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Community Classroom of Hope: Permaculture Garden & RAP

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Abstract

College classrooms are long overdue for an overhaul. As the next generation of students are bombarded with the most challenging questions of our time, including those of climate resilience, sustainable farming, and community development, universities need classrooms and curricula that inspire. Outdated lecture halls and the lack of engagement, discussion, and generative conflict in classes stands as an obstacle to creating new ways of thinking and being. It's paramount that college classes represent the change, hope, and curiosity they aim to inspire in their students. This project bridges forefront research in transformative classroom practices with survey and interview data on gaps in the UMass Amherst campus community in skillful communication skills and in experiential hands-on social learning. The results propose a residential permaculture garden program as a solution to address these competency gaps. The components of this program include a research-supported outdoor curriculum in student-led facilitation, Nonviolent Communication (NVC), insight dialogue, Earth stewardship projects, circling, and mindfulness. The project seeks to propose a solution for the feelings of hopelessness, loneliness, and pessimism that affect college students robbed of meaningful community and connection on their campuses. This is done through the medium of permaculture, a regenerative and holistic way of farming that engages communities and prioritizes "Earth Care, People Care and Fair Share" ethics and encourages "constructive hope". This project aims to inspire the foundation of a new program at UMass Amherst and serve as a model for similar community and hope-strengthening projects at other colleges and universities in the United States.

Cultivating Hope in Sustainability Education

I.   Introduction

The college students of today will inherit the carbon neutral plans of tomorrow. We will soon rely on the direction and intention of their pursuits to address some of the most frightening issues of our time: environmental degradation, species loss, global warming, climate refugees, and economic and social inequality. The activists' and sustainability professionals' only retirement plan consists of passing on the torch to younger and capable hands. Yet, in "Young People's Voices on Climate Anxiety," a survey of 10,000 college students around the world, 57 percent of them said that climate change makes them feel powerless (Hickman et al, 5). This feeling of powerlessness, and associated feelings of anxiety, sadness, fear and anger also described in this landmark study, do not lend well to creating the change necessary to address climate change and ecological harm.

The same study states that, "Distress about climate change is associated with young people perceiving that they have no future, that humanity is doomed, that governments are failing to respond adequately, and with feelings of betrayal and abandonment by governments and adults. These are chronic stressors which will have significant, long-lasting and incremental negative implications on the mental health of children and young people (Hickman et al, 3)." These consequences leave young people, who according to Hickman et al., are already vulnerable to mental illness, in a position of desperation, a majority experiencing negative functional impact in their daily lives caused by this distress (Hickman et al, 3, 8). It is inevitable that addressing climate change is as much of an emotional and social reality as it is an academic and professional one. We cannot as a society address environmental issues if young people are hopeless.

An important feature of hopelessness is that it exists as a result of real and inescapable realities and messages that young people receive from those in power. The authors of the aforementioned climate anxiety survey affirm that this response is not illogical or pathological, but a representation of being handed an enormous problem without the power to address it. The latter feature is paramount. "It has been well established that hopelessness, despair, apathy, and even denial of the threat itself arise from the combination of a big danger and no available or effective response (Moser & Berzonsky, 4)." Inaction and disinterest from those in power validate the feelings of "injustice and moral injury" that fuel hopelessness in the young: "Feelings 60% of young people in this survey have described as being ignored or dismissed (Hickman et al, 10)." These feelings are made more difficult because they are not often supported or given the space to be worked through. Young people, and college students in particular, need the resources and validation to experience and move through the enormity of these emotions.

II.   The Essential Question

Educators, institutions, and concerned onlookers must look critically at the sources of hopelessness and inquire whether our current paradigm of sustainability education meets the complex academic, but also emotional, needs of our generation of college students. Do current models of sustainability education leave students with the tools and resources to enact change? Pervasive hopelessness is the most potent indicator that institutions of higher education are not meeting these goals. Vandeale and Stalhammar conclude that education of global issues can increase the negative feelings of students (273). Phaustch and Gray agree, stating that "Combined with the impression of despondence, the present study suggests that higher education in Australia, and possibly elsewhere, is not providing the prerequisite tools tomorrow's leaders require for meeting societal, environmental and economic challenges caused by CW (Phaustch & Gray, 1158)." They cite a lack of interdisciplinary focus along with classes deprived of discussion, ethical considerations, student leadership, experiential education, and tools to process difficult emotions. They also suggest that "Possible ways forward include expanding offers on interdisciplinary courses, and practical, real-world scenario analyses with emphasis on systems thinking (1170)." Three more inadequacies of sustainability education include:

