

Potential Partnerships and Neighbors

Connecting and
Growing Roots

9

Who's Who?

Creating a Student Farm was about more than just putting harvestable crops in the ground. It was just as much about creating long-lasting partnerships that would help solidify our position both within the University and the Community. Students initially had lots of ideas for the farm, things we could do, niches we could fill in the community and university. Rather than reinventing the wheel students needed to understand who was doing what in the community and how we could partner with and learn from them.

Early on in the semester students starting compiling a list of potential partners for the student farm and groups that are located nearby our plot, using the discussion board on the website. By week 6 the class had compiled a list of 23 groups that ranged from the groups who had plots next to ours; to university initiatives, organizations and groups; to non-profit programs outside of the University. For this activity we focused on groups that were not potential customers or markets, that came later.

During week 6 students were given the assignment of choosing a group, contacting someone from that organization to find out what their organization is, what their organizations mission is, what their current goals are, what they are doing, and where they are located. Then they needed to talk to the contact person about the student farm sharing the ideas that were shaping our mission. The students also needed to find out who the organization currently partners with and the benefits of that partnership. Lastly, students needed to discuss ideas for partnerships between the contact person's organization and the student farm. (For more information see partners assignment on following pages).

The connections and relationships that began with this assignment have given the student organic farm a solid base of support and an avenue for outreach. On numerous occasions groups, organizations and individuals have come to us to participate in events and projects that have helped the student organic farm fulfill its mission. In many cases those opportunities and invitations were a direct result of connections made by students during the first planning class. Building a network of support and interconnections takes time and energy, the fruits of which can be reaped for years to come.

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Asset Based Community Development

The American Community Garden Association put out a curriculum for Community Development called, Growing Communities: Community Building and Organizational Development through Community Gardening. This publication was extremely helpful looking at developing partnerships. The curriculum uses an asset based community development slant which focuses on identifying local assets in terms of potential partnerships rather than using a deficit model which would focus on what we need and weaknesses. The asset based model really helps groups identify not only what they need and how they might fill those needs but also what we have to offer and how we might share those strengths as well.

The Growing Communities Curriculum recommends identifying local assets by interviewing, which is what the students were assigned to do with the potential partner and neighbor assignment. The curriculum then recommends mapping reciprocal relationships that is identifying in one place what each potential partner could receive from us and what we could receive from them. We initially wanted to create a map of the reciprocal relationships, however we found a table worked better for our purposes.

Potential Partnerships & Neighbors Time Table

Week of Class	Activities
4 (2 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start web discussion for brainstorming list of potential partners and neighbors.
6 (5 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students sign-up for potential partners and neighbors assignment.
7 (15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have students who have contacted organizations share preliminary info: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Who the partner organization they are investigating is Where they are located What they do How can we collaborate
8 (15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner Assignment Due Have rest of the students who didn't share in week 7 share their information a-d.
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delegate a student to summarize the partnership options.
10 (10 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have student that summarized information report back. Consider having someone put forth criteria for future partnerships to discuss.
11 (15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss criteria for future partnerships.

Categories of Local Assets

- Individual Gifts (talents & skills)
- Associations (small formal or informal groups that work together for a common goal- amplifies gifts, talents and skills of individual community members)
- Institutions (Local government, businesses and community organizations that have resources and knowledge that can be drawn upon).
- Land and Buildings (Ecology and Infrastructure)
- The Local Economy (Local Businesses and Organizations that can donate, publicize and support community work)

Potential Partners and Neighbors Assignment

Potential Partners and Neighbors- what they are up to and how can we connect?

It has been brought to my attention that a number of the great ideas that have been brought up in discussion in class and on the website overlap with things our neighbors / potential partners are already or may be already doing.

At some point someone asked the question why do we even need partners?

It's pretty plain and simple, we need partners to strengthen our place in the university and the larger community. Plus a number of organization are already doing things we want to do, so doesn't it make sense to connect to them and learn from them rather than trying to re-invent the wheel? At the same time, awareness of what's going on will help us hone in on what we want to do and what we can do to make our piece of land special and important in a larger context. This assignment does not mean that we are going to partner with 18+ organizations, hopefully it will simply give us an idea of what potential partnerships exist and how.

We need to find out what is going on.

