



CURA

Center for Urban and Regional Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

**CURA is an all-University applied research and technology center that is
part of the Office of the Executive Vice-President and Provost**

“It is evident that CURA is a major source of good will for the University among a variety of significant constituencies stretching from the State House to inner city and small town neighborhoods.”

– from an evaluation of CURA by a group of national scholars

■ **A Place Where New Ideas Can Grow**

The basic idea behind CURA is simple: get the resources of a great University—its faculty and students—involved with working on the problems facing the people and communities of Minnesota. CURA connects University faculty and students with the organizations and public institutions working on significant issues in the state. CURA connects faculty with research opportunities that can create change. CURA connects students with projects where they can learn through practical experience. CURA connects community organizations with faculty and students who can provide the research assistance they need. CURA connects government agencies with University expertise.

CURA works across disciplinary lines and across professional boundaries. It creates new programs and projects to meet needs that no one else is meeting. CURA’s staff leverages resources by collaborating closely with other University units and with the groups CURA serves: nonprofits, businesses, underserved and underrepresented groups, rural towns, inner-city neighborhoods, suburban communities, and state agencies.

In a typical year, CURA will work on as many as 125 projects that include 25 or 30 faculty and 80 or 90 graduate and undergraduate students from many different departments or programs at the University of Minnesota and other institutions of higher education in the Twin Cities. These faculty and student projects may involve as many as 15 state and local agencies and more than 80 community organizations. CURA experiments and nurtures new ideas. If they grow and flourish, they can be “spun off” to a new supportive home or to stand alone. CURA is a place where new ideas can grow.

“CURA continues to support quality research and analysis on critical issues facing Twin Cities metropolitan area residents and communities.”

– Carol Johnson, former Superintendent, Minneapolis Public Schools

■ Research for Social Change

CURA research spans a wide range of contemporary issues and is carried out in close collaboration with activists, agencies, and community groups outside the University. Projects change as the needs and concerns of the community change. Since 1968 when CURA began, there has been a continuing emphasis on housing, human relations, transportation, environmental management, social service delivery, local government, and improved information bases for better decision making. Recently there has been a growing concern with government devolution, the development of multicultural communities, urban and regional growth, community economic development, employment, and neighborhood revitalization. A sampling of recent CURA projects suggests the full spectrum of CURA's research.

- ✿ To encourage sustainable development of Minnesota lakes, CURA worked with the Minnesota Lakes Association to create comprehensive plans for five pilot lakes, and a format package that can be used to develop plans for other lakes.



- ✿ A series of studies about urban crime, conducted by graduate students in collaboration with three inner-city neighborhoods, led to the creation of a pioneering restorative justice program operating in cooperation with the City Attorney's Office in Minneapolis.
- ✿ A professor of education developed a program that boosts reading ability for first graders having trouble with this vital skill.

- ⚙️ To help in the development of an eco-industrial park in the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis, graduate students surveyed similar projects across the country and created a baseline study assessing the resources available from businesses in thirteen zip codes.
- ⚙️ A graduate student wrote the study guide for a play about American Indian issues (“According to Coyote”) presented by Mixed Blood Theater in schools across the Upper Midwest.



- ⚙️ University-generated computer simulations were used to aid the reorganization of probation and parole operations in Hennepin County when large increases in adult offenders made a change imperative.
- ⚙️ The impact of federal cutbacks on a wide variety of Minnesota programs was analyzed for each county in the state so that local officials could plan accordingly.
- ⚙️ A graduate student’s survey of the tax status and current ownership of vacant land in the Frogtown area of St. Paul helped identify land suitable for building new homes.
- ⚙️ A professor of geography in Duluth developed a geographic information system (GIS) model to help the Chippewa bands in northern Minnesota expand their capacity for harvesting wild rice.
- ⚙️ The expansion of African American poverty in the Twin Cities was analyzed by a professor of public affairs, who concluded that the change was due to increased migration.

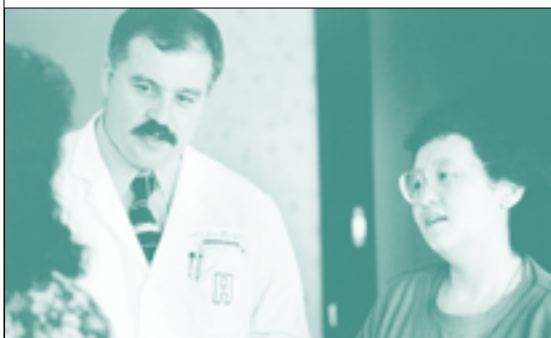
“CURA was a key experience in my intellectual and professional growth. It helped me make the transition from technician to policy analyst.”

– John L. Adams, graduate student research assistant with CURA, now a statistician at the Rand Corporation

■ Programs that Connect the Community with the University

Projects can be initiated at CURA by community groups, students, government agencies, or faculty. Often they are initiated through one of CURA's programs.

Communiversiity Personnel Grants. Community-based nonprofit organizations working with underrepresented or underserved groups are eligible for student assistance on a specific project. Applications are received twice each year. The student positions are posted at the University, and the agency that receives the grant chooses the student. For more information, contact Ed Drury at 612-625-6045 or drury001@umn.edu.



Faculty Interactive Research Grants. Each year, three or four grants are awarded to University of Minnesota faculty for research that involves significant interaction with the community on issues of public policy. A competition for the grants occurs each spring. For more information, contact Tom Scott at 612-625-1551 or scott001@umn.edu.



