Assessing Minneapolis–St. Paul’s Regional Economic Competitiveness

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• Long-Term Impacts of Lead Peace Service Learning Program on High School Seniors from North Minneapolis
• The Out-of-school Suspensions of Black Students: A Racial and Social Justice Issue
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Photo on Cover: The Twin Cities region is home to four emerging industry clusters: water technology, 3-D printing, biorenewables, and robotics. Pictured here is the St. Paul skyline. Credit: Bigstock.com/ © stevieg 2013
Abstract: The Minneapolis–St. Paul (MSP) regional economy has benefited from an abundance of successful industry clusters that are linked through a complex ecosystem of competing and supporting firms and institutions. This article presents findings from a quantitative and qualitative study of 12 established industry clusters in the MSP region. In addition, four emerging clusters of interest in the MSP region are identified—water technologies, 3-D printing, biorenewables, and robotics. The article also describes the potential for knowledge flows to occur across industry sectors in the MSP region, as seen through similarities in the occupations that different industries hire. This work may help economic development organizations, educational leaders, public policy leaders, and industry leaders as they make policy decisions and investments to enhance the region’s future prosperity and competitiveness. The research upon which this article is based was supported by a grant from the University of Minnesota Metropolitan Consortium.

With a profound understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, no region can successfully compete in the global marketplace. Fundamental to this type of assessment is an analysis of the regional economy, with industry clusters in particular being important. Industry clusters, or “clusters,” are geographic concentrations of businesses providing similar goods or services that include multiple levels of the business ecosystem. A region’s economy can be viewed as an agglomeration of industry clusters, providing a framework that helps identify strengths and weaknesses, define a region’s relative prosperity, and provide insight on the region’s future.

Agglomeration economies, the underlying concept behind industry clusters, have been analyzed by economists since the late nineteenth century. British economist Alfred Marshall first began writing about industry clusters through his examinations of Sheffield’s metal industry. Since then, cluster studies have been used to identify how certain regions gain competitive advantages in certain industries. For example, the historic strength of Pittsburgh’s steel cluster relied on locational advantages, complementary industries, innovation, and entrepreneurialism. The auto industry, centered in the Detroit region and the Big Three automakers, includes thousands of vendors, suppliers, and ancillary businesses spread throughout the Midwest. New York City remains a global leader in finance, and Silicon Valley has become a model for a regional technology cluster.

With a gross domestic product of $220 billion, the Minneapolis–St. Paul regional economy (MSP) is the second largest economy in the Midwest (behind Chicago) and the 13th largest regional economy in the United States. Unlike many cities in the Midwest, the diversified MSP regional economy remained resilient during the recent recession. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, between 2008 and 2011 the MSP region’s economic output grew 1.5%, whereas Chicago, Detroit, and most of the Midwest’s other big cities lost ground.

The hallmark of the MSP economy is industrial diversification and the presence of large, international firms. The region is home to 18 Fortune 500 companies, including 3M, which is headquartered in Maplewood.

The region is home to 19 Fortune 500 companies from a large variety of traded sectors, and eight additional publicly traded firms with more than $1.8 billion in annual revenue. Cargill, the nation’s largest private company, is also located in the region, as are several other very large private firms. The presence of several large-company headquarters across a variety of industries is key to the region’s competitive advantage and helped spark initial interest for this study of the region’s most prominent industry clusters.

The Minneapolis–St. Paul region is home to a number of important industry clusters that have contributed to the area’s competitive advantage. During the region’s formative years, key industries included finance, lumber, and processed food. Today, the most notable cluster within the metropolitan area is the medical devices cluster, which includes large firms such as Medtronic, Boston Scientific, and St. Jude Medical, smaller businesses and entrepreneurial activity, and complementary institutions such as universities, hospitals, and an active trade association. At least four, harder to define, emerging clusters are also active in the region: water technologies, 3-D printing, biorenewables, and robotics.

For companies, municipalities, research groups, and economic-development organizations, studying industry clusters has great value. Organizing policy discussions around clusters allows for state, regional, and local organizations to have a common platform for focusing programs and investments through a broader regional economic development strategy.

**Methodology**

In June 2012, a research team from the State and Local Policy Program at the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs set out to explore and assess the clusters most important to the MSP regional economy. The State and Local Policy Program has conducted regional industry-cluster studies within Minnesota and throughout the nation since 1995.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to profile twelve competitive industry clusters in the MSP region. Clusters were chosen primarily based on high location quotients (LQ),

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which indicates how concentrated particular industries are in a particular region compared with the nation. The LQ is calculated by comparing the industry’s share of regional employment with its share of national employment. The selected clusters were finalized by an advisory committee comprised of regional leaders, economic development practitioners, and industry professionals.

Quantitative data stems from the Cluster Mapping Tool that was developed for the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, by Harvard Business School’s Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness. The tool defines each industry cluster by a series of subclusters, which are represented by six-digit NAICS codes. The core data set used within the tool for industry-cluster data is U.S. Census Bureau county business patterns data that cover employment, establishment, and wage data by county for each industry sector. The definitions for each of the selected clusters can be found in the Clusters sidebar.

The study solely focused on traded clusters. According to the Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, traded clusters are industries that sell products and services across different economic regions. These industries are concentrated in specific regions where there are competitive advantages associated with the location.

Qualitative data was used to help better explain the historical and anecdotal role of clusters in the region. The research team conducted nine company interviews to gain insights into MSP’s competitive advantage. They also reviewed newspaper, magazine, and journal articles and company websites to gather more information on industries within the region. Many of the observations came from discussions with economic development leaders from throughout MSP who were interested in the study. In particular, emerging clusters of interest were identified through these types of conversations. The four emerging clusters selected were based on rapidly growing technological fields and markets where the MSP region has shown significant entrepreneurial and market leadership in commercializing these technologies and where existing competitive clusters are well positioned to advance these emerging clusters.

To assess the potential for knowledge flows across industry sectors in the MSP region, the authors examined similarities in occupations that different industries hire—particularly focusing on specialized workers such as scientists and engineers. This analysis used employer-occupation data provided by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

Results

Characterization of Selected Industry Clusters. Medical devices, management of companies, lighting and electrical equipment, and analytical instruments are the region’s strongest clusters by LQ (Table 1). The LQ of all the clusters we studied in the report was greater than 1.0, meaning that employment in all studied clusters was more concentrated in MSP than in the nation. From the perspective of regional economic competitiveness, one of the key values in studying clusters is that it allows for comparisons across regions. In the clusters we studied, a high employment rank and a high LQ suggests a true competitive advantage for that industry in the region. In examining the relationship between a cluster’s LQ and whether its concentration increased or decreased from 1998 to 2010, we found that the three most concentrated clusters were also three of the fastest growing (Figure 1).

Table 1. Selected Industry Clusters for the MSP Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>MSP Employment (2010)</th>
<th>National Employment Rank</th>
<th>MSP Location Quotient</th>
<th>Mean Annual Wage ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical Devices</td>
<td>20,097</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>82,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of Companies</td>
<td>90,843</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>114,703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting and Electrical Equipment</td>
<td>5,677</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>55,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Instruments</td>
<td>13,157</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>62,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing and Printing</td>
<td>18,826</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>53,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Technology</td>
<td>9,789</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>61,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal Manufacturing</td>
<td>16,458</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>54,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>39,806</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>96,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>14,919</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>94,305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Logistics</td>
<td>27,821</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>50,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution Services</td>
<td>30,108</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>73,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed Food</td>
<td>18,256</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>47,065</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 If an industry has an LQ of 1.0, it means that the share of an industry in the regional economy is the same as the industry’s share in the national economy. If the LQ is greater than 1.0, it means that the industry is more concentrated in the region than average, whereas an LQ of less than 1.0 means that the region has a lower than average concentration of an industry. Typically, industries with very high LQs, such as the MSP medical devices cluster, are export-oriented.

Delta/Northwest Airlines merger and the movement of the headquarters to Atlanta.

Each of the selected MSP region industry clusters includes at least one large company that serves as a foundation to the cluster (Table 2). The Census Bureau assigns one North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code to each establishment based on the firm’s primary activity, or how it generates the most revenue. In reality, however, companies may operate across industries and across clusters. As a result, some companies may appear in more than one cluster in Table 2.

Large companies ranged from being relatively young firms with rapid growth (such as UnitedHealth) to historic companies that have changed their business model since the early days of their presence in the regional economy (such as 3M). Management of companies refers to the corporate, subsidiary, and regional managing offices subcluster. This subcluster consists of

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Table 2. Representative Companies in Selected MSP Region Industry Clusters (Companies in bold were interviewed for the report)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Notable MSP Companies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical Devices</td>
<td>Medtronic, St. Jude Medical, Boston Scientific, 3M, Patterson Dental, Starkey Labs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of Companies</td>
<td>UnitedHealth, Target, Best Buy, CHS, 3M, General Mills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting and Electrical Equipment</td>
<td>Hirel Systems, MN Wire, Precision Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Instruments</td>
<td>MTS Systems, Rosemount Inc., Bergquist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing and Printing</td>
<td>Thomson Reuters, Smead Manufacturing, Smyth Companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Technology</td>
<td>Chart Industries, Thiele Technologies, Bosch Packaging, Quality Tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal Manufacturing</td>
<td>Pentair, Metal-Matic, Kurt Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>US Bank, Ameriprise Financial, Thrivent Financial, Securian Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>Thomson Reuters (West Law), Dolan Company, Resistance Technology, Polar Semiconductor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Logistics</td>
<td>CH Robinson, Carlson Wagonlit, Delta Airlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution Services</td>
<td>Cargill, CHS Inc., Mosaic, Shop NBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed Food</td>
<td>CHS Inc., General Mills, Land O’Lakes, MOM Brand Company</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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establishments that administer, oversee, and manage other establishments of the company or enterprise in a strategic, planning, or decision making role. While management of companies for most regions is proportional to its employment share, MSP has an unusually high LQ of 2.31. In other words, this subcluster represents the large presence of corporate headquarters in the Minneapolis–St. Paul region.

The MSP region benefits from a diverse portfolio of industry clusters with linkages to other clusters within the region (Figure 2), as well as with competitive clusters in Greater Minnesota. For example, processed food is a competitive cluster in Greater Minnesota and micropolitan regions in Minnesota state with 21 of the 25 metropolitan areas typically collocated within a region having an LQ of 1.3 or greater. Figure 2 indicates linkages among clusters that are typically collocated within a region based on a national cluster analysis. Clusters with overlapping borders or identical shading have at least 20% overlap (by number of industries) in both directions. In addition to medical devices, analytical instruments, and lighting and electrical equipment being the clusters most concentrated and growing the most in concentration, these three are also share similar companies.

Some clusters within the region serve more so as complementary clusters than stand-alone clusters; that is, the goods manufactured within these clusters are more commonly used as inputs for the goods manufactured by another cluster as opposed to being manufactured directly for consumer use. For example, in interviews with companies and industry experts, we found that the analytical instruments cluster, which consists of tools used for precise measurements, overlaps with the medical devices cluster and other manufacturing sectors. Similarly, the production technology cluster, which includes companies that manufacture machinery to be used in the manufacturing process, is a complementary cluster that is able to shape the ways that many other clusters perform their work.

**Analysis of Knowledge Flows.** The MSP region’s diversified economy not only makes it resilient, but also enables knowledge transfers to occur within as well as across sectors. Knowledge flows across firms can help competitors to keep up with one another; they can transfer best practices across or within sectors. Some of the ways in which knowledge transfers or knowledge flows can occur among firms are through informal social relationships and interactions among workers, through trade organizations and publications, or

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**Figure 2. Competitiveness and Composition of MSP Metro Area**

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**COMPETITIVENESS AND COMPOSITION OF MSP METRO AREA**

*Linkages Across Traded Clusters, Location Quotients, 2010*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Location Quotient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fishing &amp; Fishing Products</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Products</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution &amp; Services</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Services</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Tech.</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Knowledge Creation</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Devices</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biopharmaceuticals</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Instruments</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting &amp; Electrical Equipment</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefabricated Enclosures</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Materials</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed Food</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Driven Products</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Construction Services</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Generation</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Machinery</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Manufacturing</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Technology</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal Manufacturing</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Instruments</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting &amp; Electrical Equipment</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefabricated Enclosures</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Technology</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Clusters with overlapping borders or identical shading have at least 20% overlap (by number of industries) in both directions.

through worker flows between different firms as job changes occur. More formalized collaborations and partnerships among firms also enable knowledge transfers. Exploratory work as part of this project looked at the sectors that are hiring from similar occupational classes to see where worker flows (and as a consequence, knowledge flows) may be occurring. Researchers have also looked at knowledge transfers by looking at citations in patent databases (Examples, Jaffe et al. [1993]8; Agrawal et al. [2003]9) to trace the knowledge base that new innovations are based on. However, in sectors where patenting or publications with citations are not the norm, other methods are needed to find out patterns of worker movements across firms. These approaches may involve proprietary data (e.g., using data from sites such as LinkedIn or other portals) where work histories could be investigated to identify patterns of worker movements within or across sectors. This analysis looks at the potential for these types of worker (and thereby knowledge) flows by looking at more readily available (and less detailed) data that describes the different occupations that sectors employ. The data, which is a sector-by-occupation matrix for the metropolitan region made available by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), provides a way to look at which sectors are pursuing similarly skilled workers and thereby enabling worker movement across sectors.

Our analysis focuses on sectors that are considered basic to the region (a location quotient of 1.1 or greater is used for identifying basic sectors). In addition, since many occupations are present in multiple sectors without necessarily transferring specialized knowledge, a way to exclude these occupation classes from the analysis was instituted. The criteria for specialization of an occupation was based on how many sectors employed a given occupation. This automatically removes generic occupation classes such as office administrators or generic manager titles as these appear in many sectors. Some technical jobs such as machinists were left in the occupation list for identifying the shared occupation classes while others such as butchers were removed even though they may have been only present in a small number of sectors (see full report for details). The potential for knowledge flow is then defined based on whether some sectors attract workers from multiple occupation classes that are in the “specialized” occupation list. The criteria for specializations are set at four different levels and the number of the occupations that needed to be shared among sectors also varied as the specialization criteria is changed. This enables us to look at the variation in identified knowledge sharing potential under different specifications of specialization and knowledge sharing. Figure 3 shows one such analysis where only occupations present in five or fewer sectors are used and only sectors that attract three or more of these specialized occupations are shown. As can be seen, each occupation is attracted by two or more sectors—workers who move from one sector to another as a result of these hiring needs transfer skills and knowledge across sectors.

The shared occupation needs among basic sectors suggests that many of the regions’ basic sectors, through the transfer of workers, likely enrich each other’s knowledge base. This is in addition to knowledge and worker flows that may occur within sectors, which our analysis doesn’t explore. Second, it also identifies which occupations are in common demand by many of the regions’ basic sectors. These shared occupations cover a wide range, including degree-requiring statistical, engineering, and programming fields, as well as trade-oriented jobs, such as machine operators and mechanical drafters. This identification of occupations allows policy makers and educators to plan around the shared workforce needs of the region’s basic sectors.

Emerging Clusters. The MSP region has long nurtured a business ecosystem that fosters innovation and entrepreneurship. Many industrial innovations ranging from the aerospace industry to medical devices to supercomputers have their roots within the region. Four emerging clusters may provide new opportunities for the MSP regional economy: water technologies, 3-D printing, biorenewables, and robotics. Because of their emergent nature, these industries do not perfectly align within the standardized cluster definition. Still, they are of great importance, as they are likely to play a major role in how MSP is able to compete globally in the future.

If the region is able to harness the strength and encourage the growth of these emerging clusters, then they may be able to gain an advantage in the industry. If not, they may fail to mature or move elsewhere. The University of Minnesota’s MnDRIVE program, funded by the Minnesota State Legislature in 2013 to support the growth of targeted industry clusters and advance University research-driven innovations, is already making investments in water technologies, robotics and food-related biorenewables in collaboration with businesses. This may prove to be a promising approach in stimulating the growth of these emerging clusters.

