Initiative to build institution-wide engagement
Local Food System Symposium

Bhavna Hirani
Office of Public Engagement
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
September 29, 2015
Illinois was established as a land-grant institution to be a beacon of knowledge and service for our state and nation.

Goal 3 of Strategic Plan 2013-16:
Make a significant and visible societal impact
Public engagement at Illinois

Application of institutional knowledge and resources to address and solve challenges facing the community through mutually-beneficial partnership with the community
Role of Office of Public Engagement at Illinois

1. Facilitate communication between University and community

2. Provide community-based learning and sharing opportunities

3. Provide financial and administrative support to campus engagement initiatives
Learning and sharing opportunities for engagement at Illinois

Colloquium

- Invited speakers present programs during school year
- Share stories of engagement programs across campus

Symposium

- Annual sharing of engagement projects across campus
- Discussions and collaborations among engaged scholars
Public Engagement grant funding

- Grants of up to $20K
- $1.5M for 113 programs
- $0.25M for 30 programs in 2014

- Grants of up to $1,500
- $8,375 in 2015
Awards and Recognition for public engagement at Illinois

- Campus Award for Excellence in Public Engagement (CAEPE)
- Annual recognition of engaged scholars includes faculty, staff and students

Award winners of 2015
Publications – Engagement at Illinois

- eNewsletter (each semester)
- Highlights magazine (annual)
Engagement by numbers at Illinois

**Research**
Over 700 engagement programs

**Teaching**
About 500 service-learning courses with over 6,000 students participating

**Community partners**
Over 200 community partners in collaboration with the University

**Events**
More than 6,000 events listed on Public Engagement Portal

Data collected in 2012-13
Challenge
Decentralized nature of department and college sponsored community-engagement projects

Goal
Encourage cross-disciplinary engagement projects
An effort to build institution-wide engagement at Illinois
Local Food System Symposium

- To boost partnerships and help the local economy
- Academicians, technicians and students from campus
- Producers, distributors and consumers from community
- Over 60 participants for 3 hour symposium

http://publish.illinois.edu/local-food-system-symposium
Multidisciplinary participation

**Campus**
- Architecture
- Civil and Environmental Engineering
- College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences
- Crop Sciences
- Extension
- Food Sciences and Human Nutrition
- Hendrick House
- Institute for Sustainability, Energy & Environment
- Sustainable Student Farm
- University Dining
- Urban and Regional Planning

**Community**
- The Land Connection
- Illinois Stewardship Alliance
- Illinois Environmental Council
- Illinois Farm Bureau
- Quad Cities Food Hub
- Spence Farm Foundation
- Commerce and Economic Development, Farm Bureau
- United States Department of Agriculture
- Common Ground Food Co-op
- Farmer’s Market in Urbana
- Unit 4 School District
- Central Illinois Produce
Design approach

Small groups identify producers, consumers and market-makers
- Definition
- Type
- Needs
- Availability
- Bring changes

Discussion on resulting topics within groups of interest
- Changes needed
- Barriers identified
- New systems
- Responsible entity
- Champions

Meetings/workshops on gaps identified
- Value-added processing
- Dining Services – workshop
- Interdisciplinary grant proposals
15 Extension Educators across the State of Illinois form the Small Farms/Local Foods Team

Example 1

University of Illinois Extension
University of Illinois Extension

Outreach and Engagement channels

• Direct technical assistance
• Electronic communication
• Local, regional and state-wide programing including field days and web based learning opportunities
• Mentoring opportunities
• Beginning farmer training
Preparing a New Generation of Illinois Fruit and Vegetable Farmers – New Illinois Farmers

- 188 students representing 50% of Illinois counties in 2013-15 (3 year grant from USDA)
- Almost 1:1 male to female ratio with average age of 45
- ~80% transitioned to farm sustainably; ~20% to be certified organic
- Train new farmers, high school & community college instructors, nonprofits, community garden managers, restaurateurs, and established farmers transitioning from row crops
Example 3

Illinois School of Architecture

• Graduate architectural design studio
• Design and building of infrastructure for Sustainable Student Farm
• Designs for deployable farm stands
• Design and build efficient wash/pack pavilion on site using sustainable materials
Department of Crop Sciences

- Community Engagement in the Urban Agriculture Research Lab
- Urban cropping systems research
- Cover crop and organic “weed blasting” research
- Urban soil remediation and management research
- Service learning projects for students in HORT 435
Community and economic development

- Chanute Air Force Base closure impacted the community
- Village of Rantoul uses food and agriculture as means of economic development
- Food hub and farm incubator launched in the community
- University staff serve as leaders on committees to coordinate development in the area
- University staff works with city and state organizations in the process
Design of an ecological water treatment system

• Student researchers from Civil and Environmental Engineering characterized wastewater streams on a local farm and used it to design an ecological water treatment system

• Students helped develop educational materials for an immersion school for farmers
Impact of symposium on institution-wide engagement

1. Discussion on use of resources available on campus

- Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition
  - Use of pilot processing plant on campus for
    i. Instruction on value-added processing to community
    ii. Research on processing of grains for quality and nutrition

- College of Agriculture
  - Develop low-cost micro-equipment for processing

- Illinois School of Architecture
  - Design and create tools for efficient sorting/grading/packing of local food
Impact of symposium on institution-wide engagement

2. Interdisciplinary grant proposals between Illinois Extension and College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences
   - National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA) to study alternate protein sources in dining options

3. Interactive workshop by University Dining Services
   - Guide local producers to logistics of entering dining supply chain
Workshop by University Dining Services
Informative and interactive

• Explore the Dining Services at Illinois and at other State Universities
• Navigate through the purchasing process
• Understand the supply chain
• Share experience of local producers and distributors
Strengthening relationship with Colleges and Institutes to broaden engagement at Illinois

- Meetings with engagement representatives
- Mutual understanding of community engagement
- Share information on engagement efforts
- Delegate contacts for future communication
- Develop interaction to support engagement
- Identify connections across disciplines
Results of engagement meetings at Illinois

- Good participation of units in public engagement programs
- All units use Engagement Portal to share activities and programs with the community
- Increase visibility of engagement staff by presence in meetings of colleges
- Encourage engaged scholars by
  - Letters of recognition to Deans and Department heads, even a reception with all of the above
  - A list of engaged scholars
- Organize engagement workshops for faculty, academic professionals and students
- Engagement map or flowchart for community partners to navigate contacts
- Web form for faculty/staff to connect with external partners
Future of engagement at Illinois

• Local Food System symposium - one successful example of institution-wide engagement at Illinois

• More campus-wide workshops in future on topics related to health and education

• Representation of engagement staff at college-level to exemplify engaged scholars across campus