First, interviewees strongly underlined their sense of disempowerment in the face of others' hopelessness, and how this additional pressure and anxiety inhibit their own hope. Second, ethical dilemmas were often mentioned in relation to a prominent sense of guilt resulting from contradictions between one's behaviors and one's knowledge and values, which they perceive as "harmful and not very sustainable for myself, emotionally." Third, the lack of time and resources in their academic engagement made them feel that "there was missing the final step that is: after incorporation of critiques, how can we make it better (Vandeale & Stalhammar, 280)?"

In order to find a meaningful and complete way forward in post secondary sustainability education, all of these shortcomings must be addressed. This essay seeks to compile the factors of student hopelessness and propose a way forward using the model of transformative and experiential outdoor learning. We propose that future curriculum should contain all of the following elements: emotional processing, community and interpersonal connection, systems thinking, orienting towards solutions/application, critical reflection/metacognition, and will demonstrate that these tools are the seeds of cultivating hope in the sustainability classroom.

III.   Addressing Sources of Hopelessness

If hopelessness in young people is caused by moral injury followed by powerlessness, the solution counteracts both factors. "To protect the mental health and wellbeing of young people, those in power can act to reduce stress and distress by recognizing, understanding and validating the fears and pain of young people, acknowledging their rights and placing them at the centre of policy making (Hickman et al, 9)." In other words, young people can overcome hopelessness by processing their emotions and then becoming powerful enough to create change for themselves and others. Several studies noting the pessimistic feelings of college students towards environmental issues advocate for spaces where young people's emotions can be acknowledged

and validated (Vandeale and Stalhammar, 274). Moser and Berzonsky even state that experiencing and processing these difficult emotions is necessary to achieve an active attitude towards hope. They state, "[Hope] begins with having the courage – counter-intuitively – to go to hopelessness, to our own despair (Moser & Berzonsky 4)." It's important to establish that hope is not a passive optimism or ignorance of distressing truths of our world, but an "active, practical, civic, and political skill" in which students find "grounded hope" through transformative reflection of one's values (Moser & Berzonsky, 8). It is this skill that leads to action, and in which action begets further hope as students begin to feel empowered to change their own realities. "It points to a deeper source, an inward orientation, that should not be understood as narcissistic navel-gazing and abandonment of the outward tasks ahead of us, but as a search for a more durable source of motivation. Hope becomes a call to mature, to take on the responsibility of safeguarding the possibility of a livable future, regardless of whether it will actually be realized (Moser & Berzonsky, 8)." These authors state that reaching this more matured, reflective, and grounded state of hope is only possible when students have moved through their own despair. Learning to move through despair as a process instead of a goal allows students to build this skill and apply it to multiple situations in their lives and in the lives of others. This makes for the first characteristic of encouraging sustainability leadership, creating empathetic pathways for students to connect with others experiencing similar emotions.

Even if these emotional realities are acknowledged and processed within students, they will continue to struggle with their own disempowerment until they are connected with peers and communities sharing interests and priorities. Hickman et al. warns, "Current narratives risk individualizing 'the problem' of climate anxiety, with suggestions that the best response is for the individual to 'take action (3).'" And while counterintuitive, convincing students to enact change in their own lives only denies the interconnectedness of communities and the complexity of environmental issues, requiring coordinated and impassioned community change. This commonly held paradigm encourages disconnected "solutions" and inspires student responses such as, "when I am constantly bombarded with ill news and mounting problems that are clearly unsustainable, hope can be hard to grasp. I too often think to myself, 'Forget everyone else, I'm homesteading (Galt et al, 10).'" Even the tone of this response demonstrates that this is not a genuine solution, but rather a response to the tension and frustration between people and complex systems with dissimilar values. It almost seems easier to attempt individualized solutions to avoid the conflicts of community and society level collaboration. Yet, in a survey of sustainability education, it was found that "the majority [of sustainability students] stated that their individual contribution toward change would have no effect (Phaustch & Gray, 1166)." This is not faulty logic and students are right to assume that individual actions are not enough. "Hope Dies Action Begins?" notes that college students more often perceive global environmental issues in an individual rather than collective lens (Vandeale & Stalhammar, 272). They go on to say, "Some of them also feel deprived of communication skills to handle discussions with people outside their field of study and express how depressing and stressful these can be (280)." Our lack of focus on collaborative solutions will continue to lead students in

