journal of Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability, 1*(3), 3-9. Retrieved January 2 from http://www.sustainability-journal.com

Dewey, J. (1923). *Democracy and Education*. New York: Macmillan Company.

Driscoll, A, & Lynton, E. (1999). *Making outreach visible*: *A guide to documenting professional service and outreach*. Washington DC: American Association for Higher Education.

Holmberg, J., Svanström, M., Peet, D.-J., Mulder, K., Ferrer-Balas, D., Segalàs J. (2008). Embedding sustainability in higher education through interaction with lecturers: Case studies from three

European technical universities. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, *33* (3), 271-282.

Imagining America (2011). Mission and History. Retrieved January 2, 2011 from, website, http://www.imaginingamerica.org/mission.html

Jordan, C. M., Seifer, S. S., Sandman, L. R., & Gelmon, S. B. (2009). CES4Health.info: Development of a mechanism for the peer review of dissemination of innovative products of community engaged scholarship. *International Journal of Prevention Practice and Research*, *1* (1), 21-28.

Junyent, M., & Geli de Ciurana, A.M. (2008). Education for sustainability in university studies: A model for reorienting the curriculum, *British Educational Research Journal*, *34*(6), 763 -782.

Kecskes, K., Collier, P., & Balshem, M. (2006). Engaging Scholars in the Scholarship of Engagement. In K. Caey McKight, G. Davidson, S. Billig, & N. Springer (Eds.), *Service learning research to transform the field* (pp.159-181), Greenwich, CN: Information Age Publishing.

Kupeic, T.Y. ed. (1993). *Rethinking tradition: Integrating service with academic study on college campuses* (T.Y.Kupeic, Ed.) Rhode Island: Campus Compact.

National Campus Compact. About Us. Retrieved January 1, 2011 from website, http://www.compact.org/about/history-mission-vision/

Orr, D. (1991). Politics, conservation, and public education. *Conservation Biology*, 5 (1), 10 – 12.

Savan, B. (2005). Campus and community: Partnerships for research, policy, and action. In Jones, G., McCarney, P., & Skoinik, M. L. (Eds.), *Creating Knowledge*, *Strengthening Nations*: *The Changing Role of Higher Education* (195 – 204), Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Savan, B. & Sider, D. (2003). Contrasting approaches to community-based research and a case study of community sustainability in Toronto, Canada. *Local Environment*, *8(*3),303 - 316.

Stables, K. (2009). Educating for environmental sustainability and educating for creativity: actively compatible or missed opportunities? *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*, *19*, 199 -219. DOI 10.1007/s10798-008-9077-1

UNESCO, Education, Education for Sustainable Development. Retrieved December 5, 2010 from http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/mission/

University Strategic Plan. A Bridge to Opportunity 2005-2010 (2005). Retrieved December 5, 2010 from San Francisco State University website, http://www.sfsu.edu/strategicplan/

van Dam-Mieras, R., Lansu, A., Rieckmann, M., & Michelsen, G. (2008). Development of an interdisciplinary, intercultural, master's program on sustainability: Learning from the richness of diversity. *Innovative Higher Education*, *32* (5), 251 – 264.

Ward, K. (2002). *Faculty service roles and the scholarship of engagement*. Indianapolis, IN: Jossey-Boss.

Ylijoki, O. (2001). Master's thesis writing from a narrative approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, *26* (1), 21 – 34.

Appendix A: Worksheet for Sustainable Community Engaged Culminating Experience

This step-by-step worksheet is a guide for innovative inquiry that will assist you in considering and carrying out community engaged research for a Culminating Experience (CE). This type of research offers the opportunity to create and be a part of societal change; your community engagement, reflective analysis and presentation are the scholarship. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching describes community engagement, "as the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge

and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2011). You and/or the community you work with may choose to focus on the environment, culture or economy as you begin your engaged scholarship, but your goal is to focus on the integration of these three perspectives. It is essential that your research proposal has value to you, your advisor(s) and the community you engage with as each of you has a critical participatory role throughout your entire research process.

The 4 Phase process to engage in your Culminating Experience follows. Please check with your Department/College/University for specific requirements to be followed or completed before you begin your study.