Water Technologies. The MSP region is at the forefront of water- and wastewater-treatment technologies. It is home to industry leaders Pentair, Donaldson, Ecolab, and Osmonics (now owned by GE), and uses its abundant water sources as a proving ground of sorts. As water shortages impact numerous regions across the globe, the sustainability of water resources is of critical importance. The water-tech sector began in the region around a decade ago, as large firms such as 3M and Pentair began to expand and diversify their businesses by purchasing smaller water-treatment firms. Earnings per share are expected to grow at Pentair as a result of an increased demand for industrial water-filtration equipment and pumps, in addition to residential-related water-tech equipment. This emerging subsector, however, has long been a part of the Minnesota economy. For example, Osmonics, a firm formerly headquartered in Minnetonka, pioneered reverse-osmosis technology in the 1960s as environmental awareness began to grow demand for environmental stewardship. Products from the water technology cluster are related to food and agricultural products, information technology, production technology and analytical instruments clusters. DEED and GREATER MSP convened a Water Technology Business Summit at Ecolab’s Schuman Campus in Eagan, Minnesota, in March 2014 with 150 water technology business, development and academic leaders to talk about the importance of this growing industry and to identify ways to work together to build the cluster.

3-D Printing. The MSP region is home to Stratasys, the world’s

largest manufacturer of 3-D printers and 3-D production systems. Their products include 3-D printers, rapid-prototyping solutions, and direct digital-manufacturing solutions. Because of the specialized nature of many of the region’s production technology and manufacturing firms, 3-D printing has largely been used for prototyping because it is less wasteful and more efficient for specialized one-off jobs. The Digital Fabrication Lab at the University of Minnesota has strategically positioned Minnesota students around this emerging industry. 3-D printing is also being explored for use in the health sciences. Recently, scientists and researchers have begun investigating 3-D printing to print tissues and organs. As a result of MSP’s strength in both 3-D printing and medical devices, an intersection could occur between these two sectors in the region. 3-D printing is also closely tied with the region’s information technology and production technology clusters.

**Biorenewables.** Research at the University of Minnesota’s Center for Sustainable Polymers has focused on advanced synthetic polymers for use as environmentally friendly, cost-efficient plastics made from natural and renewable materials. The center researches these polymers on the molecular level in order to make materials stronger and more elastic, giving them the properties admired in petroleum materials. Biorenewables have been used in a variety of commercialized products, including pressure-sensitive adhesives for tape or “sticky” notes, foams for seat cushions, bedding or insulation, and hard plastics for items such as cell-phone cases.

Expansion of the advanced-biofuels and bio-based chemicals sector has a high potential for strong employment growth throughout Minnesota, with the industry contributing more than 2,000 indirect and direct jobs in 2011. This growth occurred in three main categories: headquarters; agriculture bio-refineries (manufacturing capacity for advanced biofuels and bio-based chemicals that utilize agriculture-based resources); and forest bio-refineries (industries that utilize forest-based resources). The emerging biorenewables cluster is closely tied with the Greater Minnesota food and agricultural products, forest products, plastics and chemical clusters.

**Robotics.** Minnesota is a global leader in ground and industrial robotics at its basic and applied research institutions, established firms, and young companies. The robotics field in Minnesota stems from the MSP region’s strength in bioscience, agriculture, mining, retail, and industrial manufacturing. In addition to benefiting these traditional industries, robotics is also at the forefront of some of the state’s more
emerging industries, such as security and defense.

Several cluster-strengthening organizations are also encouraging Minnesota’s robotics industry growth. For example, Robotics Alley was founded as a way to create public and private partnerships around robotics. The Global Robotics Innovation Park in Minneapolis is a research park and business incubator for the entire robotics industry in the upper Midwest, and seeks to act as the hub for the entire regional industry cluster. Robotics at the University of Minnesota, particularly development of the Scout, has received national attention.

Discussion
Our research, in particular the discussions with economic development leaders and interviews with businesses, led to several findings about the regional economy.

Much of the conversation regarding the Minneapolis–St. Paul regional economy is centered on the large companies and anchor institutions that are foundational to the strength of the region’s clusters. Through the interviews, the research team found that in many instances anchor companies had direct supply-chain relationships with other companies within the cluster. Furthermore, these large companies serve as essential trainers of talent within the industry and beyond. In addition to interacting within their respective clusters, the large companies (often indicative of the clusters as a whole) also interacted with firms outside of their clusters. Indeed, these cross-cluster linkages were ubiquitous in the cluster analysis.

Many of the large companies headquartered in the MSP region are located here because they were formed within the region, as identified through interviews and discussions. All interviews identified the MSP region’s well-trained workforce as a strength that allowed them to continue to operate in the region, despite shipping costs to major markets on the east and west coasts limiting some manufacturing, especially of larger products. One result of this is the region’s specialization in advanced manufacturing exemplified by a high concentration of analytical instruments and lighting and electrical equipment employment.

Harvard economist Michael Porter proposes a framework for analyzing and explaining what drives industry clusters to be competitive, which he calls the diamond of advantage (see sidebar). This diamond can be used to examine the conditions of an economy that allow for higher levels of innovation and productivity. The company interviews suggest that a highly skilled labor force, a factor condition, is one of the principal reasons for the region’s competitive advantage.

With regards to knowledge flows, it is helpful for policymakers and economic development professionals to know which occupations in particular are most important to the region. The need for highly skilled and specialized labor was intrinsic in most of the companies interviewed. Although the researchers found that some Minneapolis–St. Paul companies often would relocate manufacturing facilities outside the region, they would frequently keep specialized jobs such as engineers and designers within the region as a result of this talented workforce.

Emerging clusters are especially important to the region, as the proper cultivation could lead to a key advantage, while the wrong decisions could prompt the clusters to flounder or move elsewhere. Business climate and over-regulation could place burdens on these emerging industries, while support from institutions such as trade associations or universities could provide additional support for growth.

Conclusions
Ultimately, no region can compete in the constantly shifting global marketplace without an implicit understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Cluster studies have been used to identify regional competitive advantages. The strength of the Minneapolis–St. Paul regional economy lies in diversification, a talented workforce, and a high concentration of Fortune 500 headquarters. High-value traded clusters are of particular importance to the region, especially in medical devices, lighting and electrical equipment, and analytical instruments. The region also has an opportunity in the four emerging clusters of interest identified – water technology, 3-D printing, biorenewables, and robotics.

In order for MSP to remain a prosperous region, its clusters must be nurtured by public policies that benefit the region’s long-term interests. Policies that encourage innovation and entrepreneurship are especially important for the region in the long-term, especially as economic trends change. Policies tied to infrastructure, quality of life, education, environment, social equity, and workforce quality are critical to the
In 1990, Harvard Business School Professor Michael Porter proposed a framework for analyzing and explaining what drives industry clusters to be competitive, which he called the diamond of advantage (see figure). The diamond consists of four complementary parts: factor conditions; demand conditions; related and supporting industries; and firm strategy, structure, and rivalry. These parts interact with one another to create conditions where innovation occurs and the region becomes more competitive.

**Factor conditions** refer to the inputs necessary to preserve a healthy cluster, such as specialized infrastructure, natural resources, or labor pools, or disadvantages that drive innovation. For the MSP regional economy, notable factor conditions include a highly skilled technical workforce and anchor institutions (such as universities and government offices). Historically, the region’s clusters have heavily relied on Minnesota’s natural resources, such as agricultural land, vast forests, mineral deposits, and extensive water resources.

**Demand conditions** refer to the customer demand, particularly local demand that is needed for companies and industries to grow. It is expected that demand will always exist for industries such as processed food, water technology, and medical devices. In the past, local demand for computer and telecommunications industries (and later medical devices) has contributed to the development of the region’s lighting and electrical equipment, analytical instruments, and metal manufacturing clusters. The MSP region is also home to a large number of professional-services firms that cater to the demands of the region’s corporations.

In addition to professional-services firms, many other related and supporting industries exist throughout the MSP region. Because traded clusters require transportation and distribution as well as other support services, these complementary industries also have high concentrations within the region. In addition, products and services within the information technology cluster are utilized by a large and growing segment of the regional economy. The connected talent of the region creates additional linkages between competitive clusters and their related and supporting industries.

**Firm strategy, structure, and rivalry** refers to intense local rivalry among local industries that supports more sophisticated competition and higher levels of productivity; that is, a local culture, institutions, and policies that influence individual industries’ innovation and competition. Overall, the MSP region’s strength in multiple clusters, in conjunction with its high concentration of corporate headquarters, creates an ecosystem that is ripe for innovation and entrepreneurship. The strength of this ecosystem, where industries work with one another transferring products, services, ideas, and talent, is one explanation for the regional economy’s resiliency during the recent recession. The corporate headquarters within the region compete for and recruit against each other in the war for talented workers, further creating linkages throughout the regional economy.

For more information, see M. Porter, On Competition (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2008).

region’s future competitiveness and its ability to attract and retain talent. In this sense, regional stability is important to regional prosperity. State, regional, and local policymakers and economic development leaders benefit from a better understanding of the regional economy as a result of a study such as this and can make targeted investments accordingly.

Minnesota has long been known for its entrepreneurial and innovative nature, beginning with advanced manufacturing from the mining industry, its legacy as a global milling hub, and as a global epicenter for medical devices. For the MSP region to continue to grow and prosper, it must not only continue to support its legacy industries, but, more importantly, renew and enhance the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit that led to their establishment.

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The research upon which this article is based was supported by a grant from the University Metropolitan Consortium. The full report is available on the Economic Development Administration Cluster Mapping website at z.umn.edu/rgj.
Equity in Place: How Community Groups Are Shaping Investment in the Twin Cities Region

Equity in Place is a diverse group of strategic partners from place-based, housing, and advocacy organizations. We believe that everyone in the Twin Cities region deserves to live where they want to live and have access to opportunity. Our region benefits from many assets, but we continue to be unable to translate these benefits to everyone, specifically to communities of color.

Equity in Place engages community-based organizations in influencing planning and investments that will shape the future of the Twin Cities region. We believe:

- Equitable growth is good for everyone—individuals, communities, and the greater region.
- Equitable growth requires intentional planning, policymaking, and implementation.
- Government plans about communities of color need to be completed in partnership with communities of color.

A major opportunity came in 2012, when the Metropolitan Council was asked to complete a regional assessment called the Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA). The FHEA was a first-of-its-kind process, mandated by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and intended to identify where opportunities existed (or didn’t) in the Twin Cities region, with particular attention to low-wealth communities of color.

Influencing Regional Investment
Equity in Place recognized that the FHEA could drive future investment and policy, and understood the possible impact of those decisions in our communities. We also knew that without external pressure, the Met Council was likely to complete the FHEA without meaningful community input. We were able to turn what might have been a status quo government process into a powerful opportunity for low-income people and people of color to shape the futures of our communities by:

- **Building a self-interest in engaging in this process:** Community-based organizations are often overworked and don’t have the capacity to engage in processes that don’t have an immediate and visible connection to their constituents. But Equity in Place knew that the health of our communities depends on being connected to one another and to decision-makers. We also knew that the region had been having conversations and making decisions about race and place for a long time without much consultation with people of color. We were able to rally around the idea that outsiders would not make decisions, once again, for our communities.

- **Crafting a shared analysis around opportunity and equity:** We developed a shared narrative about opportunity, which crossed different geographies, races, and cultures. We decided that working collectively would be the most powerful way to engage in the process, impact the assessment as it developed, and be at the table for future policy decisions.

- **Reframing the problems and the solutions facing our region:** The FHEA conversation was initially focused on defining racially concentrated areas of poverty (RCAPs) throughout the region, which positioned low-wealth communities of color as the problem. In response, Equity in Place asked questions about the region’s racially concentrated areas of wealth. That provocative change allowed decision-makers to consider why concentrations of affluent white people were not also seen as a problem for the region. We were able to subtly shift the narrative, opening peoples’ minds to new ways of thinking.

- **Democratizing expertise:** One of our goals was to redefine who is seen as an expert in the region. After years of traditional, top-down planning in the Twin Cities region, government had been positioned as the expert on how to solve problems in low-wealth communities of color. This process, in contrast, elevated the wisdom, experience, and vision of people who lived in those communities.

- **Pushing for an equitable process:** Throughout the assessment, the relationship between the public sector and the community periodically broke down or deteriorated. We found ways to hold government accountable. For example, at one point we wrote a letter to HUD and the Met Council, signed by every organization, which demanded a better process. We emailed the letter, and had a positive response from Washington, D.C., within 24 hours, which sent a powerful signal that we were an important player in the project.

- **Bridging relationships and leveraging external allies:** With support from the Northwest Area Foundation, we started a dinner and
dialogue series with potential allies on the Met Council to discuss the issues that mattered most to each community. We also developed strong relationships with HUD staff. This enhanced the social connectedness of the communities at the table and created pressure points through which external stakeholders could emphasize that community engagement was critical to the process.

- **Securing community-level input on the FHEA document:** In the past, it would have been common for an intermediary organization to review a document, share the feedback with community leaders for approval, and then present it to government stakeholders. This process, in contrast, brought community-level leaders into relationship through a complex government process. Together, we provided three rounds of feedback on the 100-page FHEA document.

### Shifting the Regional Narrative

Equity in Place is involved in this process because we want to ensure that all Twin Cities communities are geographies of opportunity. We told the Met Council, “Tell us what impact we can have, don’t just meet with us to say you met with us.” Our results include:

- **Reframing the analysis:** Early drafts of the FHEA did not offer a historical analysis of what factors and decisions led to racial and spatial inequities. We collectively asked the Met Council to tell a more complete story of how disparities were created and reinforced in our region. We stressed the need to clarify that “access” to opportunities such as good jobs, housing, health, and education, was very different than “proximity” to those resources.

- **Naming institutional racism:** The Equity in Place table knows that how our regional problems are defined impacts how solutions are developed. We pushed a narrative that named institutional racism and decades of disinvestment as key causes of concentrated poverty in communities of color. The resulting plan goes into greater depth in detailing the history of each community and names factors, including explicit references to institutional racism, that tell a better story of how the Twin Cities region got to this point.

### Shifting governmental process:

Over the year or so that Equity in Place worked on this issue, we have observed a shift in how the Met Council approaches community engagement and talks about racial equity. Met Council staff and leadership now speak more openly about the need to lead with racial equity for the Twin Cities to thrive.
Securing positional power for community members: With our encouragement, the Met Council has added several community leaders of color to its Housing Policy Plan Working Group. This will help ensure that when investments actually land in communities, people of color are at the decision-making table.

Securing commitments for deeper community connection: The Met Council has committed to a process that will engage multiple jurisdictions and community organizations to create reinvestment strategies in historically disinvested communities. Improved community engagement practices will set up the potential for a shift in resources and policy that will contribute to more future investment in communities of color.

The FHEA, now titled Choice, Place and Opportunity: An Equity Assessment of the Twin Cities Region, shifted the narrative about engagement and investment in communities of color in the Twin Cities region. It changed the agenda for the region and influenced decisions that will create healthier communities. Our work helped reinforce that government can’t make decisions about people without their involvement, and that low-income people of color are not a problem to be solved or a deficit to our region—they are an asset and a part of the solution.

Next Steps: Blueprints for Investment
To ensure the Twin Cities region offers opportunity for everyone, regional stakeholders will have to engage in a sustained and intentional conversation about how equity can be embedded into our policies and practices. It will require commitments and investments across multiple jurisdictions and sectors.

Throughout the series of public planning sessions in communities of color that will be convened by the Met Council, Equity in Place will support communities in developing comprehensive blueprints for intensive, equity-driven investments and policies. The process will bring together stakeholders with different areas of interest and expertise, knowledge, experiences and constituencies to allow for more effective solutions and more coordinated investments. It will also prioritize the wisdom of low-income communities and communities of color in shaping our future vision, developing plans and allocating resources in their own communities.