this direction, of being unable to interface and communicate meaning even if they are logically or academically well versed. In order to foster grounded and sustained hope, students must both be given the opportunity to feel difficult emotions with others and create cooperative solutions with a sociocultural perspective. Enhancing communication skills is an undeniable part of this process.

Each of these steps moves students from hopelessness to meaning, but students are also often lacking the next necessary step: to move from meaning to solutions. Hope requires the vision of a future to be able to move towards, and student's lack of ability to envision such a future is an enormous obstacle to addressing these feelings (Vandeale & Stalhammar 274). "Serious public discussions of alternative pathways to a livable future are essentially missing, however, which leaves a terrifying silence in which hopelessness can grow (Moser and Berzonsky 4)." Sustainability education has failed to properly address the connection between content and vision, or the application of content towards a feasible solution. Hopelessness arises out of students' reactions to content, those that could be used as inertia for activating change, but is not given an outlet. "Issues at the course level were expressed as a missing articulation between knowledge and practical actions, a lack of means for teachers to nurture students' visioning skills of alternative futures, a lack of structural space for the collective verbalization of emotions, and a lack of emphasis of the role of inner dimensions for climate change mitigation (Vandeale & Stalhammar, 280)." Phaustch and Gray suggest that "Developing solutions for real-world scenarios, as well as using existing case studies have also been proven useful to raise self-awareness and improve sustainability literacy (1168)." This is a missing step that is necessary for students to move through stagnant hopelessness into responsive feelings of hope.

IV.   A New and Continued Pedagogy

In addition to focusing on gaps in sustainability education and identifying missing factors, it is important to identify characteristics of a more complete and holistic curriculum. These recommendations are continuations of the conclusions made in aforementioned studies along with continuations of the transformative education practices found at UMass Amherst. It's essential to mold curriculum to the context in which it is placed and if we are to argue that curriculum should meet students where they are, it should also meet the needs of the campus community where it currently is.

The foremost suggestion made to address hopelessness is through teaching and practicing "meaning-based coping strategies," which "involve finding meaning based on values and beliefs (Ojala, 2012c) and are especially relevant for problems which seem unsolvable but demand active involvement such as environmental problems (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2000; Vandaele and Stalhammar, 275)." These skills are "not about alleviating negative emotions, but rather acknowledging them while consciously focusing on positive trends, building resources and fostering a proactive stance toward the stressors (Vandaele and Stalhammar, 275)." Other studies suggest doing this by creating space and opportunities for students to share their personal reactions with the group, validating them, and approaching solutions through a values based

approach. This approach allows students to become reflective about the underlying forces allowing current events in sustainability to take place. For instance, in John Gerber's Agricultural Systems Thinking (STOCKSCH 379) by learning systems thinking tools (ladder of inference, iceberg model, casual loop diagrams etc) to address the problems in everyday case studies. Systems thinking provides direct and solution oriented discussion without disregarding value or meaning based exploration or falling into reductionist thinking. These tools make complex problems approachable and bearable, validating the response of students overwhelmed by the complexity of environmental issues.

