Center for Rural Research and Development

UNK’s Entrepreneurship & Community Development Outreach Center

Shawn Kaskie- Director (since 2009), Lisa Tschauner- Assistant Director (since June 2016), and one full time support staff; report directly to CBT Dean

Mission: The Center for Rural Research and Development focuses on entrepreneurship and rural economic development, empowering the regions’ residents through education, networking events, and processes that increase their individual and group decision making capacity. The center advocates the "grow-your-own" philosophy of community development, known as economic gardening. The center focuses on outreach efforts, offering a portfolio of innovative programs, events, market research services, and initiatives for various constituencies. These programs are organized into two areas of participant engagement: community (external stakeholders) and university (students/faculty).

Impact AY 2010/11-2015/16:

- Over 13,500* external stakeholders participated in CRRD Entrepreneurship, Economic Development, or Advanced Market Research programs for businesses, non-profit organizations, and communities; *the majority of this metric is a result of returned community development surveys

- CRRD survey services/data analysis led to successful grant awards for 11 NE communities; over $3.5 million in grant projects were leveraged by over $800k in local project matching funds

- Average increase in revenue (or savings) from businesses (115*) assisted: $25,000 *the majority of this metric is a result of startup feasibility consultation after referral from partnering development organizations (i.e. Chambers of Commerce & Economic Development Organizations)

- Over 3,000 students participated in CRRD programming; including presentations, education, or participation in experiential learning activities. Annual major events include the Central NE Idea (Pitch) Contest, Alumni & Student Entrepreneurship Roundtable, and the Gallup Entrepreneurship Profiles

- The Enactus social entrepreneurship student group outreach activities annually impact over 200 Nebraska residents with programmatic support and guidance from the CRRD. They were founded (2012) and continue to manage the first ever on-campus student business, Brewed Awakening (coffee shop).
COMMUNITY/EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

Advanced Market Research Services/Projects for Businesses and Communities
  o CRRD designs and conducts statistical analysis with Community Needs Assessment/surveys (in partnership with South Central Economic Development District): Census of families in 3-5 municipalities each year; Data/Analysis used to apply for Federal/CDBG planning & economic development grants.
  o CRRD facilitates targeted-business studies in partnership with UNK CBT Faculty & Students. Results are presented by students for community leaders and entrepreneurs/owners during downtown events.
  o Primary (Fairbury Theatre-first page photo) and Secondary research design and implementation for businesses.
  o Scholarly publication of Food Deserts in Nebraska in the JUST PLAINS FOLKS: STUDIES OF THE PEOPLE OF THE GREAT PLAINS Journal will assist rural resource providers, lenders, and entrepreneurs throughout the Midwest (2016).
  o The Center for Rural Research & Development, NU Alumni Association, and Xpanxion were awarded $125,000 to develop an innovative rural entrepreneurship initiative. This public-private partnership pilot project is working to address a severe labor shortage by our regional employers by connecting them with Alumni living out-of-state in selected professions. This project has recently received attention from the White House Policy Advisor to the National Economic Council.

Seminars & Workshops Providing Entrepreneurship Training/Education:
  o Annual Central NE Business Idea Competition – (100+live participants @ Top 10 live event) from 50 video submissions - Most prize winners continue to operate businesses.
  o Regularly provide customized market research training for current and future Entrepreneurs during business development events with partnering resource providers and secondary education institutions including Central Community College, Nebraska Development Network – Central Region, 3 Capstone UNK courses where students may develop service businesses, Kearney Chamber of Commerce
  o Youth Entrepreneurship Training – Annual UNK Biz Kids Camp (Middle School) and Kearney Lemonade Stand (Elementary) workshops (average annual participation 70+)

UNIVERSITY/INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT - Increase Faculty and Students Engaged in Innovative Entrepreneurial Studies/Projects
  o Entrepreneurship Minor (Management Department): 14 declarations as of Fall 2015 and 4 graduations during the 2014-15 Academic Year - CRRD staff recruit and publicize the benefits of the new minor in cooperation with the Management Department.
  o The CRRD Department advises and provides direct programmatic support to the UNK Enactus Student organization. During 2014-15, they developed or expanded operations in the following projects:
    • High School New Venture Adventure Day Training: over 14 rural high schools and students (120) come to campus each October to develop business plans that are judged by local bankers, realtors, & lawyers.
    • Crossroads Homeless Shelter resident job training (Kearney & Hastings): More than half of the 30 program participants gained employment within a month of the Enactus-student event.
    • Marketing support and implementation of educational campaigns with partnering student organizations helped increase sustainability and reduce waste on campus by more than 10% annual since 2013.

Current Activity, Short Term Plans/Goals: AY 2016
  o CRRD’s former Entrepreneur-in-Residence funding is transforming into a pilot student incubator program with a long term goal for physical space on the planned UNK South Campus Village. The new incubator and Prototype Development Fab-Lab will be managed by the new Entrepreneurship Program Manager position.
  o Implementation of one of the world’s first youth entrepreneurship engagement workshops using Gallup’s Entrepreneurial Profile EP10 science to discern the intensity of predetermined entrepreneurial traits in the students. The first 3 programs resulted in an 87% increase of essential business knowledge by the students. 120 students from 12 regional high schools took the Gallup EP10 assessment. UNK underclassmen are also using the process to develop applied civic engagement projects on campus (i.e. Democracy Wall).