



## **Delta Internship Opportunity – Service learning through 'green' housing project with Native American communities**

For more information, email us at [internship@delta.wisc.edu](mailto:internship@delta.wisc.edu)

**UW contact:** Sue Thering [sathering@wisc.edu](mailto:sathering@wisc.edu)

**When:** Opportunities with the Community Design Action Research Group are ongoing

**Funding:** Money is available to cover all travel expenses

**Number of interns sought:** 1

### **A Delta Intern will benefit from the opportunity to:**

- Be immersed in a community based action research project with a strong service learning component;
- Work with professionals that have extensive experience working in the community;
- Be exposed to broad disciplinary expertise (e.g. geography, botany, ecological sciences, sociology, and political science) and ways of developing relationships with place-based expertise;
- Learn how to work in the community and to think on the fly by working to address real needs;
- Reflect on your own learning while working with professional students doing the same;
- Learn how to do the type of research needed to accomplish a project;
- Participate in research with direct benefits to the community.

### **Role of the Delta intern:**

Native American Housing project:

- Help design and coordinate service learning projects for undergrads and graduate students;
- Work with lay people through small groups and workshops to determine land use and design criteria to fulfill the community's needs;
- Synthesize findings into a guidebook and archive of design guidelines for a given community;
- Participate in the green housing design discussion and translate this discussion into physical form;
- Present designs to the community and revise based on community values;
- Reflect on what the community, senior design students and others learned from engaging in this process;
- More Broadly, develop best practices guidelines for action research projects working with communities.

Working with the leadership in several Native American communities, Sue became increasingly aware of the severe need for affordable, and importantly, well insulated homes for families living in Northern Wisconsin, particularly in the reservation communities where families are living in unheated trailers. Sue's most recent project is a demonstration design/build initiative for affordable "green" housing to address this need. This initiative will include on-site construction training for community members and tribal housing staff, as well as service-learning opportunities for students in the Landscape Architecture Department. The products will include model affordable "green" housing that is responsive to the ecology and culture of the community. Sue, her colleagues and students intend to implement the first demonstration project in the spring of 2006 and hope to implement demonstration projects on five different reservations over the next three years. Finally, Sue's research interest involves documenting the benefits of community participation, and the educational benefits of service-learning in professional education.

The service-learning component of this project allows students in the professional program in landscape architecture to participate with faculty and licensed professionals in the planning and design of ecologically sound land development initiatives. In general, service learning involves students in activities that serve the community. It also connects those activities to learning goals for a course by challenging students to reflect on their experiences in the context of course content. Connecting to community organizations can be both an educational experience for students and a benefit to the community. Additional information on service learning projects can be found at the Morgridge Center for Public Service ( <http://www.morgridge.wisc.edu/resourcelibrary.html> ).

**Starting point for research questions:**

1. What makes for an effective process of engaging communities in land use and design projects?
2. What do students learn through the act of doing an action research project?
3. What are the community learning outcomes of such projects?
  - a. How does a community learn fundamental ecological principles (e.g. storm water runoff and erosion, solar access, etc.) through action research projects?
  - b. How can one present material in a very experiential way, in a way that has meaning for a community?

**Interns will benefit Sue and the Community Design Action Research Group by:**

- Being an excited and interested colleague and collaborator;
- Engaging with Sue as a peer, engaging the community as a classroom;
- Bringing a new disciplinary perspective to the project;
- Assisting with documenting the action research process as a way of training in professional education;
- Being a collaborator and part of a team with diverse skills and backgrounds;
- Engaging in dialogue and the group reflection process;
- Being a collaborator in the field.

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