Equity in Place recognizes that healthy communities are created through a variety of physical, social, economic and environmental factors. We can no longer view these issues in isolation. The way our region plans for and invests in opportunities can contribute significantly to healthier communities.

To read Choice, Place and Opportunity, visit http://bit.ly/1mE7HXa. The work of Equity in Place was funded in part by the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Minnesota.

### CURA’s Role in the Equity in Place Coalition

| African Career Education & Resource, Inc. | Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing |
| Alliance for Metropolitan Stability | Native American Community Development Institute |
| Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Center | New American Academy |
| Center for Urban and Regional Affairs | Northside Community Reinvestment Coalition |
| Community Stabilization Project | Northside Residents Redevelopment Council |
| Frogtown Neighborhood Association | Organizing Apprenticeship Project |
| Harrison Neighborhood Association | Minnesotans Standing Together to End Poverty |
| Hope Community | West Side Community Organization |
| Housing Preservation Project | |
The Out-of-school Suspensions of Black Students: A Racial and Social Justice Issue

By Priscilla A. Gibson, Wendy Haight, and Misa Kayama

Abstract: This report summarizes a study of out-of-school suspensions of black youth. Youth who were suspended, their caregivers, and educators participated in individual, semi-structured, audiotaped interviews. Participants from all groups expressed a commitment to youth education, viewed suspensions as a racial issue and described youth behaviors using language from the criminal justice system. Youth perspectives included the peer group as a context for their behavior. Caregivers described the negative impact of suspensions on the family-school relationship. Educators described system-level barriers to implementing what they considered to be better practices for responding to youth misbehaviors. Implications for addressing racial disproportionalities in out-of-school suspensions are discussed. The research on which this article is based was supported by a grant from the University Metropolitan Consortium, which is coordinated through CURA.

Racial disproportionalities in out-of-school suspensions are a persistent social-justice and child-wellbeing issue. Suspensions involve removing children from school for up to 10 days, often for relatively minor misbehaviors such as fighting, noncompliance and disrespect. Suspensions are largely ineffective as fighting, noncompliance and disrespect 1. Suspensions are largely ineffective in their goal of deterring inappropriate student behaviors, but they do harm their well-being, health, and academic achievement; and facilitate entry into the juvenile justice system. 2 Nationally, black children are three times more likely than white children to be suspended, 3 yet black students are no more likely than other students to engage in unsafe rule-breaking behaviors at school. 4 In short, suspensions act as a barrier to upward mobility and meaningful employment through school success historically emphasized in black families. 5, 6, 7

The research that we describe here is the first to simultaneously examine the perspectives of black youth, their caregivers, and their educators on specific incidents of suspensions. Exploring the experiences and meanings of suspensions for those who are directly involved provides an important lens for considering how youth, caregivers, and educators can work together to reduce suspensions of black youth.

Method
We collected data from September 2012 to July 2013 from suspended students, their caregivers, and their educators in the Twin Cities metro area. We invited all of the students with suspensions to participate along with their caregivers and educators, and approximately half of students and caregivers agreed as did 80% of educators. A total of 78 informants completed in-depth, individual, audiotaped interviews. There were 31 black youth, aged 11–17 (mean = 14.4), 28 caregivers, and 19 educators. Youth received suspensions for physical fights (52%), disruptive behaviors (19%), theft (13%), disrespectful behavior toward educators (10%), and making threats (6%). Twenty-one (68%) of the youth were male and 13 (42%) received special services for emotional and behavior disorders or

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specific learning disabilities. Caregivers included 24 mothers (86%), three fathers (11%), and one grandmother (3%). Twenty-four (86%) caregivers were African American and 4 (14%) were African immigrants. Eleven (58%) of the educators were white, seven (37%) were black, and one (5%) was Latino. Eight (42%) were general-education teachers, eight (42%) were administrators (principals, behavior deans, and the district superintendent), two (11%) were special-education teachers and one (5%) was a lunchroom supervisor.

Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. A team of researchers independently and through discussion then developed a set of codes summarizing the views of youth, caregivers, and educators.

Results
Three major categories of findings from this study are the psychosocial correlates of suspensions, the social-language analysis of suspensions, and the social construction of behaviors into suspensible offenses.

The Psychosocial Correlates of Suspensions. In discussing their experiences of suspensions, informants considered pathways to suspensions, emotional and relationship consequences of suspensions, and recommendations to mitigate suspensions.

Pathways to Suspensions. Generally, the students, caregivers, and educators agreed about the official reported incident leading to suspension, but disagreed about contributing factors, especially from the students’ perspectives.

- Students’ explanations of contributing factors to their misdeeds went beyond the official reasons cited for the suspension referrals to the broader context, often of the peer group. Their perspectives included they misbehaved and were responsible for their actions; they misbehaved, but were justified in their actions (usually seen as self-defense); and they were unaware that their misdeeds were suspensible offenses.
- Caregivers typically questioned “official” school interpretations of student behaviors and questioned the educators’ commitment to their children. In many cases, caregivers viewed children’s misdeeds as age typical; a result of following the wrong crowd of peers, underlying emotional problems, or reacting to family crises; or as justifiable acts of self-defense.
- Educators described a variety of reasons for the suspensions, including students’ inappropriate play, rivalries among peers, and underlying behavioral problems. They also described system-level challenges to responding to children’s misdeeds in more productive ways. These challenges included overcrowded classrooms that make relationship building difficult and inadequate support services such as counseling.

Emotional and Relational Consequences of Suspensions. Most informants experienced intensely negative feelings and deterioration in relationships as a result of the suspensions.

- Suspended students described feelings of anger and upset from being suspended. Students’ relationships with their peers/friends and caregivers at home also became strained. Students reported that they were treated differently by educators after returning to school and were avoided by certain of their peers. In addition, students felt that the suspensions had negatively impacted their school performance due to missed assignments, and that they had problems making up work after returning to school.
- Caregivers expressed anger, upset, and frustration not only about the interruption in their children’s education, but also because of the potentially negative impact of suspension on their children’s educational future.
- Some caregivers described relationship changes with their children. Despite their unwavering support for their children being in school, caregivers varied in their reactions to the misdeed. Some caregivers described that they had developed mistrust of their children and begun monitoring their attitudes and providing instructions, such as to think before acting.
- Caregivers generally imposed sanctions or punishment for the misdeed. In rare cases, a caregiver viewed the suspension as a timely warning to the child to change his or her behavior, or reported that a sibling had a negative reaction to the suspension.
- Typically, the suspension resulted in strained relationships between caregivers and educators. Caregivers initially reacted with strong, vocal opinions of their disagreement with suspensions.
- Consequences expressed by caregivers varied slightly between those who self-identified as African immigrants and those who self-identified as African Americans. Although both expressed a lack of agency, the contexts were different. Some African American caregivers reported being unable to act immediately on the request of the educator or assertively on behalf of the child. African immigrant caregivers expressed frustration with educators’ inability to provide effective discipline because of fear of litigation, as well as their own inability to act in traditional ways because of what they perceived to be prohibitions on physical discipline.
- Educators also experienced consequences from the suspensions similar to students and caregivers, including intense negative emotions and deterioration in relationships. They felt frustration with the students’ misdeeds or the length of time it took for the underlying problem to be recognized. Some educators were concerned that students’ behaviors disrupted their ability to teach other students, or to maintain standards of behavior in the classroom. Others were clearly frustrated with students’ misdeeds and expressed that “students needed some days” away from the school and other students. Others expressed strong opinions that the school had to enforce rules and policies about students’ behavior and misdeeds to keep the institution operating effectively and efficiently.
- Some educators also expressed concerns about the tone and words used by caregivers, which they viewed as ranging from verbally aggressive to verbally abusive (typically characterized by the use of curse words).

Recommendations to Mitigate Suspensions. We asked all informants for recommendations for avoiding suspensions in the future. They responded with strategies that we categorized as being related to student behaviors, caregivers, educators, and schools. The majority of recommendations targeted school policies and procedures (Table 1).

Social-Language Analysis of Suspensions. The concept of narrative inequality refers to the systematic
A total of 51 criminal justice and legal terms were spontaneously used 474 times by 59 of the 78 participants.

Educators used such language to justify punitive actions.

Caregivers used such language to resist sanctions placed on their children.

Students spoke through the perspective of the criminal defendant using terms such as “crime” and “prisoner” to describe their behaviors and experiences.

**The Social Construction of Behaviors into Suspendable Offenses.**

Critical-race theory emerged in the legal literature as a means to address the effects of race and racism. We asked informants to comment on any role of race in suspensions. Our analysis suggested that some educators’ negative misinterpretations of black youth behaviors and modes of communication contributed to the social construction of black youth as aggressive, threatening, and behaviorally/emotionally “explosive.”

Students and their caregivers generally felt that a number of factors associated with race influenced the rate of suspensions for black students. In particular, students noted that prejudicial beliefs and behaviors on the part of the educators, preferential treatment for white students, and the systematic targeting of black students for disciplinary infractions were factors that contributed to disproportionalities in suspension.

Caregivers expressed a belief that educators systematically excluded black children, who exhibited what they perceived as problematic behaviors, from the educational environment via suspensions.

Caregivers also tended to emphasize educators’ lack of cultural competence or cultural knowledge as a primary contributing factor to the disproportionate number of black youth receiving suspensions.

Coinciding with these observations, some educators and students attributed disproportional suspension rates to problematic behavioral characteristics specific to black students. In particular, informants noted that African American youth were more confrontational with teachers, and more physically and verbally antagonistic with peers and classmates, than other students.

**Discussion and Recommendations**

The pathways to suspensions are complex and interrelated. It is important to note that all informants in this study experienced negative emotional consequences to suspensions. Suspensions are interventions that call students’ and their caregivers’ attention to unsanctioned behaviors, yet the emotional costs of suspensions are so tremendous that they rip the fabric of relationships among students, caregivers, and educators, resulting in distrust and compromising future interactions. Given that educators, in the minds of students and caregivers, represent the public school system, suspensions cause distrust at the level of family-school relationships that hinders schools’ ability to educate students.

**Table 1. Recommendations to Mitigate Out-of-school Suspensions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target of Recommendation</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td>■ To exercise self-control by walking away, using common sense, and avoiding arguing with educators</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ To go to school to learn, not to play</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Caregivers</strong></td>
<td>■ To be actively involved in school and the education of children</td>
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<td></td>
<td>■ To teach children to refrain from disagreeing with educators in favor of allowing their caregivers to handle the situation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>■ To provide incentives to children for positive behaviors</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Educators</strong></td>
<td>■ To develop relationships with students to avoid problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ To provide students with adult guidance when problems do arise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ To increase their knowledge about differences relative to culture and race</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Schools</strong></td>
<td>■ To increase communication by listening and talking to students, to thoroughly investigate misdeeds, and to get to “know” the students as people to gauge why they behaved in particular ways</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ To provide training to educators in dealing more effectively with students’ behaviors and in communicating their negative behaviors to caregivers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ To contact and communicate with caregivers*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>■ To find alternatives to suspension policies, including in-school suspensions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ To provide more services, such as after-school tutoring and convening meetings between caregivers and educators prior to dealing with misbehavior of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ To reduce class sizes and provide additional staff to assist teachers with their duties</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Interestingly, some caregivers wanted educators to contact them immediately when their children misbehaved, whereas others wanted educators to limit communications with them over minor misdeeds and instead assertively deal with these issues at school.

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Given the adversarial, emotional nature and severe consequences of suspensions, we recommend oversight and review of all suspensions by a committee comprised of educators, caregivers, and students. Furthermore, the emotionality inherent in suspensions calls for policy revisions in which a third party (e.g., counselor or social worker) acts as a mediator to engage the adults—caregivers and educators—in establishing mutual goals for the student. Adults need to be aware that their emotions feed not only the emotions of students, but also the continued negative relationship between students and their educators. Students would benefit from being listened to, with the aim of developing alternative ways to deal with situations instead of using those that resulted in the referral for a suspension.

Results from the social-language analysis revealed stances taken by informants in their experiences of suspensions and how the language they employ forms bridges or barriers to effective communication. It seems that the language of the criminal-justice system is inherent in educational policies governing discipline of students, and is then used by educators, caregivers, and students. We recommend serious reflection and sensitivity not only to what is being communicated to developing children, but also in how those messages are begin communicated. Is a criminal justice language appropriate or desirable in a public school setting? We also recommend that written policies be reassessed because they set the tone for treating students as if they had committed a crime instead of displaying inappropriate behavior. It would be beneficial for educators and caregivers to use the social language of authority to collaborate on one unified message to students relative to appropriate behaviors at home and at school, respectively.

Human beings socially construct their world and their experiences in it; thus, it is not unusual for dynamics reflected in the use of different social voices to occur at school. When such dynamics become racialized and result in suspensions, they become problematic. It has long been argued that educators who lack cultural knowledge can misinterpret black youth behavior as maladaptive or disordered. The misattribution of negative labels to normative black youth behaviors fosters an environment wherein black youth identities are criminalized and punished.

As a result, disruptive, disrespectful, and violent behaviors are encoded as endemic to black youth, who are subsequently regarded as inherently pathological. It seems that, intuitively, the social construction of the behaviors of black students began prior to their entering school in general. However, a difference exists between the larger societal view that is negative and a view by blacks that is context and culturally sensitive. Although cultural sensitivity is needed, it ought to include the context in which students live. Generally, the differences in the social vantage points of educators, students, and caregivers are such that it becomes difficult to (un)stereotype behaviors of black youth, there is a lack of acknowledgement of diversity within black youth behaviors, and caregivers find it difficult to fully advocate for their children and actualize their value in education because they lack a strong working relationship with educators.

If suspensions are to be mitigated, adults in the lives of students must band together to become familiar with each other prior to a misdeed. Making a connection that is not associated with suspensions may serve to increase knowledge across differences so that educators can see the strengths of caregivers and vice versa. In addition, educators must view the behavior of black youth with an acknowledgement of the tendency to socially construct it as violent and assess such behavior in light of an actual concrete threat rather than a perceived threat. Conflicts encountered by black youth are a natural point of intervention to learn mediation and negotiation skills that will prepare them in their future places of higher education and work.

In summary, we can no longer afford to allow society to exclude from education the black youth who will be our next generation of workers. Adults, caregivers, and educators collaborating across differences without the tension of suspensions can begin to focus society in a more positive direction in its view of black youth. Caregivers would benefit from assuming a stance that shows their value of education by working more closely with their children about inappropriate behaviors and obtaining help with problematic behavior, which may also help build relationships between educators and students. Educators would benefit from the painful realization that humans are socialized in an oppressive society, and that dismantling prejudicial beliefs and actions is a lifelong personal and professional journey worthy of pursuit as a responsible citizen. In preparing to take their rightful place as productive adults, students must learn how to be responsible for themselves, follow directions, and form relationships with others. At the same time, they must be taught the reality of living as a black youth who must remain in school and deal with conflicts. This difficult task
CURA Annual Report, 2013-2014

The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) was created in 1968 to connect the University of Minnesota with the community and issues facing the state. This report summarizes the activities during the past year. For more information on any of the programs listed, visit our website at cura.umn.edu.

This is the third year CURA has used this format to present an annual report. The report provides an overview of more than 230 projects and events CURA conducted last year. These projects engaged nearly 70 different University departments/programs and more than 200 different local and state community organizations.