Community Assistantship Program (CAP). Provides applied research assistance to community-based nonprofits, citizen groups, and government agencies throughout Greater Minnesota. Student assistantships are designed to help meet community needs while offering students career-related experience. Applications are considered three times per year (February 1, July 1, and November 1). For more information, contact the CAP program coordinator at 612-626-7537 or capcura@umn.edu, or visit CAP at www.cura.umn.edu/programs/CAP/cap.html.



Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization (NPCR). Research assistance is available to neighborhood organizations and community development corporations in Minneapolis and St. Paul through NPCR and its consortium of nine colleges and universities. Students from the participating schools provide the research that community groups request. Proposals are solicited three times a year. For more information, contact Kris Nelson at 612-625-1020 or nelsol93@umn.edu, or visit www.npcr.org.

Twin Cities Training Program for Community Organizers. Sponsors internships to train new organizers and workshops to increase the skills of neighborhood staff. For more information, contact Jay Clark at 612-625-2513 or clark037@umn.edu.

“CURA has done an excellent job of working with—and I underline the word *with*—community-based organizations and developing mutually beneficial approaches for both the University and the community.”

—Yusef Mgeni, director of the Urban Coalition

“ [CURA is] a talented and flexible organization. Both are essential to the success of joint efforts. ”

—Philip Eckhert, director of Hennepin County Office of Environmental Services

University Neighborhood Network (UNN). This innovative program brings together faculty, students, and neighborhood activists to solve real community problems. Through UNN, faculty are able to offer their students the chance to complete neighborhood projects for course credit. The participating neighborhood organizations develop and direct the project, which must be suitable for a university course. For more information, contact the UNN coordinator at 612-625-0744 or unn@umn.edu, or visit the UNN website at www.unn.umn.edu.



Center for Community and Regional Research (CCRR).

A CURA-supported center based at the University of Minnesota at Duluth that fosters social, scientific, and humanities research in northeastern Minnesota. For more information, contact Larry Knopp at 218-726-6246 or lknopp@d.umn.edu, or visit CCRR's website at www.d.umn.edu/ccrr.

Minneapolis Neighborhood Information System

(MNIS). A capacity-building initiative that provides neighborhood organizations with geographic information systems (GIS) training and access to property data that can inform community revitalization, housing intervention, and economic investment strategies. Neighborhood organizations are instrumental to the design, development, and implementation of all projects. For more information, contact Jeff Matson at 612-625-0081 or jmatson@umn.edu, or visit the MNIS website at www.npcr.org/MNIS.html.

Minnesota Center for Survey Research (MCSR). This program conducts mail and telephone surveys for nonprofit groups, public agencies, and University of Minnesota programs and faculty. A large number of students are trained as interviewers each year. Fees are charged for services, but some free survey consulting is also available. Omnibus telephone surveys are conducted each year to ask households in the metropolitan area and across the state about contemporary issues. For more information, contact Rossana Armson at 612-627-4282 or arms001@umn.edu.



Fesler-Lampert Chair in Urban and Regional Affairs. An endowed chair position that supports faculty research on projects related to urban and regional affairs in Minnesota. A competition for the chair is held annually during fall semester. For more information, contact Tom Scott at 612-625-1551 or scott001@umn.edu.

Visiting Scholar Program. For more than a decade, CURA has served as a temporary home for visiting scholars working on projects concerning public policy in Minnesota. Typically these individuals receive outside funding; CURA provides office space and a supportive research environment, and often publishes the results of their research. For more information about visiting scholar opportunities, contact Tom Scott at 612-625-1551 or scott001@umn.edu.

“Unlike federal research [support], CURA gives you a great deal of flexibility to do something, and the types of projects they’ve encouraged have been the types of things that have had a real impact on the state.”

– Rosemarie Park, associate professor, College of Education and Human Development

CURA Housing Forum. The CURA Housing Forum is a monthly brown-bag discussion of housing issues and research in the Twin Cities that brings together faculty, students, and community members. Forums are held during the academic year on the University's West Bank campus, and generally take one of three forms: panel discussions, action-oriented dialogues, or presentations of research findings from faculty or student projects. For information about the topic and location of the next CURA Housing Forum, contact the program assistant at curahf@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/programs/forum.html. For more information about the CURA Housing Forum program, contact Edward Goetz at 612-624-5003 or egoetz@umn.edu.

New Initiatives. If the project you have in mind does not seem to fit any of the CURA programs listed here, we encourage you to call us to explore submitting a proposal for a New Initiative grant. CURA maintains a significant portion of its budget for responding on an ad hoc basis to such proposals. For information or to submit a proposal, contact Will Craig at 612-625-3321 or wrcraig@umn.edu.

■ Research Results

The results of many CURA projects are published so that the work can be used by policy makers, government administrators, and community leaders. CURA publishes monographs, books, and research reports, as well as a highly regarded quarterly report of research, the *CURA Reporter*.

In keeping with CURA's mission of service to the community, all publications are available free-of-charge. Publications may be ordered online through our searchable publications catalog at www.cura.umn.edu/search.html, or by phone at 612-625-1551.

“For more than 25 years CURA has been the University's leader in promoting and supporting research, outreach, and training on urban-related issues for the communities of Minnesota. CURA has played a major role in carrying out the University's urban mission.”

—Nils Hasselmo, former president of the University of Minnesota



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