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Faculty Members as Course Co-Convenors with Students: Jointly Creating a Complex Ecology for Learning Communities in Natural Resources and Agriculture

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How can we, as student and faculty scholars together, delve into the complexities of issues along the natural resources/agriculture interface? How can we think deeply about such topics as urban sprawl, food production and culture, or globalization? Then, how do we take our thinking and our dialogue further, so that we make thoughtful choices about both our professional and personal lives? The Liberty Hyde Bailey Scholars Program offers one model. The declaration of this program states that we are “a community of scholars dedicated to lifelong learning.” In our introductory course ANR 210, “Seminar in Connected Learning,” faculty and student co-convenors and student scholars jointly identify learning interests. In this conference session, we will describe ANR 210 learning experiences that coalesced around the topics of land use and professional development. We’ll engage session participants in facilitated discussion of the scholarship related to Student-Directed Learning (SDL) and Transformative Learning Theory in order to inform our work in creating learning communities that transcend the traditional boundaries between “natural resources” and “agriculture” on our campuses. We will discuss teaching and learning in terms of what Parker Palmer calls “the joint creation of an incredibly complex ecology in which each part functions on behalf of the whole and in return, is sustained by the whole.” Finally, we will share dialogue about why it is important for us, as educators in natural resources, to view that “we are here not only to transform the world, but also to be transformed” (Palmer, in *Let Your Life Speak*).

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