Who is bringing you outside the classroom....

From left to right, LaB Assistant Allyson Saunders, LaB Sustainability Assistant Kerstyn Lane and LaB Coordinators Amy Wilhelm and Leah Johnson receiving Green Space Certification for the LaB Office from the Office of Sustainability, UAlberta.

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Message from the Director....

Recently, I had the opportunity to listen to three Augustana students speak to Camrose City Council about their diverse Community Service–Learning experiences. I was struck by the students’ poise but even more by the richness of the experiences they relayed. They spoke about participating in different initiatives from programming for newcomers in Camrose to food security research and from recreational activities with seniors to assisting with language labs in Cuba. In all, their experiences spoke to the students’ involvements in enhancing the social and environmental aspects of our community and beyond.

The stories that these students told also reminded me that it is easy to attempt to summarize the work that we do in the Learning and Beyond office by counting the number of students participating in our international, outdoor and community–based programming. While I believe we have much to be proud about in that regard—for example, one in three Augustana graduates have a significant international experience; two in three participate in a CSL project—those numbers are a poor proxy for the impact of experiential learning on our students, community members and our campus community. In this report, we attempt to strike a balance between reporting on the breadth and depth of the experiential learning we have supported through our office.

This is the last annual report that we will be writing as the Learning and Beyond office. Starting in May of 2014, we will be working together with Augustana’s Academic Advising office in a renamed Learning, Advising and Beyond office. Our ultimate home will be on the second floor of the renovated Founders’ Hall building but in the interim, we will relocate to Heather Brae Hall on the South end of our Campus. Please stop by and visit. We love to hear about different ideas you may have about projects to involve our students in as they complete their studies at Augustana.

Karsten Mündel

Sustainability

This academic year, the main focuses of sustainability centered events were the bi–annual Waste Sort and the now annual Sustainability Fair.

Every semester AUENV/AUGEO 120 students participate in the Waste Sort as a class. In both the fall and winter Waste Sort this year, four students participated in the event as part of their CSL placement, acting as trained content experts who instructed their classmates on proper sorting. The remainder of the class had other placements on campus and in the community, therefore participated in the sort in shifts. This is an exciting opportunity considering our percentage of contamination as a campus has improved from 12.65% in 2010 to 8.52% in 2014. Not only does the Waste Sort allow us to see these improvements statistically, but it also allows us to continually educate new generations of students. AUENV/AUGEO 120 is one of our largest first year classes, meaning that each semester they are taught how to properly use our recycling and waste disposal system.

The Sustainability Fair took place for the second year on March 13. Participants in the Fair this year included students, different offices on campus, University of Alberta Sustainability, Battle River Watershed Alliance and a young farmer in the area. The objective of the Fair is twofold: first, the Fair is an opportunity to engage in the topic of sustainability as a community, and second, to receive feedback and generate ideas collectively on moving forward regarding sustainability. A few highlights from the Fair were students’ up-cycling t-shirts into grocery bags, Takota Coen giving berry samples from his farm, seeing a sample of the raised garden beds for the Campus Garden, and having about 90 students completing Fair passports to demonstrate their engagement with the various exhibits.
Outdoor Education

This year the Outdoor Education program offered the following trips, administered through LaB:
• AUPED 184 (41 students)
• Arctic Canoe Expedition (12 students)
• First Year Adventure (8 students)
• Dogsledding (12 students)
• Advanced Ski Touring (9 students)

All of the Outdoor Education trips get students into the outdoors and aims to enhance students’ leadership skills, environmental ethics, and personal growth.

“The scenery, wildlife, plants, and land formations that we were able to see were breath taking. The feeling I had sitting amongst the rocks, while a heard of caribou surrounded us and passed us to this day makes my heart beat faster. My memories of hearing the wolves howl, smelling the muskox, seeing the vibrant colours of the wooly lousewort are so vivid and all make me so eager to return to the North.”
Kelly Williams, Arctic Canoe Expedition

International

Augustana offers diverse opportunities for students to go abroad, which is clearly demonstrated in the trips which took place this year. A total of 53 (11 from Augustana) students were in Germany with the Canadian Summer School in Germany (CSSG), improving their language skills, living with host families, and experiencing German culture; four students completed field research in Costa Rica in biology and environmental conversation; and finally, 16 students competed in the National Model United Nations in New York.

“The chance to learn in a stimulating environment, discover new things about myself and learn that I am capable of field research was such an exciting experience. Field research offers such an interactive learning experience that can't be achieved in a classroom.”
-Tonya Dubois, Costa Rica

“I now have wonderful friends all over Canada as well as in Germany. I built a wonderful relationship with my host family and we stay in contact via "snail-mail" or email. Not only did we, the students of CSSG, learn a language through immersion, we also learned how to function in a different culture.”
-Laura Friesen, CSSG

“We were given the chance to use negotiating skills in a real life environment. As I worked to get an in-depth knowledge of Zimbabwe's foreign policy and specific interests, I was led to question my own take on foreign relations: trying to envision the UN from the perspective of a country belonging to a different continent was certainly one of the high points of the preparation for the conference.”
-Connor Malone, Model UN
“I have had numerous positive experiences with CSL, especially during my CSL practicum in a placement titled ‘From Field to Fork’. While developing a community food system assessment, I made valuable connections with members of the Camrose community who maintain a long standing commitment to sustainable local food systems. To this day I maintain connections with these individuals and am truly grateful for the opportunities that CSL has provided me with to translate my passions and interests into meaningful initiatives.”

-Kerstyn Lane, CSL Certificate

Community Service-Learning (CSL) is Learning and Beyond’s largest experiential learning offering. This year the Office coordinated 434 placements, opening opportunities for students to gain experience in non-profits, health services, educational institutions, the private sector, law enforcement, law firms, and other community organizations. In this academic year alone students have dedicated over 9,000 hours of service in Camrose and communities in the area, with each placement ranging from 20–50 hours. While the numbers are a valuable consideration, it is most rewarding to hear what students are taking out of their placements into their personal, academic and budding professional lives, as well as to hear about the opportunities Camrose and the surrounding area gives to students to enrich their educational experience.

This year, Augustana students have:
* Been members of 8 non-profit Board of Directors
* Completed five 8-month long Management internships
* Played for 260 hours with Special Olympics Camrose
* Learned how to collect wildlife track transects at Miquelon Lake with the Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society
* Dedicated 120 hours with Reading Buddies at Ecole Sifton School
* Earned 17 Certificates in Community Engagement and Service-Learning, which adds to 2210 hours of service shared between the 17 students over their degrees
* Held 12 Enviropalooza sessions with children at the Camrose Public Library, engaging children in environmental topics

All the above experiences demonstrate the diverse opportunities available through Community Service-Learning.

“I have learned to step out of my comfort zone and have met so many great people in doing so. I have had the opportunity to work with a diverse demographic of people in a variety of settings, which has strengthened my desire to work with people.”

-Annika Krook, CSL Certificate

“Special Olympics is often the highlight of my day and I always leave smiling... Through my experience I have found that many of the athletes are often more open about their feelings than people who do not have special needs. I find this comforting, because they are not afraid to tell you that they like you or that they missed you. Overall, I have learned that although people with special needs are different from the rest of us they are not that much different and their differences can even make them better people.”

-Samara Froland, Special Olympics

Completed CSL Placements Per Academic Year