Additionally, in spaces of emotional vulnerability, the impact of classroom mindfulness cannot be understated. To move from reaction to meaning, it is necessary to de-elevate stressful emotions to a manageable level (from thinking to observing mind) before proceeding with class (Gardner 159). These things fall under the three priorities of transformative contemplative pedagogy: writing as inquiry, embodied learning, and mindfulness (Gardner, 161). The practices within contemplative pedagogy that satisfy these priorities include micro-meditations to start classes, reflective regular journaling, and slow/mindful dialogue during discussion times. Madeleine Charney, in the Meditation Facilitator Practicum class (SRVCLRN 298), asks student facilitators to guide meditations at the beginning and occasional end of classes. Other professors in the Stockbridge School, including Lisa Depiano, Dan Bensonoff, John Gerber, and Sarah Berquist, also employ this strategy. In-class mindfulness prioritizes presence and allows students to notice their own thinking patterns before responding, encouraging metacognition, or the ability to notice and alter one's own thinking and learning processes. Metacognition is important to create sustained changes in attitudes towards problems, student presence and participation in classrooms, and cooperative learning (Galt et al, 8). The more that metacognition is practiced, the more that students can inquire into their own patterns of thinking and belief systems and therefore address hopelessness through connection and meaning.

In mindfulness infused classrooms, there is the potential for deeper and more impactful classroom discussion that contains two more transformative practices: dialogue and generative conflict. Dialogue as a practice, contrastive with debate, is iterative, non-goal-oriented, and collaborative. It is not the aim of dialogue to convince another person of a "correct" stance, but rather to interface with complexity and disharmonies and address them collectively, working to find a foundation in compassion and understanding rather than correctness. Dialogue sets the stage for generative conflict (Galt et al, 10). Generative conflict embraces the idea that in emotionally vulnerable spaces where students discuss meaning based beliefs, differences in ideas and approaches creates tension. Instead of avoiding this, generative conflict seeks to embrace the change in perspective that comes with embracing tension. Galt et al. noted, "The majority of students wrote in their reflective essays about experiencing, wrestling with, and attempting to resolve tensions between their values and how they found the food system to be, i.e., between is and ought to be… For most, trying to resolve this tension between is and ought to be involved changing their ways of thinking, feeling, and/or acting (Galt et al, 8)." Again, students are asked to delve into the uncomfortable and sometimes distressing feelings of their own realities and

move through them instead of avoiding them, giving them charge of their own approach. It also allows students to reconcile the realities of other students, especially if those realities involve difficult emotions, with their own which has already been stated as one of the confounding factors of addressing hopelessness (Vandeale & Stalhammar 280; Moser and Berzonsky 10). Generative conflict contributes to creating collaboration and empathy.

Having addressed the necessity to create space for difficult emotions, dialogue, meaning based collaboration, student empowerment, and generative conflict, it is clear that classrooms need to look different to accommodate these practices. In order to meet the goals described, students must be allowed to take up space, be vulnerable, and not only be students in a professional or academic setting, but also be humans. Instructors are required to sacrifice their power and control over a classroom to make room for students to assume that gap in power. "When communicators and educators come with the heavy news of climate change, it helps to think of ourselves as "friendly communicators" (the "communicator as friend"). As a friend, we would first show up not as a scientist or teacher or an advocate, but as a human being (Moser & Berzonsky, 10)." Students will not share meanings and beliefs or demonstrate vulnerability, unless facilitators and instructors do so in kind. Sarah Berquist is an extremely notable example of this practice, and encourages students to assume roles of responsibility and co facilitation as often as possible. Particularly in Agricultural Leadership and Community Education (STOCKSCH 297L), students are responsible for creating a classroom agreement at the beginning of the semester. Students propose and maintain measures that encourage all students to feel open, welcomed and encouraged within the classroom. Galt et al similarly uses student facilitated agreements to provide an environment where the methods of transformative education as described above are able to be included (9). We can even regard some of this hopelessness as resulting from an intake of information about environmental issues without application or empowerment in the classroom (Vandeale & Stalhammar, 281). It is inevitable that students feel they are unable to react to and solve these issues if they are not allowed to try in class. We take this a step further and suggest that students should be given authority over their own spaces and be able to practice facilitation amongst themselves. Sarah Berquist's classroom environment embodies some aspects of a "flipped classroom" in which students are encouraged to lead their own pursuit of knowledge and meaning. There are currently very few opportunities or classrooms on campus where students hold the power to facilitate themselves.

