

Ferris State University
Faculty and Staff Diversity Mini-Grant Application

I. Identification

Name of Primary Applicant Scott Herron, Biology/Horticulture Faculty

Members of Team Andrea Lodholtz, Greenhouse Technician/Manager

Deb Cox, Education and Career Counseling Department Head

Will Gasper, FSU Grounds Supervisor

Roger Schneidt, Big Rapids Acting Public Works Director

Jill Buse, Big Rapids Recreation Director/Parks and Rec. Chair

Krishnakali Majumdar, Social Science Faculty

Department or Unit Biology

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II. Event Title (25 words or less)

Raising Expectations with Raised Beds Gardens _____

III. Specific core value, strategic initiative, or goal related to diversity that the event will address. (See the University Strategic Plan and the Diversity Plan)

A safe and welcoming campus that is accessible to all while promoting a lifelong learning to an engaged campus. Specifically, Diversity Plan Goals 1 and 4 are focal point of this proposal. The Ferris State University Strategic Plan: Goal 2 reads, "Develop a university community where all are valued, welcomed, and informed." _____

IV. Abstract (150-200 word, use additional paper if necessary). If the application is approved the abstract will be posted on the Diversity Office's website.

In the spirit of collaboration, engagement and inclusion, a group of concerned FSU community members are planning to work with the FSU Physical Plant Grounds Crew and Big Rapids Parks and Recreation Department to locate and build several wheelchair accessible raised bed garden planters for growing ornamentals and vegetables during the summer and autumn. This project is expected to be built and dedicated during Earth Awareness Week (April 20-26) near the Science Building (FSU), and in/or around Mitchell Park (BR) near Crossroads Academy and Dairy Queen or Hemlock Park near the Middle School (BR). The Horticulture Program and Smith Greenhouse as well as the Big Rapids Public Works will provide compost and soil/growing media, some plants will be started from seed or division by the Plant Propagation class (HORT 152) as a service to the project participants so that the outdoor raised bed gardens can begin to bring

together both able and disabled and/or wheelchair bound individuals to learn about and engage in the experience, science, and leisure activity of organic gardening. It is our hope that FSU students and others seeking summer/fall volunteer hours, as well as Hope Network service recipients, MSU Master Gardeners, Cross Roads and Big Rapids Middle School students/teachers, downtown restaurants and elderly residents of the historical housing on Michigan Avenue will come to utilize the raised beds to learn more about each other and the communities (both natural and cultural) we share each growing season.

V. Event Narrative (up to 4 pages single-spaced)

- a. The conceptual framework that explains how the event will augment Ferris's long-term commitment to diversity.

This project brings together the FSU community with the Big Rapids community in a shared learning and recreation experience in the way that the FSU Diversity Plan hoped for (FSUSA Today, Spring 2009, pg. 3). The unique opportunity here is that inclusion is natural and fluid, not forced, whereby all people with interests in gardening and growing their own food, herbs and ornamentals are encouraged by building accessible raised beds. These planters will be located in areas accessible by wheelchair both near handicap parking and handicap pathways. The framework is not to dedicate this project to less able individuals of our community, but to intentionally include them in the design, location, and implementation of the project so they feel welcomed, safe and valued members of our community. We envision the social interaction of able and disabled individuals during construction, dedication, and implementation (growing, maintaining) will be an essential learning experience for all involved, greatly expanding the empathy and understanding of the limitations and opportunities of being wheelchair bound or living with other disabilities. Because our team is lucky to have Deb Cox (administers Disability Services) involved, she will help the campus and city identify the sites within our specified areas that best meet the accessibility requirement we seek. As a MSU Master Gardener, she will be able to work with our other Master Gardener, Andrea Lodholtz to integrate the local Master Gardener program into this project to help sustain it in the long run since these individuals are required to perform volunteer service hours annually to maintain status with this MSU certification program. These Master Gardeners also help the project maintain the educational component we seek to perpetuate, along with the Horticulture program. By placing these gardens in highly visible locations we seek to mainstream this project, not to be overlooked or forgotten, with the hopes that the several raised beds proposed for 2009 will become the start of an expanded garden in future years.

- b. The goals and intended outcome(s) of the event.