Your Assignment:

1. Choose one of the following *starred organizations and either email Courtney by Thursday 2/24/05 @10:00 AM (first come, first choose), or you can sign-up in class on Friday. (People who will be gone on Friday should email Courtney before Thursday to get their pick.) (There are more than 18 groups listed, let's try and get the ones above other groups first- if you want to contact a group not listed, talk to Courtney about it).
2. Contact someone (often a contact person is given, if you need ideas on who and how to contact, let Courtney know) from the organization and find out:
 - Who are they? What is their mission? What are their goals?
 - What are they doing?
 - Where are they located?

This information that might be gleamed from a web search, however you will need to contact someone from their organization to complete step #3.

3. In the conversation tell them about our student farm, you can share some of the ideas that are shaping our mission: Student run, organically certified land, sustainable practices, research opportunities for students (in the try new things out definition of research), Outreach & education (yet to be defined- but its safe to say we'll be doing something in this realm).

Find out who they currently partner with and what the benefits of that partnership are.

Then find out if they have any ideas about how we could partner or connect to what they are doing.

You can also share ideas you have about ways we could connect to them as well.

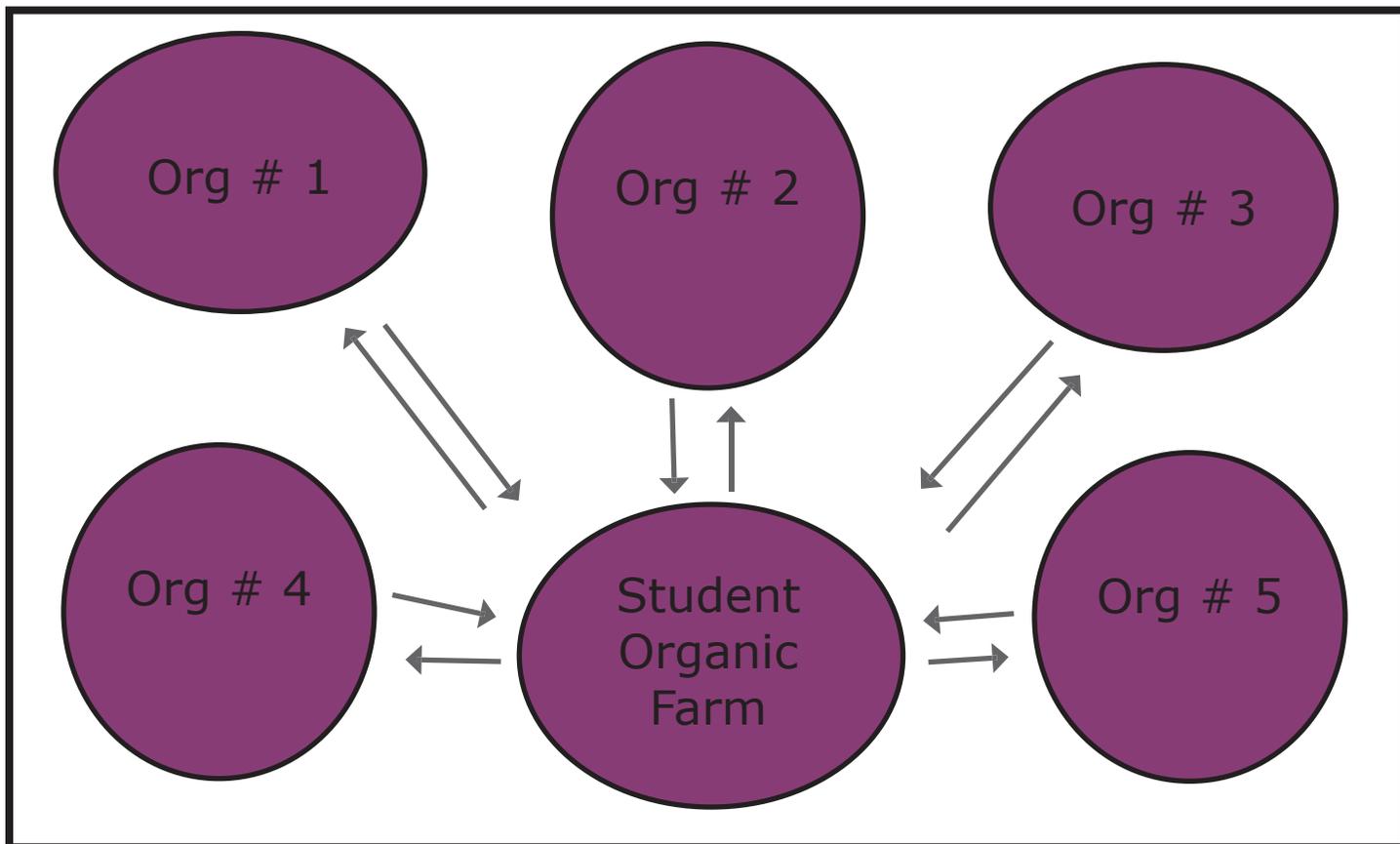
It might also be a good idea to get their contact info (email, snail mail address, phone number, etc) and find out if they want to be updated with our progress. Also, make sure to thank them for their time.