Above are the practices that we seek to include throughout the UMass campus community. Our call for expansion upon the transformative pedagogy practices is not admonishing to its lack at UMass Amherst, but in its need to be compiled, acknowledged and spread to wider corners of the university in order to have an effect on students of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. At this point, transformative pedagogy is rare and limited to specific majors, class sizes and professors who are familiar with it. We propose a much more widespread sinking into these practices within sustainability education.

However, to propose change to a complex system requires a much deeper listening to what is being indirectly asked for. To aid in this process, we adopt a process of curriculum formation created by a professor focused on transformative learning.
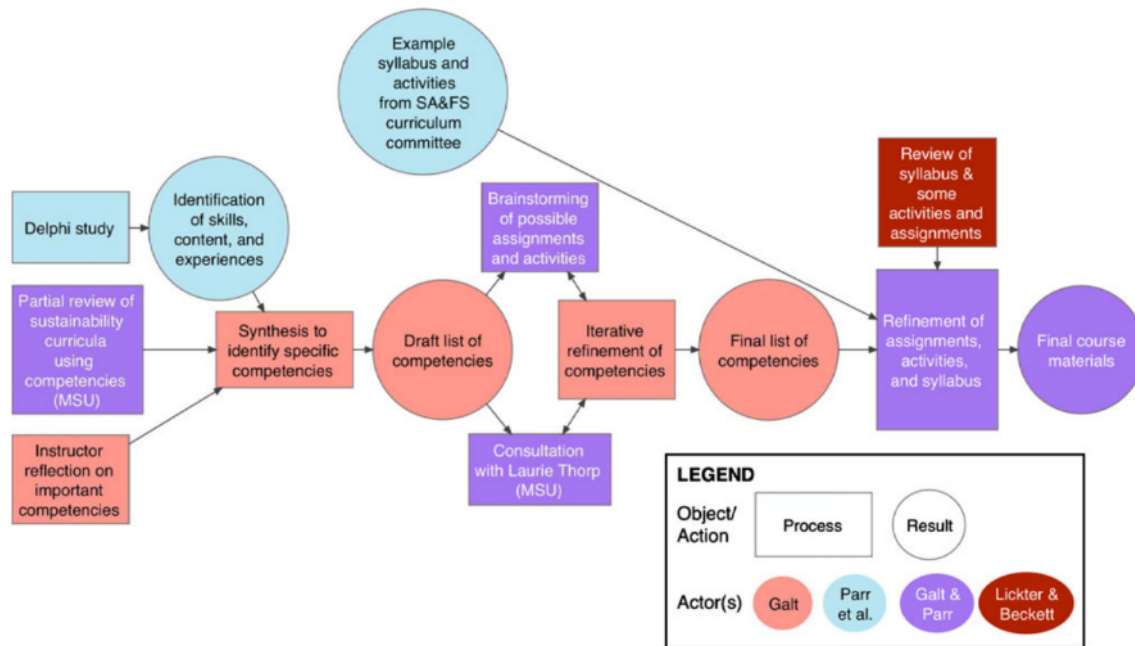

Fig. 1 The course design process

Source: (Galt et al 8)

At this point in our analysis, we have identified skills, content and experiences needed in sustainability education and identified competencies, listed more succinctly below.

Students should be able to…
1. Contribute to **facilitating spaces** that are welcoming to challenging emotional realities
2. Engage with feelings of hopelessness in themselves and others and respond with **collaborative and values based solutions**
3. Practice **meaning-based coping strategies**
4. Reflect on their processes of learning (**metacognition**)
5. Engage in mindful and **reflective dialogue** that transitions students from "thinking" to "observing" mind
6. Practice **generative conflict** with their peers
7. Steward community spaces that are theirs

Identified skills contributing to these competencies are bolded in the above figure.

Figure 1

V.   **The Setting of Transformative Educational Practice**

The primary obstacle in meeting these skills and competencies is that classroom spaces on campus do not represent the goals of transformative learning. When a student enters a classroom, it is under the assumption that they will be learning something that they do not know and that the professor does, that they are dependent on this authority for knowledge and meaning, and that they are allowed to contribute or make space for their experience only when allowed to. Our research has concluded that this dynamic is not only unbalanced, but harmful to students searching for meaning amidst feelings of hopelessness.