Research Projects: 86

33 Faculty and Graduate Student Research Projects

4 Faculty Interactive Research Program. Competitive program that supports public policy research on issues of significance to Minnesota communities
  - John A. Arthur (Department of Sociology and Anthropology, UMD), Structural and Individualistic Determinants of Access to Healthcare Services: A Case Study of Somali and Sudanese Immigrants and Refugees in Duluth, Minnesota
  - Karen Gran (Department of Geological Sciences, UMD), Identifying and Mitigating Impacts from Expanding Urbanization to Duluth-Area Streams
  - David Karjanen (Department of American Studies), Fringe Banking and Low-Income Communities in the Twin Cities
  - Phyllis Moen (McKnight Presidential Endowed Chair, Department of Sociology), Minnesota Boomers at Work/in Transition

1 Fesler-Lampert Chair in Urban and Regional Affairs. Endowed chair honoring Bert Fesler and Jacob Lampert
  - Hari Osofsky (Law School), Fostering Suburban Climate Change Efforts in the Twin Cities

1 Dissertation Research Grant. Provides one year of support to a doctoral student to complete work on an issue of local significance.
  - Daniel Nidzgorski (Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior), Green Cities and Clear Waters: Can Urban Trees Help Protect our Lakes and Streams?

10 Hennepin-University Partnership. Facilitates strategic connections between Hennepin County and the University of Minnesota that support collaborative research, sharing of expertise, and student field experiences.
  - Tim Sheldon (Center for Applied Research & Educational Improvement) Be@School Evaluation

Technical Assistance Projects: 188

74 Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing. A total of 18 training sessions and 56 significant projects serving 64 different organizations
  - Ned Moore - 9 trainings and 19 projects
  - Jay Clark - 9 trainings and 37 projects

82 Community GIS. Maps and other projects for community organizations requiring 5+ hours effort per project.

3 Charles R. Krusell Fellowship in Community Development. Three organizations supported by graduate students of color enrolled in the Humphrey School.

15 Neighborhood Partnership Initiative. Provides grants up to $10,000 to community-based organizations and/or artists working to build vibrant neighborhoods that engage their diverse residents, build neighborhood resiliency, and increase the collective efficacy and action in a place.

4 CURA:Tech. Small planning grants funding collaborations among diverse communities in the Twin Cities to design, create, and deploy civic technology tools and practices.

10 Hennepin-University Partnership. HUP responded to specific requests from seven different county departments.
10 CURA-organized events
- Anchoring Equity: Minnesota’s Tomorrow. March 2014: 240 attendees. (Neeraj Mehta with Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation, Nexus Community Partners, Northwest Area Foundation and The McKnight Foundation)
- Housing Forum: Two events with an average attendance of 50 people
- CURA:Tech: Two-day Human-Centered Design workshop on strategies for designing civic technologies (40 attended), and four collaboration sessions to develop proposals (average of 15 people at each) Spring 2014
- Community-Based Research Workshops. Two events with a total attendance of 25 people
- Minnesota Foreclosure Roundtable with Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers, MN Housing and Minnesota Foreclosure Partners Council, February 2014 (25 people attended)

7 CURA co-sponsored conferences
- Policy Analysis Conference. October 2013 (provided scholarships for three organizations)
- Twin Cities Media Alliance Fall Forum: Getting the Word Out. November 2013

3 Hennepin-University Partnership events
- Ripple Effect Mapping. September 2013 — 40 people attended
- Family Shelter Dialogue. December 2013 — 42 people attended
- Diversity and Inclusion Exchange. April 2014 — 90 people attended

3 Resilient Communities Project
- RCP-North St. Paul Kickoff Event, September 2013, 50 people attended
- RCP-North St. Paul Community Open House, October 2013, 70 people attended
- RCP-North St. Paul End-of-Year Celebration, May 2014, 90 people attended

### CURA Projects by Research Area

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This section lists the outside nonprofit and governmental organizations that CURA served in the past year. Organizations are listed by geographic area impacted by their CURA project, not necessarily by their physical location or their service area. Because of this, an organization with multiple CURA projects can appear more than once.

**Community Organizations Served: 230**

**Minneapolis**–85

- 2909 Somali Residents–South Mpls
- Afro-Eco–North Minneapolis
- Appetite for Change–North Minneapolis
- Audubon Neighborhood Association
- Bancroft Neighborhood Association
- BCC–report on Somali community
- Beltrami Neighborhood Council
- Bright Water Charter School–North Minneapolis
- Cedar Riverside Neighborhood Association
- Citizens for a Loring Park Community
- City of Minneapolis
- CPED–Development Services
- CPED–Housing
- City View Housing–North Mpls
- City View Soccer Team–North Mpls
- Cleveland Neighborhood Association
- Corcoran Neighborhood Association
- courageous heARTS–Standish
- CTUL–Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha–Phillips
- East Phillips Improvement Coalition
- EMPOWER–Education Matters: Parents Organized and Working for Education Reform
- Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis
- Folwell Neighborhood Association
- Free Poet’s Press–Cleveland
- Green Central
- Harrison Neighborhood Association
- Hawthorne Eco Village
- Health Equity Engagement Cohort–North Minneapolis

**College of Design**

- Architecture
- Center for Changing Landscapes
- Design Graduate Program
- Design, Housing and Apparel
- Graphic Design
- Housing Studies
- Landscape Architecture
- Sustainable Design

**College of Education and Human Development**

- Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare
- Center for Applied Research and Education Improvement
- Center for Early Education and Development
- Institute of Child Development
- Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute
- Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development

**College of Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resource Sciences**

- Applied Economics
- Conservation Biology
- Environmental Sciences, Policy and Management
- Forestry and Natural Resource Management
- Horticulture
- Natural Resource Science and Management

**College of Liberal Arts**

- American Studies
- Anthropology
- Biology, Society, and Science
- Communication Studies
- Geographic Information Science
- Geography
- Sociology
- Statistics

**College of Science and Engineering**

- Civil Engineering
- Industrial and Systems Engineering

**Humphrey School of Public Affairs**

- MDP – Master of Development Practice in International Development
- Nonprofit Management
- Public Policy
- Urban and Regional Planning

**Law School**

- Medical School

- Program in Health Disparities Research

**School of Public Health**

- Community Health Promotion
- Environmental Health Sciences
- Epidemiology
- Gerontology

**University of Minnesota Extension**

- Center for Family Development
- Community Vitality
- Cook County Office
- Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships

**University-Wide Organizations**

- Center for Transportation Studies
- Community Campus Coordinators Alliance
- Community Campus Network
- Institute on the Environment
- Measurement Services
- Student Affairs
- Sustainability Faculty Network
- TC-PEN (Twin Cities Public Engagement Network)
- UMore Park Academic Mission Advisory Board
- University Senate
- UROC (Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center)
- U-Spatial

**University of Minnesota at Duluth**

- Environmental Education
- Geological Sciences
- Sociology and Anthropology

**Other Colleges and Universities: 3**

- Bemidji State University
- Macalester College
- St. Cloud State University

- northeast CDC
- Northside Fresh
- Northside Funders Group
- Northside Residents Redevelopment Council
- Phillips Bhutanese
- Pillsbury House Theater
- Pohlad Foundation–North Mpls
- Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association
- Prevention Health Care Agency dba Isuroon Project
- PRG–Powderhorn Residents Group
- Project Footsteps–Lyndale
- Project for Pride in Living
- Project Sweetie Pie–North Minneapolis
- Rainbow Terrace Senior Highrise–North Mpls
- Seward Neighborhood Group
- Seward Redesign
- Southside United Neighborhoods
- Standish Ericsson Neighborhood Association
- SUN Collaborative–South Minneapolis
- The Family Partnership–Corcoran
- Twin Cities Community Land Bank
- Twin Cities Media Alliance–Seward
- United Neighborhood Association
- Urban Homesworks
- Volunteers of America Residential Reentry Center
- Waite House–Pillsbury United Communities–Phillips
- Walker Art Center
Greater Twin Cities  
- West Broadway Business and Area Coalition  
- Whittier Alliance  
- St. Paul–31  
  - Aia Dah Yang Center  
  - Anderson Youth Science Center–Frogtown  
  - Aurora/St. Anthony Peace Sanctuary Garden  
  - Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa  
  - Dayton’s Bluff Community Council  
  - District 1 Community Council  
  - District Councils Executive Directors/Community Organizers Group  
  - East Side Progress Campaign  
  - Eastside Financial Center  
  - Frogtown Neighborhood Association  
  - Frogtown Rondo Home Fund  
  - Grand Avenue Business Association  
  - Hamline Midway Coalition  
  - Highland District Council  
  - Historic Saint Paul  
  - Lexington–Hamline Community Council  
  - Macalester–Groveland Community Council  
  - Model Cities  
  - NEDA–Neighborhood Development Alliance  
  - Neighborhood Development Center  
  - Neighborhood Energy Connection  
  - Nexus Community Partners  
  - Parkway Montessori/Community Middle School  
  - Payne-Phalen Residents  
  - Poetry for Thought–Hamline Midway  
  - Science Museum of Minnesota’s Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center  
  - Selby Avenue Action Coalition  
  - Skyline Tower Advantage Center–Union Park  
  - Union Park Community Council  
  - Westside Community Organization  
  - World Culture Heritage District–University Avenue  

Hennepin County Departments–10  
- Community Corrections and Rehabilitation  
- Environmental Services  
- Hennepin County Library  
- Housing Community Works and Transit  
- Human Resources  
- Human Services and Public Health  
- Information Technology  
- Public Affairs  
- Resident and Real Estate Services  
- Transportation  

North Saint Paul Departments–6  
- Administration  
- Community Development  
- Economic Development  
- Fire  
- Police  
- Public Works  

Greater Twin Cities–50  
- Accountability Minnesota  
- ACER–African Career, Education & Resource, Inc.–Brooklyn Park  
- African Immigrant Services  
- Alliance for Metropolitan Stability  
- Asamblea de Derechos Civiles  
- Asian Indian Family Wellness  
- Blue Line Coalition  
- Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis  
- Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy  
- Center for Families  
- Children’s Justice Initiative  
- Community Engagement Team  
- Corridors of Opportunity  
- Dakota County Planning Commission  
- District Councils Collaborative of St. Paul and Minneapolis  
- Equitable Opportunities Project  
- Fair Housing Equity Assessment  
- FamilyWise  
- Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis  
- Gardening Matters  
- Hennepin County Teen Parent Connection  
- Hmong American Partnership  
- Homes Within Reach–Hennepin County  
- Hopkins and Wayzata Hmong Student  
- Hopkins Parks  
- HousingLink  
- Jewish Community Action  
- La Asamblea de Derechos Civiles  
- Lao Assistance Center  
- Legacy Family Center–Hennepin County  
- MetroGIS  
- Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers  
- Metropolitan Council  
- Mujeres en Accion y Poder (Women in Action and Power)  
- New American Academy–Eden Prairie  
- Nexus Community Partners  
- Partnership for Regional Opportunity  
- Peta Wakan Tiipi/Dream of Wild Health  
- Rainbow Health Initiative  
- Sanneh Foundation  
- SEIU Healthcare Minnesota  
- SEWA-Asian Indian Family Wellness  
- St. Paul Public Schools  
- Sundance Family Foundation  
- Twin Cities Agricultural Land Trust  
- Twin Cities Community Land Bank  
- Twin Cities Daily Planet  
- Twin Cities RISE!  
- Union Gospel Mission  
- Vermillion River Watershed Wetland Engagement Team  

Greater Minnesota–13  
- Big Stone Products  
- City of Duluth  
- City of Winona  
- Eagle Bluff Learning Center–SE Minnesota  
- Fargo-Moorhead Kurd Association  
- Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Board  
- Hiawatha Valley Resource Conservation and Development Council  
- Isanti County Parks Department  
- Melrose Lake Improvement Association  
- Middle Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District–NW Minnesota  
- Region 5 Development Commission  
- Southeast Sheep and Fiber Advocates  
- Zumbo Watershed Partnership  

Statewide–20  
- AMAZE  
- American Planning Association–Minnesota Chapter  
- Board of Water and Soil Resources  
- Center for Victim of Torture  
- Goodwill-Easter Seals  
- Karen Association of Minnesota  
- Legal Services Advisory Committee (Minnesota State Courts)  
- Minnesota Association of Museums  
- Minnesota Budget Project  
- Minnesota Department of Human Services  
- Minnesota Foreclosure Partners Council  
- Minnesota Public Health Association  
- MnGEO Statewide Geospatial Advisory Council  
- MN GIS/LIS Consortium  
- Organizing Apprenticeship Project  
- Preservation Alliance of Minnesota  

Renewing the Countryside  
- Rural Advantage  
- SEIU Healthcare Minnesota  
- Steppingstone Theater for Youth Development  

National–15  
- American Community Survey Data Users Group  
- American Composers Forum  
- Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education  
- GIS Certification Institute  
- Imaging America  
- Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago  
- Minnesotans for the American Community Survey  
- National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership  
- National States Geographic Information Council  
- Sustainable City Year National Network  
- Technology Affinity Group serving foundations  
- Transportation Research Board  
- University Consortium for Geographic Information Science  
- Urban & Regional Information Systems Association  
- US Department of Justice  

CURA Supporters

CURA would like to thank its funders for their support. Without them, our work would not be possible. Minnesota and the Twin Cities are better places because of you!

Alliance for Metropolitan Stability  
Blandin Foundation  
City of Minneapolis  
City of North St. Paul  
Hennepin County  
The Initiative Foundation (through their support of rural communities)  
Local Community Organizations  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)  
The McKnight Foundation  
Metropolitan Council  
Minnesota Housing Finance Agency  
Nexus Community Partners  
Pohlad Family Foundation  

University of Minnesota:  
- Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute  
- Humphrey School of Public Affairs  
- Institute on the Environment  
- Office for Public Engagement  
- Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships  
- Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost  
- Senior Vice President for Research  
- Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center
requires not only the support of caregivers and educators, but also a shift in society’s views of black youth. Staying in school instead of being pushed out of school through suspensions is the key.

_The research from this article was recently published in the journal Children and Youth Services Review_. Read the full article at 2.umn.edu/rho.

**Priscilla Gibson** is an Associate Professor in the University of Minnesota School of Social Work, Administrative Fellow in the Institute of Diversity, Equity and Advocacy (IDEA) and Academic Leader Fellow, class, 2013–2014. She earned a doctoral degree from the University of Denver in social work, a Masters of Social Work from Tulane University, and an undergraduate degree from Southern University in social welfare. She is a licensed independent clinical social worker (LICSW), has more than 25 years of direct social work practice experience, and teaches direct practice and cultural diversity courses. Gibson conducts research studies on African American grandmothers and other relatives in intergenerational caregiving arrangements. She also explores out-of-school suspensions (OSS) with students, their families and professionals, and the mentoring of university faculty. **Wendy Haight,** PhD, is the Professor and Gamble-Skogmo Chair in Child Welfare and Youth Policy at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work. Professor Haight completed her undergraduate degree in Psychology at Reed College, and her PhD at University of Chicago where she studied developmental, cultural psychology. Her research focuses on better understanding and supporting vulnerable children and families, especially those involved in public child welfare systems. These projects use mixed methods approaches, and emphasize field (community) initiated and cross-cultural research. They include studies focused on maltreated children who become involved in delinquency, maltreated children who have disabilities, legal representation of parents involved with the child welfare system, why black children are more likely to receive out-of-school suspensions than their white peers, and international child welfare.

**Misa Kayama** is a licensed independent social worker (LISW) and a Postdoctoral Associate at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work. She received her PhD in social work from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Master of Social Work from Illinois State University. Her research focuses on stigma and social justice issues at schools for children and their families who are vulnerable due to disabilities or membership in ethnic minority groups. She has conducted several research projects on children’s experiences in cultural context, including the school experiences of children with developmental disabilities in the United States, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, and minority children with behavioral challenges who received out-of-school suspensions in the United States.

The research on which this article is based was supported by a grant from the University Metropolitan Consortium, which is coordinated through CURA. The mission of the consortium is to strengthen the University’s overall contribution to understanding metropolitan-urban-suburban issues by enhancing and extending the work of existing programs and strengthening the University’s connections to those individuals, communities, and activities in Minnesota, the region, and nationally that are working with those issues on a daily basis.