Once you've got your info, email it (in the submission to the master plan format) to Courtney (tchi0003@umn.edu) and she will post it to the draft master plan. This assignment is due by March 3rd at 10:00 AM.

The List of Organizations the class brainstormed as potential partners is listed in the Appendix on Page 146.

The Students final master plan submission on potential partners and the summary can be found in the Master Plan under Potential Partners and Neighbors.

Mapping Reciprocal Relationships



The Growing Communities Curriculum recommends identifying local assets by interviewing representatives from other organizations, which is what the students were assigned to do with the potential partner and neighbors assignment. The curriculum then suggests mapping reciprocal relationships by identifying what the benefits given and received could be in each potential relationship. Initially we attempted to create a visual map of the reciprocal relationships however, we found a table worked better for summarizing that the concept map (example of the concept map above and summary table below, see appendix B page 177 for actual).

Guiding Principle	Organization	We Receive	We Provide
Education	Local High School	Volunteers, Public Relations, Future Recruitment	Learning Opportunities, Tours, etc.
Outreach	Neighborhood Organization	Publicity, Customers	Volunteers for Events, Market Stand at Events, Positive Interaction between Students and Neighbors
Research	University Initiative	Funding for Interns	Demonstration Site on Campus
Operations	Local Businesses	Expertise Advise	Shared Intern

Results of Investigating Potential Partnerships and Neighbors

It's worth noting that many yields of relationships envisioned by the students ended up producing different results than expected. This assignment has yielded many serendipitous outcomes that have benefitted the student organic farm and the unofficial partner organization.

Organizations	Results of Partnership
Bell Museum of Natural History (U of M)	Future Neighbor- will be able to provide an example of an organic, sustainable agriculture landscape in contrast the conventional agricultural landscape of the rest of the experiment station.
Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management (U of M)	Provide examples of perennial crops on campus.
Display & Trial Gardens (U of M)	Provide University visitors with the example of organic produce gardens.
Green Lands, Blue Waters Initiative (U of M)	Perennials in farm plot as an example of continuous cover production, membership in sustainable U program, they provided funding for internship projects in 2005.
Horticulture Design Studio (U of M)	Provide opportunities for students to re-design and implement a new wall structure and plantings at the corner of Cleveland and Larpentuer.
Presidential Initiative on the Environment and Renewable Energy (U of M)	Provided the student farm with biodegradable corn based plastic bags for use at the Farmer's Market
U Day Camps (U of M)	Host site visits of the Student Farm for Kids.
U Plan Wellness (U of M)	Hosts and runs the Minneapolis Campus Farmer's Market.
Woodland Wisdoms (U of M)	Share equipment storage space and sell some of their excess produce in 2005.
Dream for Wild Health	Co-hosted an intern working on wild edibles.
Ecological Gardens	Co-hosted intern with the student farm who designed perennial guilds for the student organic farm.
Minnesota Crop Improvement Association	Organic Certifying agency co-hosted intern during season 1 to learn more about organic certification process.
Minnesota Horticultural Society	Membership in MN green program for seed and plant donations.
South East Como Neighborhood Improvement Association	Hosts Annual Fall Festival and Tomato Tasting Contest, where we set up a farmer's market table and submit entries to the contest. We now have prize winning tomatoes.