Classrooms are even physically structured to demonstrate this reality. Desks in lines facing the instructor or a raised podium does not even allow the possibility of dialogue in which each person has equal power. The educators mentioned in this essay serve as potent enactors of another, more transformative pedagogy, and yet it is only under their jurisdiction that transformative learning occurs. Inspired educators, including those mentioned, are bound to actively work against the assumptions of what a college classroom is and what occurs there. Our project is a proposal to switch the narrative. We seek to create a space where student empowerment, stewardship and co facilitation is the first choice. The plan is two-fold, both physical and social. The physical classroom must assert these values as much as the curriculum that takes place there, as the two are inseparable. The space that we envision is a community outdoor classroom, maintained by students and faculty, and a center of transformative education on the UMass campus. Our proposal includes a permaculture garden, circle classroom, student steward areas and collaborative artworks. Its multifunctionality prevents it from becoming a space with obligatory roles attached and creates a "community common." This space will be designed to challenge the assumptions of conventional college classrooms and bridge student living and learning, creating a "human first, student second" paradigm. We believe that classrooms must not only be physically spacious enough to hold students, but socially spacious enough to hold the humanity of students, and hope we will need to move forward.

Focus & Objectives

★ We build and maintain a new permaculture garden/outdoor classroom that honors the history and well-being of the land through the use of ecological diversity, valuing renewable resources, and preventing waste.

★ We value and integrate community inputs and make the space sustainable and maintainable past the first generation of student users.

★ We cultivate spaces that foster healthy relationships between students/faculty and the ecological landscape.

★ We provide a community of support and hope around sustainability for students to have transformative conversations and experiences in their classrooms.

★ We generate a curriculum for a student-led undergraduate course revolving around permaculture and maintaining the garden throughout the Spring/Fall semesters.

★ We prevent neglect and mismanagement of the garden's care through connection to campus organizations, intentional primarily perennial plantings, stable structures, and ensuring student/faculty interest and engagement.

Location

Currently, UMass Amherst is home to three permaculture gardens, Franklin(East and West), Berkshire, Hillside. However, none of these gardens are near students living or taking classes in northern areas of campus or designed to act as a commons for student residential life. A significant number of students live in the Northeast residential area, North Apartments, and Sylvan residential area, but don't have easy access to gardens like students living in Southwest residential area or Central residential area. There are also few opportunities for students to extend learning or dorm life into garden spaces. Keeping this in mind, there are still ample spaces near these other residential areas that could be utilized to create spaces for more students to be able to gather outside and engage with their environment. We imagine a permaculture garden that belongs to its residential area and is multi-use both as a classroom and social commons. For this reason, our tentative location for the Community Classroom of Hope (CCOH) is in the North East residence area. The grass plots in the middle of all the residence halls already act as a high traffic area for students commuting from their dorms/apartments, parking lots, or to/from class. Near the residence halls, there are already volleyball nets and frequent meetings of clubs who want to use the small grill near the courts. Due to this, and the fact that the garden would be situated close to dorms, Worcester Dining Commons, and Totman Gym, the CCOH would get plenty of visitors. Overall, the grass lawns in the North East residential area offer an abundance of opportunities for creating a unique, sustainable space for students and faculty.
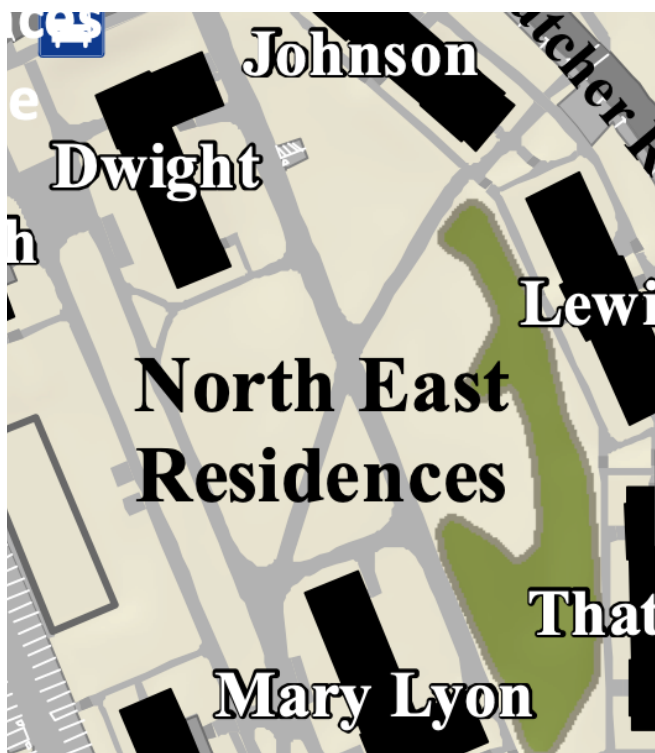
Permaculture Design

