



URBAN EDUCATION CENTER  
A Community Service Component  
of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs  
University of Minnesota

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The Urban Education Center is a community-based, multidisciplinary service/learning program for students who wish to work with community groups or individuals as an extension and expansion of their campus-based learning experiences. Student participants have come from many disciplines such as Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Geography, Journalism, Interior Design, Photo-Journalism and Urban Studies. Projects have included day care center remodelings, assistance to Project Area Committees (PACS), totlot designs, supergraphics, simple remodelings, brochure designs, environmental design instruction for public school groups, etc. A special project which will continue through June, 1973 deals with action design, planning and community involvement in rural Renville County.

UEC is located on the top floor of a 19th century brick structure at 118 East 26th Street in the heart of the Minneapolis Model City Neighborhood. Our 4500 square foot space has been imaginatively rehabilitated by students of the UEC program and now houses the Community Design Center of Minnesota (C.D.C.) along with UEC. Our space is also available for community and University groups needing a community-based location for various kinds of meetings and retreats.

The primary missions of UEC are (1) service to low budget groups desiring a level of skills consistent with that possessed by our students and (2) the provision of growth-producing, skill expanding experiences for all involved with U.E.C.

The UEC program began in 1969 as a response to the concerns of students in Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Social Work for more relevance in their education. Most of the student input that first year came from Architecture with the three storefront studio locations in the St. Paul and Minneapolis Model City Neighborhoods and the Dinkytown area supported by the University's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs. Then, in 1970, the University was able to lease space in the Minneapolis Model Neighborhood large enough to accommodate a stronger, expanded program of community-based service/learning and the Urban Education Center of today was born.

The largest amount of student involvement with UEC continues to come from advanced students of Architecture who normally comprise roughly half of our total group of 60-70. Landscape Architecture, Photo-Journalism and Urban Studies have also become increasingly committed and the Renville County Development Project has provided a good chance for inputs from Geography and Sociology too. The affiliation with CDC links us with CDC professional volunteers. We also expect Urban Education Center to be an important field experience extension for substantially more students from the expanding Urban Studies program starting in the Fall of 1972.

The following questions and answers give some of the highlights of UEC:

1. When did the project begin?

Urban Education began officially in the summer of 1970 with support from CURA. It is still very much alive, with the community demand for student services normally exceeding our capacity to respond.

2. What was the initial objective of the project?  
The central objective of UEC continues to be the achievement of positive learning experiences for students which simultaneously provide a needed service to community groups unable to afford the service on the open market.
3. What departments, faculty and students have been involved?  
Our involved persons have come from Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Journalism, Photo-Journalism, Urban History, Interior Design, Urban Studies, Social Work, Sociology, Mechanical Engineering, Geography and Psychology.
4. What public agencies or private organizations have participated or been served?  
We have been joined in the serving role by the Minneapolis College of Art and Design and by the Community Design Center of Minnesota. Agencies served include the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Northeast Neighborhood House, Northside Settlements, Afro-American Cultural Arts Center, South Saint Anthony Park Association Project Area Committee, Model Cities Communications Center and many Twin Cities Public Schools to name just a representative handful of the dozens of agencies and groups served by UEC since its inception.
5. What population has been served?  
Most of our service/learning contacts have been here in the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul but we have also worked outstate with groups including Indians at the Ponsford Reservation, small businessmen in Ely and with residents of Renville County.
6. Has fiscal support come from outside the University?  
We have obtained most of our funding from CURA for program, materials and limited staffing, from central administration for rent and utilities and, indirectly, from departments or schools contributing faculty to UEC. We also have phone costs borne by the Community Design Center of Minnesota and, on some projects, have had materials costs covered by the organization we are serving. Also one of our projects, an educational study to illustrate congregating places in the City of Minneapolis has culminated in an exhibit supported by funds from the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.
7. What results have been produced? How has the wider community benefited? How has the University been affected? What guiding principles have we learned?  
Perhaps our most important result is the continuously recurring discovery that service/learning can be a tremendous growth experience for students while simultaneously affording meaningful interactions with and products for limited-budget, community groups. Community benefits have varied depending on the nature of the project. One could point to numerous tangible products such as the gallery at the first Afro-American Cultural Arts Center designed and constructed by UEC students, the West of 280 study and brochure completed for the South St. Anthony Park Association Project Area Committee or the supergraphics being painted at the Northeast Neighborhood House. One could also cite the basic communication process which becomes such an important component for the student-community interaction. The UEC community location on the top floor of 118 East 26th St. in the Minneapolis Model City neighborhood has served not only UEC students, the community, the Community Design Center and

Advocate Services Incorporated; it has also been a retreat site for University groups including the Experimental College and Newman Center. Then, in addition, the UEC program has affected the University in allowing an opportunity for community-based cross-disciplinary learning experiences for undergraduates from a number of departments. I find it hard to set down anything as fixed as "guiding principles" in looking back on our experiences. We just keep trying to match needs of the community with needs and skills of students to allow for service and shared growth. As long as open communication is maintained, our efforts seem to be successful.

8. How has the project helped the University serve the wider community?

The Urban Education Center has apparently given the University, through CURA, a substantially enlarged capacity to respond directly to many of the environmental design needs of low budget groups in the community.