The goals of this project are to build relationships between the faculty, staff, students, Big Rapids residents, Parks and Recreation employees, the city commission, Master Gardener program, local middle schools, and other local populations interested in

gardening without the facilities to enjoy this learning pastime. The relationships have been initiated, and March and April will help us build capacity, listen to constituency concerns, and implement construction and dedication for the upcoming growing season. A critical goal is to utilize this non-threatening garden concept that is help improve relationships between the Grounds/Park and Recreation/Public Works departments of FSU and Big Rapids and their constituencies. Another goal is to bring people from these communities together in a social and education manner that will foster multi-generational conversation. As we learn more about each other during gardening, we hope bias, assumptions, stereotypes, and misconceptions will fade away into to soil and compost, to be decomposed so new ideas can grow in the minds of participants. We intend for this project to be a community gathering mechanism, starting small, but eventually spreading like the plant we will help grow. Another outcome will be to let less able individuals establish a raised voice and image in both communities, where they are seen for what they can accomplish, not what they cannot accomplish. Another critical goal is to engage young learners at Cross Roads and/or the Middle School in gardening, horticulture, and the value of lifelong learning by attempting to establish curriculum based and after-school/summer opportunities aligned with Michigan Benchmarks and Standards.

- c. A statement on how the event relates to the curriculum or a specific discipline, if appropriate.

This program relates to the Ornamental Horticulture program, an Associate's Degree from the Biology Department, which also administers the Smith Greenhouse. Dr. Scott Herron (Horticulture faculty, who teaches Basic Botany (BIOL 113) and Plant Propagation (HORT 152)), Professor John Vanderploeg (Horticulture Program Coordinator) and Andrea Lodholtz (Smith Greenhouse manager/technician) all are associated with or teach in this program. The raised beds near the Science Building will be valuable instructional tools for the Horticulture Program, as there are no outdoor facilities available to the students and faculty, limiting instruction on mechanisms and techniques to do not work in the greenhouse. This program looks forward to the opportunity to teach about composting in action during Soils in fall semesters, how to propagate cuttings and seeds that require cold treatment during fall and spring semesters, as well as provide an internship opportunity for a Horticulture student to coordinate the raised bed volunteer and educational outreach program to be established.

- d. A timeline.

During February, the initial idea was discussed with team members to determine project support and viability levels. Upon submission of this grant proposal, Scott Herron will facilitate meetings with project stakeholders. Here the concerns and logistics will be discussed and a project plan will be further refined by the stakeholder group in March. The essential balance is to make the raised beds accessible to all, yet not hinder the staff

from FSU and Big Rapids from performing their jobs to maintain safe and attractive grounds. We will encourage participation from FSU Grounds and Big Rapids Public Works/Parks and Recreation, but we do not want the responsibility of caring for and maintaining this project to fall on their overburdened staff. Thus, at this time, we will not focus as much on the outcome as the process, because we have the vision and support to realize this project, and we want the outcome to be the best possible for all stakeholders involved. During late March and early April, Dr. Herron will construct a personal raised bed at his home with personal funds to confirm project plans and dimensions as shown in the attached blueprints. When the project raised beds are built in mid April with local cedar wood if possible, Dr. Herron will donate gravel and sand from his home to the project for drainage at the base of the planters. The Plant Propagation/Horticulture Seminar class will help construct the planters in mid April with help of other project partners. The raised bed planters will be dedicated and filled on Earthday, Tuesday April 22, 2009 with compost from the Smith Greenhouse and City Composting program. A qualified student will be selected by professors Herron and Vanderploeg to help manage the summer volunteer and educational outreach program via an internship. In early April, Dr. Herron's Plant Propagation class will initiate seed propagation experiment in the Smith Greenhouse, which will provide the project with starter plants for both campus and city planters. Other perennials will be started from seed or propagated asexually from greenhouse stock plants. Space will be intentionally not filled to capacity to allow community members to provide a few plants or seeds for plants of personal interest. This planting program will be monitored by the Horticulture intern as well as team members to minimize growing incompatibilities or inappropriate plantings. The project team will communicate with local stakeholders starting in March and continuing until a permanent mechanism for involvement, outreach, and education are established, at which time a project guideline paper will be developed to ensure continued maintenance, communication, education, and expansion are handled effectively. As raised beds warm up quicker than ground based gardens, it is our expectation that early May will be when annual, non-cold hardy plants will be transplanted into the planters. Gardening will continue throughout the growing season, using water from rain barrels when available, with occasional formal educational programs as developed by the team. During welcome-back week at FSU in August, Honors, Horticulture, International Students, and students with documented disabilities will be invited to an event to raise awareness, education, and interaction of these programs and their students. During Riverdays in September, an education and outreach event will be planned for the Big Rapids raised bed gardens. Upon the completion of the growing season, the beds will be cleaned up, leaving some perennial plants to overwinter, while annuals are harvested and vegetation composted by the city and greenhouse or FSU Grounds. Dr. Herron will also utilize them to instruct Horticulture students and other interested constituencies on how to use the planters to propagate hard-wood cuttings, woody plant seeds by cold stratification, and establishment of rootstock material for spring grafting of trees/shrubs.

e. Description of the target audience, including the estimated number of participants.