Model for a Sustainable and Community Engaged Culminating Experience
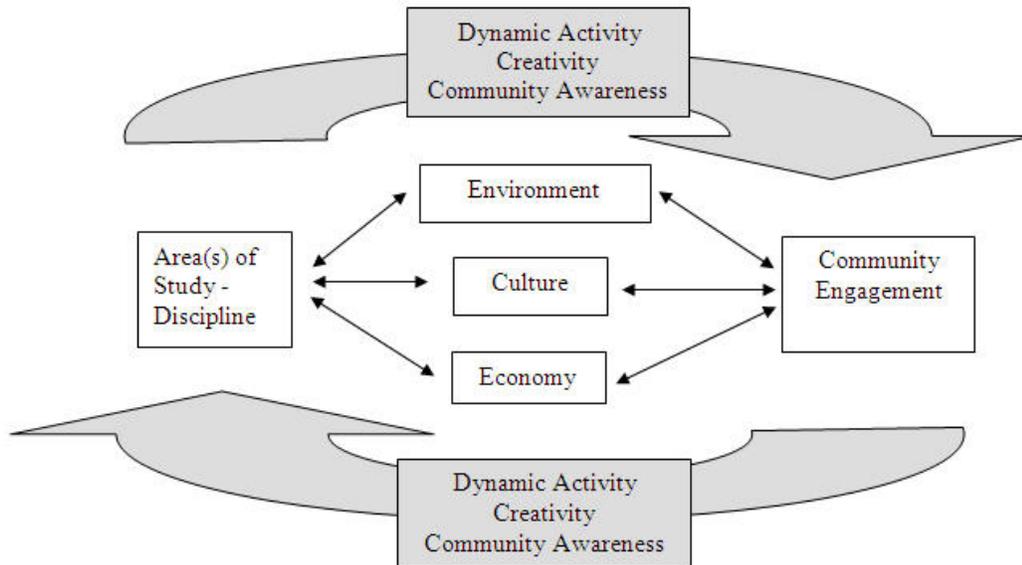
Phase 1:
Begin your inquiry into a community, or community partner that you are interested in working with by giving thoughtful consideration to the investigative questions that follow. Respond briefly to the questions through written, audio, and/or pictorial format (photographs and recordings, as permitted by your institution, are a great method for capturing the climate of the community, and identifying problem areas). Focus on the strengths you have, your area of study and the needs of the community or community partner.

Goal 1: Identify the potential community or community partner(s) and meet with your advisor to discuss your responses and the culture, environmental and/or economic needs they address.

Culture

- What is the community or community partner culture? Who contributes time and work to its success?
- What inspires your motivation for this work?

- How can you initiate an interdisciplinary or intercommunity approach?
- Does the culture integrate with the overall sustainability mission? How?

Environment

- Is there an environmental need? How can you contribute?
- What environmental impact will result from the work/activities you will perform?
- Does the environment integrate with a sustainability mission? How?

Economy

- What are the goods and/or services offered or created?
- What economic impact or improvement will result from your involvement?
- Does this project leave the community or community partner with something they can continue to use?
- Does the economy integrate with a sustainability mission? How?

Phase 2:
Develop an outline that can be used to present your ideas to the community or community partner for engaged scholarship. Clearly identify problems or needs within the areas of economy, culture, and environment. Develop a statement of the problem or need that you will address.

Goal 2: Formalize your commitment to work with a community or community partner and their commitment to work with you.

Phase 3:
Develop the action plan that will address the problem or needs. Articulate the expectations of your scholarship to your community and/or community partner and your advisor. Upon agreement, carry out the plan. This phase requires continual written reflection to document your time, commitment, challenges, growth and outcomes.

Goal 3: Formalize and carry out your action plan.

Phase 4:
Your final review includes a presentation to and with your advisor(s), community members, and/or community partner to assess and evaluate the expected outcomes and value of the experience. The presentation should take on a method which best illustrates the outcomes of your CE. Be prepared to highlight the means through which the community you have engaged with will continue in a dynamic and sustainable direction.

Goal 4: Successful presentation and completion of CE.

About the Authors

Dr. Connie Ulasewicz
As an Associate Professor at San Francisco State University in Apparel Design & Merchandising I engage with students on topics integrating with responsible fashion practices within, visual merchandising & promotion,social entrepreneurship, product development and the social psychology of clothing. My research interests include extending the life cycle of sewn products and I am the coauthor of the recently published book Sustainable Fashion Why Now: A Conversation about Issues, Practices and Possibilities. With over 25 years of garment industry experience managing production, merchandising, and sales, my industry connections are a great source for community engaged scholarship for our students. I am a founding member of ESRAB, Educators for Social Responsibility in Apparel Businesses, and PeoplewearSF a bay area,non-profit sewn product industry association and I am on the board of Global Action Through Fashion.

Dr. Gus Vouchilas
As an Assistant Professor in the College of Health and Human Services, department of Consumer & Family Studies/Dietetics I engage with my students in areas of Interior Design. My emphasis is in the areas of universal design and the integration of technology into house design. My current research focus is on perceptions and practices of sustainability in design and also perceptions of leadership as they relate to office design. As a longtime and active member in the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), my students are connected with solving real time issues and problems with our basic human need of housing.