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**2014–2015 Faculty Research Awards**

CURA is pleased to announce the recipients of faculty research awards for 2014–2015 provided through the Faculty Interactive Research Program (FIRP) and the University Metropolitan Consortium. FIRP was created to encourage University faculty to carry out research projects that involve significant issues of public policy for the state and that include interaction with community groups, agencies, or organizations in Minnesota. Grants are available to regular faculty members at the University of Minnesota and are awarded annually on a competitive basis. The University Metropolitan Consortium was established in 2006 to link the centers, programs, and faculty and staff at the University engaged in teaching, research, and outreach concerned with understanding metropolitan change and development. The mission of the consortium is to strengthen the University’s overall contribution to understanding metropolitan-urban-suburban issues by enhancing and extending the work of its existing programs and strengthening the University’s connections to those in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors who also work with these issues.

- **Internal Migration and Recovery from the Great Recession in Urban Minnesota Counties and Neighborhoods.** This project is a collaborative endeavor with the Minnesota State Demographic Center to understand the role of internal migration within the United States as a means of economic recovery in local, primarily urban, counties and neighborhoods in Minnesota following the Great Recession of 2007–2009. While Minnesota posted a slow but steady recovery, the pace of this recovery was uneven across and within local areas, raising important challenges with respect to issues of economic development and inequality. Using county-to-county migration flow data from IRS tax records, this project will estimate the total household income gained or lost due to internal migration in all Minnesota counties. The project will also develop a procedure to convert these data into tract-to-tract migration flows in an effort to estimate similar quantities for all, but primarily urban, Minnesota neighborhoods toward identifying local areas that might be best served by targeted economic development initiatives and safety net programs.

  **Researchers:** Jack DeWaard (Department of Sociology and Minnesota Population Center) and Zack W. Almquist (Department of Sociology, School of Statistics, and Minnesota Population Center).

  **Program:** Faculty Interactive Research Program.

- **Improving Community Access to Healthy Foods Through the Minneapolis Staple Food Ordinance.** Improving access to healthy foods has been identified as a key strategy for local governments to prevent obesity and promote healthy eating. In early 2015, Minneapolis plans to implement an ordinance requiring all food stores to carry specific healthy foods and beverages as a requirement for licensing. This would be the only policy of its kind in the United States and would have important impacts on food access, particularly in underserved communities.

  **Researchers:** Moira Winters (School of Public Affairs), George Joens (School of Public Affairs), Bret Scheller (Strategic Planning Group), Rich? 

  **Program:** Faculty Interactive Research Program.

  **Continued on page 21**
As technology becomes more and more integrated into our lives, communities around the country are struggling with what that means for our future. While many people constantly feel inundated with information, there is an emerging open data movement acknowledging that data—including government data—is still a largely untapped resource. Simple technological changes can help communities analyze the information available to them, make more informed decisions and participate more actively in civic life.

Nationally, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation has been a leader in funding projects that harness the energy of community-led efforts to solve social challenges by merging existing public data with technologies that can deliver accessible information. The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation also recently launched a program to fund what it calls “disruptive solutions” at the intersection of information, community, and engagement. These programs are at the heart of a philanthropic movement aimed at allowing information to flow freely between government and the citizens it serves to solve critical community problems.

In the Minneapolis-St. Paul region of Minnesota, the McKnight Foundation has followed the lead of these innovators. The foundation is supporting CURA in testing what we call a civic technology incubator. The project, called CURA:Tech, is capitalizing on both community knowledge and technology expertise by building relationships between these two seemingly disparate worlds.

The idea for CURA:Tech came as staff at both CURA and the McKnight Foundation observed a trend toward competitions and “hackathons” that brought technical experts together to build a technology project like a website or a mobile application. We noticed that these projects were often missing the participation of people who may not be tech experts, but who have ideas about how to solve tough community challenges, based in the lived experience of their communities. “We noticed that technology was driving the projects,” said project manager Kristen Murray. “We heard from our partners that it was important for a community need and opportunity to lead the decision-making rather than the technology being in the lead.”

We designed CURA:Tech to create information-based tools that help people connect, have a voice in the public process, and access and deliver resources. The vision was for the project to be truly community-driven, starting with the premise that technology can strengthen low-income communities and communities of color. CURA’s director of community-based research, Neeraj Mehta, says this was important because the best community solutions usually come from residents themselves. “Much of the early civic technology work did not analyze who benefitted or was indifferent about who benefitted from the tools that were created,” Mehta said. “We wanted this project to bring together leaders who were experts in the challenges and assets of their communities with technology experts who could co-design solutions.”

Putting community in the lead, particularly low-income people and people of color, acknowledged the changing demographics of the Twin Cities region. Just a few decades ago, the area was predominantly white. Now people of color make up a sizable share of the regional population and are the majority in some suburban communities—and yet racial disparities in education, wealth, employment, health, and more abound. By democratizing data and problem-solving processes, CURA hopes the technologies developed can give low-income people and people of color more power and information to help both government and nonprofits work better for their communities.

CURA:Tech introduced a human-centered design method to project teams, which focused on integrating the unique experiences and perspectives of real people. The key message to project teams was to avoid making assumptions about what technical solutions might work best, and instead to listen to the community need, brainstorm solutions, and test technologies with community members. CURA also held events that we called mixers, which allowed technologists, designers, and community leaders to collaboratively generate ideas for a technological solution. “We thought these events would serve a match-making function to help people build teams,” Murray said. “What we learned, though, was that they also

Teen Tech Crew (from the Science Museum of Minnesota’s Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center), with the project WhatsWerk.
created a space where people could talk about their challenges, discuss and learn about what technology might be able to do, and get feedback on ideas for solutions. We heard from people that this space was really valuable.”

A competitive grant process then provided seed funding to seven pilot projects, including nonprofit organizations, for-profit businesses, and new teams that formed to work toward shared goals. Project teams developed an emergency text message system for a youth homeless shelter, a mobile application to connect people to Minneapolis City Council decision-making, and a youth-produced video series to connect their peers to employment resources, among others.

Three of the prototype projects received a second award, to build on their prototypes and begin a more robust build-out of the technology. One of those was Tuloko, a website and mobile application that helps people find, patronize, and rate African American–owned businesses. Company owner Duane Johnson said CURA:Tech was beneficial because it allowed for-profit businesses to participate and to put forward innovative solutions to deep-rooted problems that people have been studying for decades. “We’re trying to solve a multigenerational problem using 21st-century technology,” he said. “We’re saying, ‘Enough with describing the problem, we’re giving a prescription to the problem.’”

Program Officer Sarah Hernandez said the McKnight Foundation learned that the process the project teams went through was even more important than the final destination. The foundation hopes others in the field will pick up the importance of supporting technology work that captures on-the-ground knowledge and find creative uses for information-based tools. “It’s about being innovative and finding new ways of doing business,” Hernandez said. “We are finding ways to lean in to the future and encourage a new generation of thinking.”

To learn more about CURA:Tech and the prototype projects, please visit www.cura-tech.org.

2014–2015 Faculty Research Awards (continued from page 19)

neighborhoods and in small food stores (“corner stores”) that do not currently stock these items. This project will provide insights into anticipated issues with policy implementation and compliance, including analyzing food environment assessments in small stores most likely to be challenged by this policy, conducting interviews with store owners identifying potential challenges, sharing these findings with city officials and key stakeholders, and helping advise the Health Department in their strategic planning for policy implementation and support programming. Researcher: Melissa Laska (School of Public Health). Program: Faculty Interactive Research Program.

Leveraging the Youth Development Study Archive to Inform Local Public Policy. This project, uniting University of Minnesota researchers with the Ramsey County Policy Team, will probe the vast Youth Development Study data archive to address key issues surrounding education and work that face our community and state. The Policy Team will focus on initiatives to promote education, employment, and economic development and to alleviate poverty. The proposed project offers a rare opportunity for the Policy Team to better bridge theory and practice to inform local educational and employment efforts. This collaborative research will draw on local survey data collected since the late 1980s that encompass three generations of St. Paul families. Leveraging this unique data archive offers the potential for crucial insights into what factors may foster the resiliency of future generations of Minnesotans.

Researcher: Jeylan Mortimer (Department of Sociology). Program: Faculty Interactive Research Program.

The Impacts of Transportation Investments on Economic Growth in the Twin Cities. The transportation system plays a critical role in fostering economic growth. Although previous studies have shed light on the impacts of transportation investments, their results are not readily adapted to predicting economic impacts of individual transportation projects. This study aims to investigate the impacts of transportation investments on economic growth in the Twin Cities and developing a method that practitioners can apply to predict economic growth resulting from investments on individual projects. The capacity of such predictions is critical for the economy of the Twin Cities because transportation infrastructure lasts for decades once built. Researchers: Jason Cao (Humphrey School of Public Affairs) and David Levinson, Michael Iacono, and Andrew Owen (Department of Civil Engineering). Program: University Metropolitan Consortium.

Addressing “Talent Loss” in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area: Understanding the Local Development of Non-Immigrant and Immigrant Minority Students’ Academic Mindsets. This project adopts an innovative and powerful approach to remedying a persistent challenge that has adversely affected the competitive position of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area: “Talent Loss,” or young people not reaching their full potential. Talent Loss is most pronounced among students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, and leads to low educational and occupational returns, which affects the productivity and competitiveness of local communities. Drawing on a unique partnership between the University of Minnesota; St. Paul Public Schools Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment; and the New Lens Urban Mentoring Society (NLUMS), the project will investigate promising new approaches to developing this heretofore “lost” student potential. The project’s mixed-method ethnographic design will enable it to capture the creative efforts of teachers, caregivers, school leaders, and community members who lead minority students from disadvantaged backgrounds to acquire these skills and dispositions in a particular Twin Cities Metro Area high school. Finally, part of the project will be dedicated to training African American researcher-evaluators who can collaborate in the design and conduct of an evaluation of the uniquely “in-house” or racially specific relationships between NLUMS mentors and mentees. Researchers: Peter Demerath (Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development), Marian Heinrichs (Department of Research, Evaluation and Assessment, Saint Paul Public Schools), and Gayle Smaller, (New Lens Urban Mentoring Society, Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation). Program: University Metropolitan Consortium.
Long-Term Impacts of Lead Peace Service Learning Program on High School Seniors from North Minneapolis

by Barbara J. McMorris, Kristin Swartz, Chelsey Thul, Pam Russ, Nicole Randolph Fernandez, and Renee Sieving

Abstract: Every year in Hennepin County, one student drops out of high school for every four students who graduate; educational disparities are particularly marked for youth of color. Although dropping out usually occurs in high school, the process of disconnecting from school begins much earlier. The Minneapolis Public Schools and the Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department partnered to initiate the Lead Peace service learning program in 2001 to reduce violence and improve school connectedness among sixth- to eighth-grade students in North Minneapolis. The Lead Peace curriculum teaches specific skills to youth, including how to be leaders and identify and address school and community needs, set goals for the future, work together with their classmates, navigate setbacks and problem solve, and speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. The purpose of this study was to examine protective factors and high school outcomes among a small sample of high school seniors who participated in Lead Peace during 2007–2009. We conducted interviews with an ethnically diverse group of 10 18-year-olds to learn about their high school careers after participating in this positive youth-development intervention during middle school. Our qualitative analysis identified numerous themes, including that: caring relationships developed with adults and peers involved in the Lead Peace program; leadership skills emerged that helped students succeed during high school; and students had opportunities to make a difference in their communities. Our findings showcase Lead Peace as a promising program that contributes to student success in high school. The research upon which this article is based was supported by a grant from CURA’s Faculty Interactive Research Program.

For young people from communities characterized by pervasive poverty and violence, graduating from high school on time is a remarkable accomplishment for the youth themselves, as well as for the many individuals who supported them—school staff and teachers, family, and community members, to name a few. More than 75% of public high school students in the United States graduated on time in 2012.1 Minnesota’s on-time graduation rate is typically ranked among the top five in the nation. However, Minnesota’s high ranking masks an enormous gap between students of color and White students. In 2012, 51% of Black and 53% of Hispanic students in Minnesota earned their diploma on time, compared with 84% of White students.2

Every year in Hennepin County, home to Lead Peace partner K–8 schools, one student drops out of high school for every four students who graduate; educational disparities are particularly marked for youth of color. The on-time graduation rate in 2012 was 68% (including all public, alternative, contract alternative, and independent charter schools);3 however, compared with 80% of White students and 74% of Asian students who earned their diplomas on time, only 45% of Black students, 39% of Hispanic students, and 31% of American Indian students graduated on time. Although gaps in high school graduation are closing, much work remains to be done in terms of supporting our young people of color.

In 2006, Hennepin County launched an initiative called Accelerating Graduation by Reducing Achievement Disparities (A-GRAD) to increase high school graduation rates for all students. To reach this goal, A-GRAD acknowledges the importance of reducing risk and building protective factors in as many

places (including school, family, and community) and as many ages (early childhood, middle and high school) as possible. Protective factors include positive relationships with peers, teachers, and other pro-social adults, as well as strong connections and engagement in school. Such factors are explicitly targeted by Lead Peace.

**Lead Peace: A Middle-School Youth Leadership and Service Learning Program**

Although dropping out usually occurs in high school, the process of disconnecting from school begins much earlier. School transitions, especially between elementary and middle school and between middle and high school, are related to increases in emotional, academic, and behavioral difficulties and may result in disengagement from school. Importantly, students’ experiences during their middle-school years strongly impact their odds of graduating from high school, especially for youth from disadvantaged environments.

Lead Peace addresses key protective factors for preventing school disconnection and violence involvement among young adolescents. In particular, the structured program (see sidebar on page 27) provides opportunities for middle-school students to practice leadership skills, including communication, decision making, problem solving, and conflict resolution; develop emotional skills; build caring relationships with peers and adults; and gain experience in identifying and responding to authentic school and community needs.

Reflecting its name, Lead Peace teaches youth how to be leaders and use peace to solve problems in their community. In 2001, Lead Peace began when Hennepin County Social Services (“the Village”) in North Minneapolis established a partnership with Nellie Stone Johnson School, a K–8 school also in North Minneapolis. Invited by the school and the Village, the University of Minnesota’s Healthy Youth Development-Prevention Research Center joined the partnership in 2002, assisting with design, implementation, and evaluation of a middle-grades service learning program. In 2004, the Prevention Research Center received a five-year grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for a Lead Peace research demonstration project in North Minneapolis. Minneapolis Public Schools, additional North Minneapolis K–8 schools, and Kwanzaa Church joined the partnership. The project included Nellie Stone Johnson and Cityview Schools as schools where students participated in the Lead Peace program; comparison schools were the Hmong Academy and Lucy Craft Laney School.

To evaluate Lead Peace, researchers conducted student surveys as the cohort of students progressed from sixth grade to seventh and eighth grades during 2006–2009. Initial findings comparing seventh-grade survey responses with eighth-grade survey responses reinforced the importance of Lead Peace service learning for school outcomes, particularly with regard to protective factors that decrease the likelihood of negative outcomes for youth. Students in Lead Peace schools were more likely to report stronger connections to school and higher levels of cooperation with their peers in eighth grade than their classmates in comparison schools. Students who reported strong connections to school and intentions to contribute to their communities were the least likely to be involved in violence. Likewise, students who reported cooperating with peers, caring about others’ feelings, and managing their own emotions in stressful situations were least likely to be involved in violence.

These promising findings deserved further exploration, which led to the current study. In particular, we were interested in assessing whether key protective factors and skills targeted by Lead Peace remained as students made the transition into high school and then on to graduation. Our goal was to conduct interviews with young adults who had been enrolled in Lead Peace during the time that they were in seventh and eighth grades in 2007–2009. If these students were on track, they would be seniors in high school during the spring of 2013. The overall purpose of this qualitative study was to describe what a sample of high school students remembered about taking part in Lead Peace during middle school, what skills were learned, what relationships were influential, and what helped them be successful during high school. We chose interviewing as our methodology to learn about each student’s personal story and lived experience.