The target audiences include 30 current Horticulture students, several dozen Honor's Program students, any students/faculty/staff this Disability Services office can engage in the project, several dozen International Students, the local Master Gardeners and Big Rapids Garden Club (several dozen), FSU Grounds Crew (5), Big Rapids Park and Recreation/Public Works Crew (?), Crossroads Academy students and staff (?), Big Rapids Middle School students and staff (?), local retired and/or elderly residents from Big Rapids (one or two dozen), Transitions Program of the Intermediate School District (integrating local residents with disabilities into the community), and possibly Hope Network participants.

f. The expected impact that the event will have on Ferris.

The expected impact should be a culture shift starting this spring, where the participants put their gloves on and dig in to help make Ferris a more welcoming and embracing campus. The improved relationship with the Big Rapids community and city employees should be gradual but marked, helping Ferris move closer to its intended Diversity Plan and Strategic Plan goals. We hope to inspire a movement toward engagement, volunteerism, interaction, conversation over shared interests. If this project grows, it has potential as a model for future challenges on this campus and in this community, as well as on other campuses. We hope to document this project and publish our findings in an appropriate peer-reviewed forum.

g. A specific plan to assess the impact of the event on the University.

The team will work with our intern to develop a survey instrument that can be utilized both on campus as well as in the Big Rapids community. The events in August on campus and September in town will serve as data and impact gathering sessions to gauge the community support and interest, as well as impact on learning, awareness, relationship building, and educational value. Dr. Herron and Dr. Majumdar will analyze the assessment data statistically and qualitatively to communicate the project impact in our report as well as our classrooms. It is our hope that several of the team leaders will co-author both the final report and a peer-reviewed article to be submitted to an appropriate journal upon completion of the first year's data analysis.

VI. Budget

a. Anticipated expenses (itemize and briefly explain).

Note: All materials for one bed, since number of beds TBA per recommendation by FSU Grounds and City of Big Rapids (6 beds total)

Cedar wood lumber (6 feet long by 2 inches thick by 4 in wide)@ 12 per bed= \$90 per bed per quote from Alan Holmes in Tustin

Cedar corner brace posts (24 inches long by 4 in wide 4 in thick) @ 4 per bed (1- 8 foot post)= \$20

Galvanized Screws (3 inch long) @ 5 lb box-\$30

Landscape fabric (for lining the inside walls-not bottom)-\$15

Water costs (?)-would city or FSU charge for water usage?

Horticulture Internship (Outreach Education Coordinator)-open to any qualified student regardless of program affiliation- \$1500

Organic fertilizer- \$100

Watering hoses (150 foot length), buckets & cans- \$75 per location

Dedication Placard (FSU Media Production?)-\$100

Educational materials (brochures, fliers, and handouts)-\$300

Rain barrels (plastic 60 gallon, recycled material) to capture rain water for supplemental watering -\$100 each (4 barrels per location= \$400)

Material and Supplies for one bed = \$1130

Each Extra Rasied Bed=\$155 (5 extra beds=\$775)

Additional location (Big Rapids site/s-add placard, fertilizer, hoses, water cans, rain barrels=\$675)

Personnel (intern)=\$1500

Total Costs=\$4080

b. Funds anticipated from other sources (please list).

Compost from Smith Greenhouse (in-kind) and Big Rapids Public Works (in-kind)

Gravel and sand (in-kind) from Scott Herron for bottom drainage

Plants (in-kind) from Greenhouse, Plant Propagation class and donations

Woodchips (FSU grounds or BR Public Works) to place around beds if necessary

c. Total amount requested from Faculty and Staff Diversity Mini-Grant.

\$4080

Applicants' Signatures:

Submission Date: 2/25/09

Submit applications to Patty Terryn, Diversity Office, CSS 312. Review of applications will begin upon receipt and continue contingent on available funds.