

Correspondence with Josh UVM student climate study

From: Robert Low <Bob.Low@uvm.edu>

Sent: Monday, November 18, 2024 10:36 AM

To: Josh Arneson <jarneson@richmondvt.gov>

Subject: UVM student Climate Study for Richmond

Josh:

I am following up on our brief conversation today about the possibility of a UVM Climate Study for Richmond. It would involve students in a class given by Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux, UVM faculty member and State Climatologist. Cathleen Gent may already have bent your ear on this.

I have attached the Highlights pdf the study students did for Underhill so you can see what this is about and what were the deliverables. I understand there is no charge for this, though would be important to confirm.

Here is an excerpt from the Final report to Underhill that explains still further:

CONTEXT FOR THIS REPORT

During the Fall 2022 semester, the students enrolled in Climatology and Natural Hazards (GEOG 246), an advanced level climatology course offered in the Department of Geography & Geosciences at the University of Vermont, engaged in a Service-Learning collaboration with the Climate Change Task Force of the Town of Underhill, Vermont. This collaboration grew out of the needs articulated by the Task Force during a presentation made by Dr. Lesley-Ann L. Dupigny-Giroux (Professor of Climatology and the Vermont State Climatologist) on 18 May, 2022.

Service-Learning is a reciprocal relationship among students, faculty and an external community collaborator(s), that is responsive to the needs of the collaborator(s), while enhancing student learning. The relationship is symbiotic such that all parties benefit by learning from each other.

Service-Learning differs from volunteerism and co-curricular activities. Service-learning activities are directly related to curricular goals, with course assignments tied to the service experiences” (<http://www.uvm.edu/~partnerships>). During the semester, students in GEOG 246 worked directly with Ms. Sandy Wilmot, Mr. Brad Holden and Mr. Kail Romanoff (Town of Underhill), Mr. Chris Campany (Executive Director of the Windham Regional Planning Commission), Mr. Brian Baldwin and Ms. Canserina Kurnia (ESRI) and Dr. Ned Gardiner (NOAA Climate Program Office & Lead on the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit) on a pilot study to apply the Steps to Resilience framework as inputs to the creation of a Climate Action Plan for the Town of Underhill. On 8 December 2022, the course culminated with the class’ presentation of our findings and recommendations

to the Town of Underhill Committees, Regional Planning Commissions, NOAA Climate Program Office, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, State of Vermont Agencies, the Community-Engaged Learning Office and other entities across the University of Vermont.

The report is organized into the four sections as presented by the class. It opens with a focus on the importance of MASS WASTING events and WATER RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS, followed by ANCILLARY CONSIDERATIONS. It concludes with an exploration of the VEGETATION RESOURCES in the Town of Underhill. At the end of the report is the 2022 NOAA National Center for Environmental Information State Climate Summary for Vermont, which is the federal source of climate change projections and information for the state developed in support of the Fifth National Climate Assessment.

Dr. Lesley-Ann L. Dupigny-Giroux

The current plan would be for a core group to get together at the turn of the year to organize. From Lesley-Ann:

Service-learning (as this type of teaching is called), involves a lot of discussion ahead of time with the community partner to identify what exactly is needed and in what format. I then take all of that and redesign my class to create activities and exercises that will lead the students to work through how best to meet these needs. With Richmond being close to UVM, student visits to the town would allow for an in-depth, on the ground understanding of what recommendations could be brought forward. All of this culminates in a presentation and written report at the end of the semester (December).

We can put a pin to circle back around in the New Year to do a deep dive into what this collaboration could look like.

As someone who looks quite closely at Climate-related affairs, I am really impressed at what came out and how it helped Underhill.

Key will be to understand the degree to which Town staff would be involved. I understand at this point that it would be not be a great deal other perhaps than interviews. However, I would anticipate that Town Committees such as our Conservation Commission and the Climate Action Committee would be involved. Let me know if you want further clarification here.

I will be interested in your thoughts and the degree to which our Selectboard should be involved should this be a go.

Best,

Bob

11/22/24

Bob,

Thanks for sending this along. It seems like it may be something to discuss with the Conservation Commission first and then make a recommendation to the Selectboard. We do not have much staff time to commit to the study. We are currently working on the following flood related projects:

- Two FEMA claims (submission of expenses as well as work on ongoing projects)
- Flood Mitigation Scoping Study with Stone Environmental
- 10 Emergency Watershed Protection Program projects
- Upwards of 10 home buyout applications.
- One home elevation project with the potential for a few more
- Exploring mitigation projects with FEMA.
- Flood proofing projects for the Water and Wastewater Infrastructure.

I outline the above projects to illustrate that we are already doing quite a bit with flood response and mitigation which is taking a decent amount of staff time, so we don't have much time to fit more in. If this is a project that can be run by a committee with minimal staff time, then that could work. But if it needs significant staff support, we will likely not be able to help.

Josh Arneson (he/him)

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