**Methodology**

**Lead Peace Participant Recruitment.** We found that locating and consenting former Lead Peace participants was challenging. These young people live in economically impoverished neighborhoods in North Minneapolis with high levels of resident mobility. We used a variety of recruitment methods, including attempts to contact young people at addresses or phone numbers provided by parents during middle school, online searches of address/telephone information, and searches of social-networking sites, such as Facebook. We also used personal contacts with Lead Peace program staff. We enlisted youth-serving agencies in North Minneapolis (e.g., Cookie Cart, North Commons Park and Recreation Center, Minneapolis Beacons, The Boys and Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities, and North Community YMCA) to hand out and display flyers in public locations frequented by former Lead Peace participants (Figure 1). Once young people consented to be interviewed, we asked for their help in recruiting their seventh- and eighth-grade classmates with whom they remained in contact.

From an initial pool of 144 students (53% female, 50% Black, 22% Hispanic, 15% multiracial, and 13% Asian) who were enrolled in the Lead Peace program during middle school, we identified 72 who had engaged in the program for at least two years between 2007–2009. Study participants had to be at least 18 years old at the time of the study interview, and 46 of 72 former Lead Peace participants had celebrated their 18th birthday before data collection ended in June 2013. Of this eligible sample, we consented and interviewed 10 young...
people, 70% of whom were female, 40% Black, 30% Hispanic, 20% Asian, and 10% multiracial (Table 1). All 10 study participants attended one of four Minneapolis public high schools: Edison; North; Patrick Henry; or South. Within this ethnically diverse sample, eight were on track to graduate in June 2013. More than half were planning on attending college after high school graduation, and the remainder said that their plans after high school were still in flux.

Data Collection and Analysis. We used a semistructured interview to collect data, involving an open-ended question and follow-up format. Examples of interview questions are provided in Table 2. Before answering questions about their middle-school and high school years, we visually prompted young people to think about schools they attended each year with a colorful timeline (Figure 2). We conducted and digitally recorded interviews in person or by telephone between April and June 2013. Study participants received a $50 Target gift card upon interview completion.

Prior to analysis, we had the digital files transcribed verbatim by an online transcription service. Data from the 10 transcripts were organized and managed using NVivo, a qualitative software program. Two coders identified and described themes present in the transcripts. Both coders independently read transcripts in their entirety and coded the data. During regular meetings, the coding team reviewed and revised codes in each transcript, ultimately reaching agreement and saturation of the data. After reviewing multiple potential quotes from the qualitative data, we selected quotes to use in this report that best illustrated both the commonalities and the individual variation of the young people that we interviewed.

Findings
In this report, we highlight three themes that emerged from our interviews: the importance of caring relationships established with both adults and classmates in the Lead Peace program; the leadership skills learned during Lead Peace that helped students succeed during their high school careers; and opportunities to make a difference in their communities.

Caring Relationships with Adults and Peers. During the interviews, high-school seniors talked about the importance of relationships they established with adult facilitators, school staff, and classmates.

Table 1. Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name*</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>School Attended during Grades 7 and 8</th>
<th>Self-identified Future Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Nellie Stone Johnson</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Nellie Stone Johnson</td>
<td>College/university in state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Cityview</td>
<td>College/university out of state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Nellie Stone Johnson</td>
<td>College/university in state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galy</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Nellie Stone Johnson</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>Biracial: European and Black</td>
<td>Cityview</td>
<td>College/university out of state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Nellie Stone Johnson</td>
<td>Community college in state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julio</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Nellie Stone Johnson</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Nellie Stone Johnson</td>
<td>Community college in state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Nellie Stone Johnson</td>
<td>Community college in state</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Pseudonyms provided by study participants, all of whom were age 18 or older.

Connections to Lead Peace Facilitators and School Staff. When asked what he remembered, Richard said:

Lead Peace [was]… one of my favorite things about school actually… Everybody in the program, including staff and students, were really welcoming. Everybody was really nice to each other.

Lynn noted that the connections established over time during Lead Peace activities were similar to family ties:

Everybody from Lead Peace [was] like family… Everybody just had great fun with everybody… We all built a great relationship with everybody—Mr. Ed, Ms. Russ, Ms. [Stone], all of us. You know what I mean? Like we just built that family… It took time, but it got built.

Our interviewees remembered conversations and expectations expressed by middle-school teachers and Lead Peace facilitators and regarded them as key to students’ identity.
development and self-efficacy as they made the transition to high school.

One young woman in particular, Amy, recalled being worried about making the wrong kinds of friends:

Some of my teachers from eighth grade... they told me that when I go to high school, make sure that you don’t fall for the wrong people... and they don’t want me to follow other people’s steps like... my friends who were... bad in making the wrong decision. They want me to step away or try to help my friend [make] the right decision.

She remembered Lead Peace facilitators giving her positive and consistent feedback about her ability to make friends with all types of classmates and her lack of fear in trying new things. Amy was able to transfer these skills to her high school context:

... so then I decided to take the skills that they told me that I had and I tried it around [new] people... And I start making friends and they start liking me and telling me the same thing as the Lead Peace people told me... So I got that in my head like, really, I never knew I had those types of stuff.

Caring adults from middle school continued to play active roles in the lives of these students. Most saw these adults in their neighborhood or community settings on a regular basis. Hannah said:

One of my old teachers did my senior pictures... and then I still talk to the desk receptionist who is now at North [High School] and I keep in contact with... the discipline guy that we had. He lives five blocks away from me and I see him at football games, and so I actually keep in contact with more of my teachers than with the students.

Some students talked about intentional attempts to keep connected. Galy recalled that her Lead Peace facilitator came to her quinceañera (15th birthday party):

We got close, up to the point where she came to my party with her husband and it was just fun seeing her there... I just feel comfortable around her.

Another student, Lynn, talked about not only feeling emotionally tied to her

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### Table 2. Example Questions and Follow-up Prompts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle-School Recollection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What do you remember about being in middle school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ What were the teachers like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ What were the other students like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ What was hard? What was easy or fun?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have you kept in contact with any of your friends from the Lead Peace program (or middle school)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills Learned in the Lead Peace Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What do you remember about being in Lead Peace?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ What was the best experience you had in Lead Peace?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ What was an uncomfortable experience you remember about Lead Peace?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What did you learn about yourself by being involved in service learning? (Service learning is an opportunity for students to work in the community while learning at the same time.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How did the skills you learned through and/or the experiences you had in service learning help you succeed in high school?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tell me about a time when you were able to make a difference in your neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 2. Visual Timeline Prompt
Lead Peace facilitators, but also reaping the rewards of connections to adults who have known her on a long-term basis:

Well, I have a résumé. They said I can use them as references. I mean, that’s a good thing.

**Relationships with Lead Peace Classmates.** Not unexpectedly, reports of friendships with peers from middle school and the Lead Peace program were more varied. Most interviewees mentioned staying in contact with one or just a few Lead Peace classmates through social-networking sites. Some continued to see friends as teammates on sports teams, and a few remained close due to attending the same high school. Others had lost touch because of where they chose to go to high school. Because of changing friendship dynamics and a lack of exposure to each other at high school, young people spoke more about the potential for reconnecting if they would run into former classmates in their neighborhoods rather than about current friendships. Lynn said:

As everybody is older now, everybody just branched off and is doing their own thing... I still see people that I worked with [in] Lead Peace... around the neighborhood. But really, it’s just a “hi and bye,” you know... we’re still cool.... We might not be able to catch up right now, but we can catch up some time in the future.

**Leadership Skills Learned during Lead Peace.** The service learning program empowers young people with the skills to do something if they notice gaps or problems in their school or neighborhoods—not to give up, but to take collective action. Lead Peace reinforces the idea that youth are active contributors and leaders in shaping their everyday social environments, rather than victims or passive recipients of services. Four years later as high school seniors, the young people we interviewed were actively using leadership skill-sets emphasized in Lead Peace. In particular, they discussed skills in planning and goal setting, working together as a group to navigate setbacks and problem solve, communicating and speaking up, and practicing being leaders.

**Planning and Goal Setting.** Lead Peace asks students to set goals to address their community’s needs and problems and provides opportunities for youth to learn how to work together to create a plan and articulate goals. Several high school seniors recalled the “planning and organizing” that went into setting up and carrying out service learning projects, such as creating activity books and bracelets for children at a neighborhood homeless shelter or creating an illustrated storybook to teach that “bullying isn’t fun and it’s not fun for others” for younger students. In particular, “taking a long time planning projects and seeing how we could get the good out of them” helped Galy with independent projects for her high school classes.

Jake remembered that “they constantly had us setting goals throughout every year in middle school.” He said that Lead Peace taught him that “if you set goals and write them down, it’s better because you’ll actually work towards them.” Experiential-learning experiences stayed with students as they made the transition from grade school to high school, where more independent work and time management was expected. April noted that the “planning skills and organizing skills of the food drive” in middle school helped her to play an active role in her community, such as helping out with events at church (e.g., serving food) or the Salvation Army.

**Working Together.** One of the key findings noted from the earlier quantitative analysis of middle-school survey data was that students who participated in Lead Peace demonstrated higher levels of peer cooperation than students in comparison schools. Peer cooperation is developed in Lead Peace sessions by utilizing one of the group’s main principles—democracy—which means that every member’s contribution is valued equally. Students learn to work together across their differences. This emphasis on learning how to collaborate effectively with groups of diverse peers was echoed four years later in recollections from several high school seniors about their middle-school experience of “just having to work together with a lot of variety of people.”

In particular, April remembered problem solving with her Lead Peace classmates, “because sometimes we would have a problem amongst ourselves and we wouldn’t know how to do it, so we would just have to work together.” She noted that this experience of teamwork with a variety of classmates helped her be more comfortable with the diversity in her high school and having to work with people from different cultures and backgrounds. One of the young men, Julio, also reflected on working in groups of people who were unfamiliar to him in middle school and how that helped him be a better group member:

Because in high school you don’t, you can’t choose people at school that you don’t want to go to school with. You actually, you can choose a school, but, who’s in the school is not up to you, so when you get to high school you’re not sure what good people you’re around, and it helped me with my diverse skills. When I got here, I was used to working in different groups with people, so I was never really uncomfortable. And if I was, I knew I could overcome that.

**Communicating.** The most frequently mentioned skill-set that young people recalled learning during Lead Peace was how to communicate, which included public speaking, being able to talk to people of all ages and backgrounds, and just being more “verbal.” Most high school seniors described themselves as very shy and quiet as middle-school students, feeling comfortable talking only with friends, family, or people close to them. Through participating in the service learning curriculum, students learned important communication skills, such as how to speak up and share their ideas and opinions with their peers. Galy remembered:

I was really quiet and being in that group... I felt comfortable so it helped me a lot in the future with projects with other people in my group. So it helped me a lot to actually share my ideas and not just stay quiet all the time.

In addition to talking with Lead Peace classmates and facilitators, young people experienced opportunities to build recognition of their accomplishments by presenting the outcome of their service project to administrators, teachers, or classmates. Students often talked to younger classrooms of students. A group organizing a food-drive project visited younger grade classrooms to encourage their participation. Lead Peace students completing a project to teach about respect and always sharing my ideas.
Lead Peace Programming

Service learning boosts youths’ sense of responsibility, connection, and contribution through activities that serve their community. Serving approximately 400 students to date (about 120 per year), the goals of Lead Peace are to improve school connectedness and academic success, improve community involvement, and reduce risks for violence. Lead Peace involves weekly service learning program sessions over three years during sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. All students in a grade level participate in programming that is offered during a regular class period during the school day. The school-based program is led by a facilitator team that includes a mix of teachers, social workers, parent/family liaisons, and community-based youth workers. Each adult facilitator works with small groups of seven to nine students whose membership remains consistent throughout the school year.

Lead Peace typically begins the school year with a service activity that involves all grade-level students in a school working together, such as packaging food for children in Africa at Feed My Starving Children, a local nonprofit organization. Through this initial activity, Lead Peace staff introduce the concept of service and reinforce its value for young adolescents, while at the same time illustrating connections between youth, their community, and communities in other parts of the world. Students meet weekly in small groups for 50-minute Lead Peace sessions held during class time (e.g., as part of a daily social-studies class). Guided by the Lead Peace curriculum (see below), each group identifies school or community issues they wish to address, develops service learning projects to address these issues, implements their projects, and reflects on their service. For example, one group developed a lesson on how to be a good friend and avoid being bullied, and taught the lesson to a classroom of younger students. During a “walk through” of their school, a second group found that many of the school’s preschoolers lacked blankets for nap time, because their families had no extra blankets to send to school. This group took on the project of purchasing fabric and making blankets for the preschool class.

During Lead Peace sessions, facilitators emphasize that leadership—being active in your school and community—can take many different forms and that each student can develop talents and abilities to be an effective leader in a variety of situations. These lessons are illustrated using real stories (some told by community leaders) of how individuals, such as Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, an Argentinian human-rights activist, organizer, and Nobel Peace Laureate, stepped up to be leaders during important global events. One student group took this lesson to heart and produced a comic book that featured “Super Adolfo” as a superhero character to use as a teaching aid with younger students.

An intentional and academically rigorous component of service learning is reflection. Lead Peace incorporates many challenging reflection activities that help students prepare for, succeed in, and learn from their service experiences, and to examine the context in which their service occurs. These reflection activities go beyond the basics of summarizing events and examining feelings to prompt more complex thinking skills, such as analysis, problem solving, and critique. Students are asked to learn more about the social issues they want to address, investigate potential causes and solutions, and weigh alternatives. Young people are expected to resolve conflicts among themselves and consider how to persuade others. Lead Peace challenges students to explore and understand their voice as youth, as well as ways that they can make positive contributions to their school and their community.

Key Elements of Lead Peace Curriculum and Service Learning Projects:

Curriculum Elements

- **Team Building.** Each year, initial sessions employ creative and interactive activities to help students get to know each other, build trust, and develop group norms.
- **Leadership Skills Development.** Sessions focus on helping students develop a clear understanding of what leadership means and see themselves as leaders.
- **Community Mapping.** Sessions illustrate how community issues can be broken down into root causes, resources, and outcomes.
- **Goal Setting.** Sessions encourage students to consider their personal hopes and dreams, and create goals for their lives.

Service Learning Projects Elements

- **Project Planning.** Sessions focus on the planning process and steps that lead to service. Students work together to create expectations for themselves and in service settings.
- **Implementation.** Sessions focus on implementing service projects. Emphasis is placed on experiential learning, in which students apply content knowledge, critical thinking, and good judgment to address genuine community needs.
- **Reflection.** Sessions allow students to reflect on their service projects and the lessons they learned about themselves and others through their service projects.

If I wasn’t pushed to speak and to try new experiences, I wouldn’t be able to speak now as I do. And I wouldn’t be able to feel comfortable going up in front of a classroom and speaking and saying and sharing experiences that I love to share.

Julio even indicated that he is considering pursuing a communications major in college because “I think I’m a pretty good speaker, which Lead Peace helped me out with.”

**Practicing Being Leaders.** Empowerment is a key principle of Lead Peace, as facilitators communicate their belief in students’ abilities to have the answers.
and create change. Facilitators gradually hand over leadership so that students experience ownership of the group and the success of their projects.

Through these practical experiences, Richard learned to be more open and share his opinions, and he noted that this helped when he joined the National Honor Society in high school:

And also that’s kind of similar [to Lead Peace]. We also do things around the neighborhood. And then they would... select people to be in charge of... certain parts of... whatever we were trying to do. So then I kind of... stepped up whenever we needed people to be in charge of certain things.

Several students reflected that when they first started Lead Peace, they questioned themselves and their ability to be a leader as middle-school students, mostly because they were shy and lacked confidence. However, over time, and with great support from their peers and facilitators, they realized that their own experiences were exactly what was needed to show compassion and understanding for others and to be effective role models and leaders.