When designing our garden and outdoor classroom, we will employ permaculture ethics and principles to help cultivate healthy spaces for students, staff, and faculty. With a foundation based on earth care, people care, and fair share, we are working toward creating an environment that prioritizes the health and well-being of the UMass Amherst campus community. Using permaculture design, we will create spaces that promote diversity, creativity, and inclusivity through intentional plantings and structures.

Looking at the most recent Campus Climate Survey from 2021, undergraduates who have 2+ disabilities report lower levels of belonging than other dis/ability groups. In this survey, faculty with disabilities were more likely to report feeling no sense of belonging than any other group. Plus, when considering perceptions of campus climate, similar to the data from student demographics, staff and faculty groups whose ratings fell below the mean, including disabled faculty and staff, were 15 - 18% more likely to perceive UMass Amherst as uncommitted to inclusion than their non-disabled peers[1]. Reflecting on these results, there is a clear disparity in the environments across campus that support the wellbeing of disabled as well as non-disabled students, faculty, and staff. Keeping this in mind, through our garden and outdoor classroom, we will prioritize accessibility so the entire campus community is able to interact with the CCOH. Some potential design features include:

- ➔ Wheelchair accessibility (Paths, garden beds, edging, turning spaces, etc.)
- ➔ Sensory Stations (Plants and elements for touch, taste, smell, and sound)
- ➔ Ropes with knot markers

In addition to addressing inclusivity and accessibility within the garden, through permaculture design, we will incorporate several permaculture principles to guide the design process. Some principles include: catch and store energy, use and value renewable resources and services, produce no waste, integrate rather than segregate, and use and value diversity. Many design elements will address these principles, such as:

- ➔ Pollinator-friendly plants
- ➔ Diverse and native plants, trees, or shrubs
- ➔ Wildlife homes (Bird houses, Bee and insect hotels)
- ➔ Rainwater catchment
- ➔ Composting

Furthermore, for the outdoor classroom, we hope to be able to include various elements to help create a welcoming and efficient learning environment for students and faculty. Including:

- ➔ Adequate, accessible seating
- ➔ Removable canopy for shade and weather protection

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[1] *Climate survey toolkits*. UMass Amherst. (n.d.). Retrieved March 6, 2023, from https://www.umass.edu/diversity/resources/climate-survey-toolkits

➔ Chalkboard for instruction

Along with that, we will strive to include a variety of design features which allow the space to function as not only an outdoor classroom, but community area for students and faculty to observe and interact with the landscape. Some of the design elements include:

➔ Little Free Library
➔ Benches and seating
➔ Picnic and study areas
➔ Plants for harvesting
➔ Student steward plots
➔ Permanent collaborative community art fixtures

In order to prevent the neglect and mismanagement of the CCOH, we will design while consistently keeping in mind the sustainability of student/faculty interest and engagement. As undergraduate students, the ensured maintenance of the CCOH is one of our top priorities since the garden and classroom's upkeep will be under new management once we graduate. With that, we hope to inspire it's immortality through:

➔ Perennial plantings
➔ Stable, well built structures
➔ Club meetings in garden/outdoor classroom
➔ Classes held using garden/outdoor classroom
➔ Student stewardship projects using garden
➔ Student-run maintenance of garden through RAP
➔ Student-run volunteer sessions/semester positions

Overall, through our permaculture design, there is an array of opportunities for students/faculty in the garden and outdoor classroom. By considering the maintenance and engagement needed to keep it running, our permaculture design ensures that students and faculty across campus will have continued access to a welcoming space which improves the lives of our community members as well as the health of our environment. Using permaculture as a backdrop to our design, we are cultivating a garden and outdoor classroom space which works to improve campus climate and the overall wellbeing of our students, faculty, staff, and environment.