Participating in Lead Peace opened up possibilities for young people to take notice that they are global citizens who have the ability, power, and voice to create changes in themselves, their community, and ultimately, the world. Emily explicitly remembered a Lead Peace lesson about leadership in the context of the Dirty War in Argentina during the 1970s and 1980s:

Well, I knew that being a leader meant having compassion and not being scared to stand up for what you believe in, speaking out even when it’s tough... because I remember at one of our [Lead Peace] sessions, we talked about... Argentina, about kids and grown-ups going missing, and about sometimes the government are the ones behind this.

She further recalled how this lesson from middle school continued to shape who she is and who she has the potential to become:

And so it made me more aware of these kinds of problems... [in] other parts of the world, too. And... it made me think... “I wonder who’s standing up to these things right now?” and “[when] I grow up... am I going to be able to speak on a big issue in my own community?” And... I feel like I wasn’t that confident at that time. I wasn’t really confident that I could be a leader... But then now that I’m... four years older, I think I have definitely grown and... I can... see myself as a leader... Like I’m able to fulfill... what being a leader is.

Making a Difference in Their Communities. In terms of the legacy of this middle-school service learning program, students articulated the importance of recognizing problems in their communities and stepping up to be leaders in attempts to work through problems.

Being a Changemaker. One of the most common themes articulated was that “even though you’re just one person, you can make a change.” In particular, Richard said:

Most people would say like one person can’t change things... And ever since then... I’ve been active more with programs like [Lead Peace] or just people or organizations that try to help out.

Ashley described some tough times in both middle and high school, such as incidents of bullying or being left out, and how these taught her to share her story so that others can learn from her experience. She attributed her leadership skills to working on projects for her community and described awareness of the impact she might have on others:

I learned that being able to share your experience with someone else and trying to make their experience a little bit better than what yours was is really important because... a lot of people in my community don’t have anybody to talk to or reach out to, and you being that one person can make a difference to someone who’s really going through a tough situation.

Before participating in Lead Peace, several high school seniors whom we interviewed said that they had never really tried to address a problem in their community or even speak up if they noticed a problem. Lynn learned not to just think about herself, but rather:

... how to think about others and look at life from a different perspective... because... I don’t have much, but there’s people out there that don’t have as much as I got... You know, sometimes it’s cool not to think about yourself.

April echoed similar ideas about giving back:

And so I noticed that I really liked helping people, just liked being around. Not necessarily because I want people to notice me or, “oh well, she’s helping a lot.” Just because I know that I am very lucky to have the things that I have and, you know, I just know that other people don’t.

Taking on Leadership Roles. Many of our interviewees reported a desire to make a difference in their community, and several gave concrete examples of a variety of roles and different ways that they contributed to their high school or the larger community. These included being involved with church service activities for homeless individuals, working as a counselor at summer camps for younger children, serving as secretary of the Black Student Union and as a student teacher with a “Learning Works” program, working with children and helping out at carnivals and parks, managing an intramural soccer team, being involved with the National Honor Society, and interviewing other students for a “College Possible” program. A few recognized that, by finishing school and striving to being successful themselves, they were serving as important role models for younger members of their families and communities.

Conclusions and Future Steps

We had the great fortune to interview 10 remarkable young people as they were successfully finishing up their high-school careers in the spring of 2013. Eight of them were on track to graduate on time in June, and two had plans to wrap up their high-school degrees before the end of 2013. What did these students have in common? As seventh and eighth graders in two North Minneapolis public schools, they had participated in the Lead Peace service learning program. Lead Peace is a story of “what works” in helping young people to grow, develop, and succeed in school despite challenging odds; the take-home message is that investment in positive youth development pays off.
Our findings from this qualitative study feature the voices of young people to illustrate the long-term effects that a middle-school service learning program has on youth development. Lead Peace is an example of a promising program that engages students from communities with relatively low high school completion rates, fosters their connections and commitment to school, adults, and classmates, and teaches them life skills through active-learning strategies that allow students to impact their community. These outcomes directly align with Hennepin County’s A-GRAD initiative to increase the graduation rate for all youth by supporting interventions that target student attendance, attachment, and achievement. Our findings also confirm previous research attesting to the importance of positive youth-development factors, such as prosocial connections and life skills, in assisting youth from diverse backgrounds to succeed and graduate from high school.

It is important to note that results from our study can only be generalized to students who were able to locate and interview during their last year of high school. These students may have been some of the more engaged graduates of the Lead Peace program. In addition, we acknowledge the descriptive, anecdotal nature of this small study. That said, these students’ stories and voices matter. They highlight what worked for a diverse sample of several young people.

Lead Peace continues to be offered for middle-school students at Nellie Stone Johnson and Lucy Craft Laney Schools in North Minneapolis, funded in large part by foundation grants and support from the two schools. Hennepin County and University of Minnesota partners continue to support the program through training and supervision of program facilitators, as well as evaluation of student outcomes.

The long-term goals of Lead Peace are to secure sustained support and expand to other middle schools. Interviews we conducted with Lead Peace facilitators revealed that they felt that the type of developmental support offered through Lead Peace should extend beyond middle school. Providing high school students with opportunities for graduated levels of leadership and cofacilitation of Lead Peace groups would allow for their continued involvement with their middle schools and the program itself. Although the high school seniors interviewed here were all on track to graduate from high school, the lack of concrete plans after high school for some of the interviewees raises cause for concern. Students who described their goals and plans as “flexible” would benefit from additional leadership opportunities and coaching from caring adults about postsecondary options available to them, including internship and volunteer opportunities in specific career or work settings. Some of the youth interviewed might benefit from additional adult support in translating their skills and community-service experiences into desired qualifications for employment or further education.

As to what is next for the young people we interviewed, the sky is the limit. Richard wants to graduate from community college, find a steady job working on cars, and be able to afford his own place. After finishing university, Hannah sees herself first working in an architectural firm and then starting her own business, “kind of get your feet wet and then transition to [being] an entrepreneur.” Both young people have a solid foundation to achieve these goals—with lessons learned from Lead Peace in their backpacks and ongoing encouragement and support from positive adults and peers in their lives.

Barbara J. McMorris is an associate professor in the School of Nursing at the University of Minnesota. She is the evaluation team leader for the Healthy Youth Development–Prevention Research Center, located in the Department of Pediatrics, which conducts and disseminates community-engaged research that promotes healthy youth development and reduces health disparities among young people. Her research focuses on the prevention of health-risk behaviors among youth, such as substance use, sexual risk-taking, violence, bullying, and school drop-out. Kristin Swartz is a doctoral student in the School of Nursing at the University of Minnesota. Her research interests center around how to create healthy cross-cultural relationships in clinical interactions, utilizing a mixed-methods approach. Chelsey Thul is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health at the University of Minnesota, soon to be teaching faculty in the Department of Kinesiology. Her research focuses on understanding physical-activity behaviors, preferences, and social and structural supports, particularly among underserved girls, in order to successfully implement culturally relevant physical-activity programming that promotes healthy youth development and reduces health disparities. Pam Russ is a senior social worker with the Accelerating Graduation by Reducing Achievement Disparities (A-GRAD) Initiative at Hennepin County.

For more than 25 years, she has worked actively across systems, building partnerships with youth, community agencies, public schools, and higher education institutions to create, implement, and evaluate youth-development programming. She is a cofounder and program manager of Lead Peace. Nicole Randolph Fernandez is currently a development coordinator at Compass Boston in Dorchester, Massachusetts, and has more than 20 years of violence, community, and youth-leadership development experience. As a parent and community liaison for Minneapolis Public Schools, she also served as a Lead Peace coordinator, where she wrote curriculum, mentored staff, and facilitated Lead Peace classes at Nellie Stone Johnson School for five years. Renee Sieving is an associate professor in the School of Nursing and the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Minnesota. She is deputy director of the Healthy Youth Development–Prevention Research Center. Her research focuses on testing programs and services that involve schools, health clinics, families, and communities in promoting the health and well-being of young people.

The authors wish to thank Kara Beckman, Shari Plowman, Glynis Shea, and Pamela Moore from the Healthy Youth Development–Prevention Research Center for their technical assistance with recruitment and data collection, and Maureen Springer for her graphic-design skills for recruitment materials. We also want to acknowledge the contributions of community members in North Minneapolis for their assistance with recruitment, and especially acknowledge the young-adult study participants themselves for sharing their experiences.

The research upon which this article is based was supported by a grant from CURA’s Faculty Interactive Research Program. The program was created to encourage University faculty to conduct research with community organizations and collaborators on issues of public policy importance for the state and community. These grants are available to regular faculty at the University of Minnesota and are awarded annually on a competitive basis. Additional funding was provided by the School of Nursing at the University of Minnesota and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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Artist Neighborhood Partnership Initiative and Neighborhood Partnership Initiative 2014 Grantees

**Artist Neighborhood Partnership Initiative**
CURA’s Artist Neighborhood Partnership Initiative (ANPI) provides small grants (up to $10,000) to artists working in partnership with community-based, neighborhood, or other place-based organizations located in communities of color and low-income communities in Minneapolis and St. Paul and surrounding suburbs. ANPI grants recognize the valuable role that the arts and artists can play in community revitalization efforts and are intended to support the involvement of artists as key actors and leaders of community development. This grant program is particularly focused on supporting efforts where art, art making, and the artist(s) are at the center of the project. ANPI grants are made possible through the generous support of the McKnight Foundation.

**Project Summaries for our 2014 Grantees are listed below.**

**Project Title:** The Soul Sounds Open Mic  
**Artist:** Tish Jones  
**Partner:** Saint Paul Almanac, Selby Avenue Action Coalition, and the Golden Thyme Café  
**Project Description:**  
Since 2012, The Soul Sounds Open Mic has become a consistent space for poetry, song, dance, and critical community conversations at Golden Thyme Café, located in the heart of St. Paul’s Rondo neighborhood. Hosted and curated by spoken word poet, emcee, activist, writer, educator, and organizer Tish Jones, Soul Sounds invites writers, poets, community members, visitors, organizers, educators, arts activists, and others to a weekly gathering of dialogue, artistic presentation, and community building featuring an artist from the local or national community. Every first Thursday, Soul Sounds hosts a free community writing workshop. Once a month on Thursdays, Soul Sounds features a representative from an active community organization in an effort to raise awareness of social justice issues and increase the level of engagement in the community. Using an arts- and culture-based approach, Soul Sounds has become a vehicle for inspiring connection, discussion, literacy, and social change among a diverse group of community members in St. Paul. The Soul Sounds Open Mic platform is also used to encourage literacy within the St. Paul community through leadership, mentoring, and relationship building. The format is designed to foster leadership; encourage networking opportunities between established, emerging, and amateur writers; and help build, strengthen, and leverage other opportunities for the St. Paul literary community.

**Project Title:** Tell a Story: Visual Arts + Personal Memoir  
**Artist:** Jeremiah Ellison  
**Partner:** Neighborhood HUB and Juxtaposition Arts  
**Project Description:**  
Tell a Story is a project of Jeremiah Bey Ellison, a native North Minneapolis resident, Juxtaposition Arts graduate, public artist, and muralist. Tell a Story will be a place for community members to discuss, process, and articulate their stories, while also reclaiming ownership of their communal narratives. Participants of the course will each create a work of visual art, combined with the written word (prose, poetry, etc.), to relay elements of their life’s journey and narrative. The project will build skills and relationships that allow participants to grapple with, challenge, and reflect on the internal and external narratives that are imposed on communities of color. Intentionally designed as an intergenerational effort, Tell a Story builds a platform for community members to interact and exchange knowledge between one another with the purpose of creating a narrative that competently reflects the story of the individual and the community.

**Project Title:** Letters to our Grandchildren  
**Artist:** Robert Karimi, aka The People’s Cook  
**Partner:** Hmong Elder Center and May Lee-Yang of Lazy Hmong Woman Productions  
**Project Description:**  
Robert Karimi, aka “The People’s Cook,” creates instant ensembles with performance artists and audience members where they become part of...
the experience, not just idle viewers. The People’s Cook unites cross-cultural cooking and interdisciplinary art to promote wellbeing and make issues identified as important to the community delicious. With Letters to Our Grandchildren, The People’s Cook is partnering with the Hmong Elder Center to pilot a project that engages Hmong elders in the process of telling their own stories using food and theater. The purpose of the program is to engage Hmong elders in not only theater activities and techniques, but also give them an opportunity to share personal recipes and stories with future generations. A CD of the performances and an online cookbook are also in the works.

Neighborhood Partnership Initiative
The Neighborhood Partnership Initiative (NPI) makes technical assistance and small grants (up to $10,000) available to community-neighborhood-, or other place-based organizations located in communities of color and low-income communities in Minneapolis and St. Paul and surrounding suburbs. NPI supports community-based efforts that build partnerships that lead to increased engagement, power, and influence of community members affected by racial, social, and economic disparities.

Project Summaries for our 2014 Grantees are listed below.

Aurora St. Anthony Peace Sanctuary Garden
Project Title: Growing Food, Health, Connectedness, People, and Peace
The Aurora St. Anthony Peace Sanctuary Garden, developed 10 years ago by African American community leaders as a place to use gardening as a tool for community building, is a collaboration of six individual community gardens and backyard box gardeners growing food in the Summit-University (Rondo) and Frogtown neighborhoods in St. Paul. Through the cultivation and sharing of food, they promote reconciliation, healing, peace, and social and environmental justice. Their project is focused on creating a Neighborhood Garden Alliance that will work to strengthen the connections and relationships between the area’s many gardeners and gardens. The Neighborhood Garden Alliance will seek to feed the neighborhood by empowering people to grow their own food, meet, work with their neighbors, and share Rondo’s food culture with their families while fostering an increased sense of ownership by strengthening a connection to the land. The alliance will be a vehicle for community building among the area’s diverse residents, increasing access to fresh foods and engaging new leaders in their community through gardening.

Ce Tempoxcalli
Project Title: Organizing Community Health through Cultural Engagement
The Organizing Community Health through Cultural Engagement project recognizes that low-income indigenous people and people of color on the West Side, including many new immigrants, lack the power to shape how their community functions. This initiative builds on the long-standing work of the West Side Community Organization and the Neighborhood Development Alliance to effectively engage the voice and power of historically underrepresented community residents by adding Ce Tempoxcalli’s explicit cultural organizing framework. The focus of this project is in building power and leadership to address food access issues challenging West Side communities of color and immigrant communities, and those living in low-income housing through a culturally grounded community engagement process that builds community health and resident power simultaneously. Using free space on the West Side, they will grow food and increase the engagement of historically excluded members of their community in advancing policies and practices that lead to more equitable food security on the West Side.

Hope Community
Project Title: Training and Organizing for Equity
Hope Community has a long history of addressing equity in one of the most challenged and diverse communities in the state. This project is focused on building community pressure to get the Minneapolis Park Board to use a racial equity lens to allocate park resources and work toward major policy change in the Minneapolis Park system. In addition to working with a cohort of 15 community residents through their intensive organizing and leadership-training program (SPEAC), they will be providing strategy and power training to another 100 diverse grassroots leaders in the Phillips neighborhood. The training will include: history of urban neighborhoods and issues related to race and equity; how cities and park board work and how they function in Minneapolis; and related strategies for working toward greater equity. The training will equip people in the community with the tools, knowledge and leadership skills to participate in public decision-making and system change that will impact their community. It will also help build a growing network of community residents who will continue to act around issues of equity.

Jewish Community Action and Northside Community Reinvestment Coalition
Project Title: Rank the Banks Report Card & Community Engagement
Jewish Community Action (JCA) and Northside Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) are working together to engage their communities in a public process to more fully hold banks accountable and responsible for how they serve communities of color in North Minneapolis. Simultaneous to their development of a Rank the Banks Report Card that identifies the performance of banks that hold public funds, the partners will be implementing a community engagement strategy that engages diverse neighborhood leaders in North Minneapolis to learn about bank performance and work with officials to increase review of and improve the banking services and products offered to their community.