Vision Board

Phase Design

Phase 1: Interviews, Surveying, & Presentations

  Throughout this first phase, we will work to study and interact with our campus community to gauge interest and student/faculty specifications. With extensive interviewing, surveying, and presentations, we will retrieve the proper support and data to guide our design process and influence our decision making.

➔ Proposal Editing
➔ Flyer Distribution
➔ Student/Faculty Survey Distribution
➔ Campus Stakeholders Interviews
➔ Campus Presentations (e.g Chancellor's Sustainability Advisory Committee, Student Government Association, North East/Sylvan RAs)
➔ Student/Faculty Signature Collection

Phase 2: Permaculture Design & University Approval

  Using the data and signatures collected during Phase 1, we will begin to work on connecting with UMass Amherst administration and faculty to get approval on the CCOH. During this time, we will begin a permaculture design for the CCOH.

➔ Site Assessment, Permaculture Design & Plant List
➔ Budget for CCOH
➔ Timeline for CCOH
➔ Campus Administration Approval
➔ Residential Life/Maintenance Approval

Phase 3: Planning, Team Building, & Logistics

After initial designs and approval from the university, we will begin to dive deeper into the logistics of making the CCOH a possibility. By reaching out to classes and marketing, we will work to build a team of students and interested faculty to help execute tasks.

➔ Create Planning Committee
➔ Funding
➔ Tool Shed
➔ Design Sign/Logo for CCOH
➔ Volunteers

Phase 4: Implementation

After securing access to funding and items such as a tool shed, while creating a team of reliable students and volunteers, we will begin implementing the CCOH.

➔ Garden Prep (e.g sheet mulching)
➔ Coordinate Access to Structures/Materials
➔ Outline Daily Future Tasks
➔ Organize Future Volunteering

FAQs

1. *We already have four permaculture gardens on campus, why do we need another one?*

   The CCOH offers a unique experience for students/faculty in the northern area of campus to live and learn alongside nature and have access to spaces which foster a healthy and creative relationship with their surroundings. The CCOH would be the most accessible garden on campus for disabled students, and the only proper outdoor classroom on our campus. Through its implementation, CCOH would positively impact campus climate and emphasize the prioritization of sustainability across campus.

2. *How will CCOH sustain through the years as students graduate and may not return to campus?*

   Through the permaculture design process, we are prioritizing a low-maintenance garden which functions as a result of student-led maintenance and volunteering. As a result of organizing a planning committee, the CCOH would be proactive about ensuring continued management of the CCOH and advocate for its sustainability.

3. *What if the weather is bad and students can't work outside?*

   Similar to any UMass Amherst classroom, if there is a bad weather day, particularly snow days, class could be moved remotely, or rescheduled.

4. *What happens to the outdoor classroom during the winter/snowy months and class cannot be held outside?*

   Since the garden would be "sleeping" during the winter, and for general safety, the outdoor classroom would only be used for formal class instruction during the Fall/Spring in desirable weather conditions. Similar to other Stockbridge courses sometimes held outdoors, students would be made aware of any changes in schedule as a result of weather.

5. *How does the CCOH serve students outside of majors in Stockbridge or Environmental-related studies?*

   The CCOH functions as an interdisciplinary space for students from all majors and disciplines to come and engage with nature, conduct classes/meetings, study, etc.

6. *Will the CCOH interrupt the current activities/events that take place in that area of campus?*

Due to the vast amount of available space, it is very unlikely that the CCOH would affect the amount of room available for the current activities of students living in the North East residential area.

7. *In what ways will CCOH affect the workload of grounds and maintenance staff?*

Throughout this project, it is an important factor in the design process that grounds and maintenance staff will not be negatively affected by the addition of the CCOH. We are incorporating low-maintenance design features which can be reasonably managed by students through a RAP and volunteering.

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