Kwanzaa’s Northside Women’s Space
Project Title: Women in the Sex Trade: Organizing to Change Community Perceptions and Reduce Stigma
Kwanzaa is an African American led Presbyterian congregation that
promotes community, justice, social change, and empowerment for the children and families of North Minneapolis. Their major work focuses on dismantling stigma, racism, sexism, and classism. This project will engage women who trade sex in North Minneapolis to organize and build a movement that challenges current perceptions of prostitution. Their efforts will work to expand community understanding of the roots of sex trading and reduce community-caused stigma and shame. The project seeks to build power in a community of marginalized women who trade sex by building on the work of the Northside Women’s Space (NWS). NWS is a safe place where girls and women who have been exploited by sex trafficking and the sex trade can find rest, a place to think, and connections to the services and supports that will get them from where they are now to where they want to be in life. Using the Northside Women’s space, they will create a civic engagement, organizing, and community change effort so that women and girls involved in sex trading and trafficking can mobilize to lead change in their community.

Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota
Project Title: The Lao Leaders Project
The Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota administers programs that serve low-income Lao community members and strives to meet their basic needs, increase self-reliance, and promote leadership and cultural equality. The Lao Leaders Project is focused on organizing and training emerging Lao leaders in North Minneapolis, Brooklyn Center, and Brooklyn Park. The project will recruit and train a new generation of younger, emerging Lao professionals who are expressing a desire to participate in the strengthening of their community. This effort will work to educate and empower these younger Lao community members to make positive impacts in their community by placing them onto the governing boards and advisory groups of organizations and entities that are serving/representing the needs and interest of the Lao community. By encouraging emerging Lao leaders into serving their community, the project will elevate new Lao community voices to influence decision making on issues that directly impact the well-being of the broader Lao community.

Organizing Apprenticeship Project
Project Title: Education Equity Rubric Pilot Project
The Organizing Apprenticeship Project (OAP) advances racial, economic, social, and cultural justice in Minnesota through work, primarily, with a network of low-income community of color organizations and leaders. This project will work to advance education equity at Bright Water Elementary School in North Minneapolis by training a diverse group of staff, community members, board members, and parents to identify and address barriers that lead to racial disparities in education. The rubric is a tool that has been created to define an equity framework for schools, and it will be used during this project as an educational resource. Brightwater Montessori, which will be the initial site of a culturally specific Somali community food shelf in South Minneapolis. Currently, there are 300 food shelves in Minnesota, none of which are initiated or run by the Somali community. Due to dietary restrictions, most Somalis cannot access mainstream food shelves, and this project will allow Somali community members to engage in the development of a food shelf that makes culturally appropriate food more readily available for all people. Isuroon will work deeply with the Somali community to design and implement the food shelf, collaborating with ethnic businesses, faith-based organizations, and people of all ages.

Somali Youth Against Violence
Project Title: Somali Youth Against Violence
Somali Youth Against Violence is an organization that works as a unified force for Somali youth, aiming to eliminate the roots of violence and guide children on a secure path to success. Their project will explore the root causes of violence, its surrounding culture of silence, and internally and externally mobilize the Somali community to build awareness and support against it. The project will use stories of families, affected youth, mosque leaders, and other community members and organizations to bring the epidemic of Somali youth violence to the forefront of the community’s mind through community dialogues and a media campaign. The effort will engage both the Somali community and non-Somali community to engage with Minneapolis police and other groups to change the culture of violence for Somali youth and create visible and lasting change for Somali children and their families. They will build awareness and mobilize the community through public announcements and a series of layered and collaborative community dialogues.

For more information on applying for 2015 Artist Neighborhood Partnership and Neighborhood Partnership Initiatives from CURA, visit z.umn.edu/anpinpi. If you are interested in applying, the deadline for the letter of intent is January 15, 2015.
Tony Damiano was recently hired on permanently in the position of research specialist for the Community GIS (CGIS) program. Tony will be splitting his time working on larger community mapping projects and special research for the director of CURA. Tony recently completed a master's degree in urban and regional planning and has extensive experience using GIS and developing web mapping applications for CURA's community partners.

Jeff Matson, CGIS program manager, along with Jacob Wascalus from the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank contributed an essay to a newly released book from the Urban Institute, Strengthening Communities with Neighborhood Data. Their chapter is about local efforts to build data partnerships among university, city, and community organizations. The book is available for purchase or as a free e-publication here: http://www.urban.org/strengtheningcommunities/

Jeff Matson was invited to present on the work CURA has been doing in partnership with Twin Cities and national Local Initiatives Support Corporation at the 2014 Neighborhood Revitalization Conference in Washington, D.C., in July. The presentation focused on racial disparities among a number of indicators in four Twin Cities neighborhoods and how we might quantify and develop solutions to the gaps that exist in areas such as housing, employment, education, and public safety.

On September 26, 2014, the Hennepin-University Partnership (HUP) hosted a tour of the University of Minnesota’s Minneapolis campus for Hennepin County Cohort members and their supervisors. County staff attending represented departments including Human Services, Public Works, Libraries, and Corrections. Tour participants visited 10 different locations on campus and heard from 17 University faculty and staff members, including Megan Gunnar, Institute of Child Development; Brad Hokanson, College of Design; and Albert Tims, School of Journalism & Mass Communication.

The HUP hosted a workshop on July 10, 2014, for Hennepin County employees entitled “Working with Students 101.” The workshop focused on different ways Hennepin County departments can engage with students. The event featured a panel of four Hennepin County employees who have engaged with students in a variety of ways. More than 30 county staff attended the workshop from 10 different Hennepin County departments.

Hennepin County’s Environmental Services Department worked with a class at the University’s Law School on a capstone class titled “Climate Change and Clean Energy,” supervised by Professor Hari Osofsky. The goal was to help the county explore options for expanding the distribution of the energy that is produced at its waste-to-energy facility, the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC). The HERC is located in downtown Minneapolis and burns 1,000 tons of garbage per day to generate energy. Students in this capstone gained practical experience on local efforts to combat climate change and clean energy while providing valuable information to the county on legal considerations associated with energy sales from the HERC facility.

During the summer of 2014, the Hennepin County Library hired a PhD candidate from the art history department to review artwork in each of the libraries for the Stop, Look, Art! project. The art historian researched 115 library-owned art pieces and produced brief descriptions for each piece. The existing information was incomplete or, in some cases, unverified. The library plans to use the descriptions generated to update its website and enhance in-building displays.

The Hennepin County Sheriff’s Office collaborated with University Extension to replicate a federally funded Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) study. The purpose of the study was to collect data on drug use and related behaviors among adults booked in jail. The study involved a survey that includes questions about drug use,
treatment, age of first arrest, employment and housing history, and drug market activity. A team of researchers led by Professor Mary Marczak from University Extension interviewed and completed drug testing on a random sample of males booked into the Adult Detention Center over a period of two weeks. The researchers analyzed the data collected, which the Sheriff’s Office used to inform decisions about programming and the need for services.

Jeff Corn, Community Program Coordinator, wrote a case study in the book Asset-Based Community Development in Higher Education, published by the Minnesota Campus Compact. The article showcases the Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing’s work with Hmong youth in North Minneapolis. Jeff also presented on this topic at Universities Public Engagement Leaders Retreat in May.

Jeff Corn has been invited to serve on the University Public Engagement Council (PEC) representing the Campus Community Coordinators Alliance. The PEC informs the University’s senior officers and governing bodies on critical and important issues regarding publicly engaged work across the university system.

Jeff Corn is excited to be participating in the 2014 Shannon Leadership Institute. The Institute is a structured, challenging, and supportive opportunity for personal and professional renewal for experienced leaders of philanthropic, civic, and community service organizations. Participants clarify the purpose of their work and their core values, identify strategies to increase their effectiveness and articulate the changes needed to enhance focus, commitment, energy and satisfaction.

The Resilient Communities Project (RCP) and the City of Rosemount co-hosted a kickoff event at the Rosemount Community Center in September to recognize their year-long partnership. The partnership will enlist hundreds of students and dozens of faculty to provide course-based assistance to Rosemount on community-identified projects that advance local sustainability and resilience. More than 60 guests attended the kickoff event, including state representative Anna Willis and state senator Greg Clausen (both of whom represent the Rosemount area), local residents and business owners, Rosemount city staff and elected officials, local community organizations, and University of Minnesota faculty and students. For more information about the partnership and the projects involved, visit rcp.umn.edu/2014-2015-partner-rosemount/.

In July, Mike Greco transitioned to a full-time position as RCP program manager, relinquishing his duties as CURA’s communications coordinator and editor of the CURA Reporter. In October, Greco participated in a Frontiers in the Environment panel at the University of Minnesota’s Institute on the Environment that considered the question, “How might the Twin Cities catalyze needed urban innovations?” Other panelists included Pat Hamilton, director of the Science Museum of Minnesota’s Global Change Initiatives; Anne Hunt, environmental policy director for the City of Saint Paul; and Peter Frosch, director of strategic partnerships for Greater MSP.

Will Craig was a finalist for the University of Minnesota President’s Community Engaged Scholar Award based on his longstanding academic career that embodies the University of Minnesota’s definition of public engagement. A large group of university and professional colleagues met June 4 in the Campus Club to celebrate Craig’s career at the University of Minnesota. He started that career in 1967 and moved to CURA in 1970 as assistant director. His career at CURA involved pioneering work in the development of GIS and making that technology useful to local community organizations. He has been honored by his peers at state, national, and international levels. “This was all made possible,” said Will, “by a University culture that encourages creativity and supports work that contributes to society.”

Esther Wattenberg, CURA’s policy and program coordinator in family and child welfare, recently wrote an article on the demise of the last remaining elements of the General College at the University of Minnesota. You can read her piece at z.umn.edu/rfd.

CURA has hired Malik Holt as the Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing’s (MCNO) new Program Coordinator. Prior to joining MCNO, Malik worked as a Community Organizer with the Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition to promote access, equity, and community engagement. A large group of university and professional colleagues met June 4 in the Campus Club to celebrate Craig’s career at the University of Minnesota. He started that career in 1967 and moved to CURA in 1970 as assistant director. His career at CURA involved pioneering work in the development of GIS and making that technology useful to local community organizations. He has been honored by his peers at state, national, and international levels. “This was all made possible,” said Will, “by a University culture that encourages creativity and supports work that contributes to society.”

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benefits of bicycle infrastructure, policy, and engagement. He also served as the Executive Director and Economic Development Organizer of North Minneapolis’s Harrison Neighborhood Association for 11 years leading community engagement projects, racial equitable development initiatives, business development, and land use planning.

Malik currently sits on the Board of Directors for the Headwaters Foundation for Justice. He is a long-standing member on CURA’s Kris Nelson Community Based Research Program Grant Review Committee, a 2004 graduate of MCNO’s Neighborhood Organizing Training Program, and a past member of the MCNO Advisory Committee.

The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs supports research and technical assistance through a number of individual programs, each with their own deadlines and application procedures.

- **The Community Assistantship Program** (CAP) matches community-based nonprofit organizations, citizen groups, and government agencies in Greater Minnesota with students who can provide research assistance. Eligible organizations define a research project, submit an application, and, if accepted, are matched with a qualified student to carry out the research. For more information, to discuss potential projects, or for assistance with applications, contact CAP coordinator Jeff Corn at 612-625-0744 or jcorn@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/cap.

- **The Community Geographic Information Systems** (CGIS) program provides technical assistance in mapping, data analysis, and GIS to community-based organizations and nonprofits in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Staff at the CGIS program specialize in parcel-level mapping, demographic analysis, and Internet-based GIS technologies. The CGIS program has no formal application process or deadline to apply. Project requests can be made by phone, e-mail, or online at z.umn.edu/cgishelp, and generally can be turned around within two weeks. For more information, to discuss potential projects, or for assistance with data needs, contact CGIS program coordinator Jeff Matson at 612-625-0081 or jmatson@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/cgis.

- **The Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program** (the Nelson Program) provides student research assistance to community and neighborhood-based organizations and suburban government agencies in the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area. Priority is given to groups serving diverse communities. Projects may include any issue relevant to a neighborhood or community’s needs and interests. For more information, contact CURA community programs coordinator Jeff Corn at 612-625-0744 or jcorn@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/nelson-program.

- **The Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing (MCNO)** supports place-based organizations to successfully take on local issues by developing the skills of community organizers and leaders through organizing training and strategic partnerships to build vital communities that value full participation and embody racial equity and economic justice. For more information about MCNO and the training opportunities available contact Ned Moore at 612-625-5805 or nedmoore@umn.edu; Jay Clark at 612-625-2513 or clark037@umn.edu; or visit www.cura.umn.edu/mcno.

- **The Resilient Communities Project** (RCP) is a year-long partnership between the University of Minnesota and one local community in Minnesota. Through the partnership, students and faculty from across the University collaborate with the partner community to address its self-defined sustainability-related needs through course-based student projects. This collaboration results in on-the-ground impact and momentum for a community working toward greater resilience, sustainability, and livability. RCP is now accepting proposals from communities interested in being the community partner for 2015–2016. Cities, counties, and clusters of communities (for example, along a shared transportation corridor, around a regional center, or within a watershed) are eligible to apply. To minimize travel time and costs, applicant communities should ideally be located within a two-hour drive of Minneapolis. Communities located farther away from Minneapolis may be considered if the applicant contributes additional funds for overnight travel costs. The deadline for proposals is February 13, 2015. The partner community will be selected and notified in March 2015. Communities that are considering applying to the program are strongly encouraged to contact RCP to set up an initial informational meeting to discuss the program and the applicant’s specific needs. For a complete application packet and more information about how to apply, visit z.umn.edu/rcp or contact RCP program director Mike Greco at mgreco@umn.edu or 612-625-7501.

### Jonathan Miller

Jonathan Miller was hired as the new Communications Coordinator for CURA at the end of October. He is also the co-editor of this issue of the **CURA Reporter** and going forward he will be the sole editor of the publication. Since starting his position, Jonathan has met individually with CURA program staff to identify areas of common need that he will prioritize to accomplish in the first several months of his tenure. He has also plugged into as many communications resources that the University of Minnesota has to offer as possible. Previously Jonathan was the Director of Communications for the Minnesota State College Student Association and the co-editor of *The Alley Newspaper* in south Minneapolis.

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**Photo by Chris Dang**

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**Jonathan Miller, Communications Coordinator**
The Faculty Interactive Research Program is designed to encourage University of Minnesota faculty members to carry out research projects that involve a significant urban-related public-policy issue for the state or its communities, and that include active engagement with groups, agencies, or organizations in Minnesota involved with the issue. CURA is now accepting proposals for the 2015–2016 competition. Regular faculty members from all University campuses are invited to apply. Each award will provide support for two pay periods of the faculty member’s time in the summer of 2015 and a half-time graduate research assistant for the 2015–2016 academic year. Where appropriate, limited support for miscellaneous research expenses can be provided. The application deadline is March 16, 2015. Grant recipients will be notified in April 2015. For additional eligibility requirements, terms of the award, and application procedures, contact CURA director Ed Goetz at 612-624-8737 or egoetz@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/FIRP/announcement.

The Fesler-Lampert Chair in Urban and Regional Affairs is an endowed position that supports the research activities of a University of Minnesota faculty member for work on a project related to urban and regional affairs in Minnesota. The award is made possible through the generosity and vision of David and Elizabeth Fesler. Funds may be used to obtain release time or other support for the project, and may be used for either new or current projects. The application deadline for the 2015–2016 academic year competition is March 16, 2015. Grant recipients will be notified in April 2015. For additional eligibility requirements, terms of the award, and application procedures, contact CURA director Ed Goetz at 612-624-8737 or egoetz@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/Fesler-Lampert/competition.