

**FINAL REPORT**  
**May 29, 2003**

**SUSTAINABLE UNIVERSITIES INITIATIVE MINI-GRANTS PROGRAM 2002**

"Colleges and Congregations: Envisioning and Designing Sustainable Gardens for Religious Institutions and Surrounding Communities"

**Narrative Description**

**1) Purpose**

Students in landscape design courses at Clemson University researched, analyzed, designed, and communicated ideas about how meditation gardens, memorial gardens, habitat gardens, parking lots, community gardens, and other associated spaces can be created incorporating principles of sustainability. Using a service learning methodology, students worked with members of the Mount Zion United Methodist Church congregation in Central, S.C. in the spring of 2002 and with members of the First Baptist Church of Westminster, SC, in the spring of 2003.

College students were involved in the planning of landscape designs and a web page to help congregations envision, design, and celebrate "greening" efforts through landscape design. Students in participating landscape design courses researched topics such as sacred spaces, meditation gardens, plants of the Bible, the role of gardens in religion, and the use of water as a metaphor in religion. They identified practical problems that religious institutions face, such as how to design parking lots that accommodate large numbers of vehicles only one day of the week. After identifying problems, they proposed creative solutions to design such areas in an environmentally friendly manner. As people within congregations work to foster an awareness of the value of God's creation and develop acts of care that reflect this awareness, university students provide ideas about how this can be done in part through sustainable landscape designs including meditation, memorial, and memory gardens at religious institutions and community outreach recreational facilities and gardens.

Our first community partner was Mt. Zion United Methodist Church in Central, S.C. Tri-County Technical College's SUI Fellow and congregation member Dr. Sharon Miller served as both client and outside critic for Clemson University students working on the project. Her husband, Dr. Ansel Miller, a retired plant physiologist who worked in the CU Department of Forest Resources, chaired the landscape committee and served as the primary liaison between the university students and the congregation. The Millers are spearheading the installation and maintenance of the gardens. Phase one of a memory garden was installed with wheel chair accessibility in the spring of 2003.

Our second community partner was First Baptist Church of Westminster, S.C. The landscape project was to design a sloping 16 acre site consisting of woods, fields and stream to provide sustainable recreational outreach opportunities for our clients and the surrounding rural community in upstate South Carolina. The designers' proposed meditation gardens, walking/jogging trails, nature study areas, family picnic areas, softball fields, etc. as part of their master plans for the complex.

Students in the "Sacred by Design" component studied how a variety of religions show reverence for the natural world. They researched and discussed ways to bring healing and wholeness to the biosphere and the whole of Creation. Research projects focused on environmental education and/or information

services for churches, community gardens, denominations and the wider world community. Field trips to special places like state parks and botanical gardens allowed participating students to gain field experience, confer, and develop practical tools for environmental stewardship. They became engaged citizens as they researched, analyzed, wrote about, and reported their findings and ideas.

Our third community partner was Tri-County Technical College. While design students at Clemson were proposing community vegetable gardens as part of their designs, students enrolled in Dr. Sharon Miller's spring 2003 nutrition class at Tri-County Technical College studied the environmental impact of food intake and explored opportunities to recycle, reuse, and reduce while participating in this project. Some students volunteered at a church soup kitchen and at the Haven-of-Rest, a Christian housing facility for men. Other students presented ideas for minimizing food waste and for using food waste by taking it to local animal shelters or pig farms. One student worked for a catering business and helped insure that left over food was donated to malnourished and needy people. Another student researched "Meals on Wheels" and wrote a paper about the organization. Yet another student participated in a program called "Saturday Servants" at the First Baptist Church of Anderson. Participants helped feed the hungry through a soup kitchen. In addition to helping with local food recovery programs, students researched and presented ideas for providing healthy and nutritious meals as part of this outreach project.

## **2) Participating population or audience**

Clemson University students in Professor Mary Haque's courses (Hort. 461, Problems in Landscape Design; Hort. Honors 461) spring 2002 and spring 2003.

Students in Dr. Sharon Miller's BIO 240 human nutrition course at Tri-County Technical College spring 2003.

Members of the Mount Zion United Methodist Church congregation in Central, S.C.

Members of the First Baptist Church of Westminster congregation in Westminster, S.C.

## **3) Outcomes**

Over 40 boards including research boards, site analyses, landscape designs, and posters were produced by students working on the Central project and an additional 60+ boards were generated by students working on the Westminster project. One web page (with another in progress) was developed and an abstract and paper were published. Oral presentations were given to participating organizations and community groups.

Publications:

Haque, Mary Taylor. "Of Colleges and Congregations-A Campus Ecology Case Study." Campus Ecology 2001-2002 Yearbook. <http://www.nwf.org/campusecology/pdfs/ClemsonUniversity.pdf> 2002

Haque, Mary, Ansel Miller, Sharon Miller, and Lolly Tai. "Sacred by Design: Shifting to higher ground through the design of meditation and memorial gardens." CELA 2002: Groundwork Conference Program and Abstracts. 2002. PPS. 275-276.

To view photographs and documents, visit our web site at the address below.

**"Sacred by Design: Shifting to Higher Ground through the Design of Meditation and Memorial Gardens"**

<http://www.clemson.edu/hort/HORT461/MTZION/churchimages/Sacred.htm>

#### 4) Transferability to other institutions

Individuals from two SUI institutions collaborated on this project. Student and faculty work was presented through posters, papers, and a web site, which is instrumental in transferring information and ideas to other institutions. We shared results of our research and projects with interested organizations and individuals. Following is the abstract from a poster presented at the 2002 Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture meeting in New York.

#### COUNCIL OF EDUCATORS IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE ABSTRACT FOR 2002 POSTER PRESENTATION

Presented in Syracuse, New York, September 27, 2002.

"Sacred by Design: Shifting to higher ground through the design of meditation and memorial gardens"

The grounding of many landscape architects and global citizens has been shaken by terrorist activities, war, sickness, ecological disasters, natural resource depletion, and other profound changes that are prompting students and practitioners to move toward designing with timeless principles of sacred space in meditation and memorial gardens (Hammatt, 2002; Mazria, 1991; Thompson, 1999). Though the idea of incorporating signs of the sacred into landscapes and gardens is not new (Artess, 1995; Brockman, 1997; Charlesworth, 1993; Coffin, 1994; Harpur, 1994; Iyer, 1999), opportunities for designers to respond to the renewed citizen interest in sacred spaces abound.

An interdisciplinary team of landscape architecture and horticulture students have joined community partners to research, analyze, design, and communicate ideas about how meditation and memorial gardens can help individuals become more grounded. Students in participating courses researched topics such as sacred spaces, meditation gardens, medicinal and healing plants, the role of gardens as spiritual places, and the use of water as a metaphor in religion. As societies work to foster an awareness of the value of the natural world and develop acts of care that reflect this awareness, university students provide ideas about how this can be done in part through sustainable landscape design.

In the "Sacred by Design" component, students were asked to study how a variety of religions show reverence for the natural world. Outcomes included forty design boards, eighteen papers, and a web page developed by students to help others envision and design meditation and memorial gardens.

#### References

- Artess, L. 1995. *Walking A Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- Brockman, N. 1997. *Encyclopedia of Sacred Places*. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO.
- Charlesworth, M. 1993. Sacred Landscape: Signs of Religion in the Eighteenth-century Garden. *Journal of Garden History* (Jan.-June): 56-68.
- Coffin, D. 1994. *The English Garden, Meditation and Memorial*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Hammatt, H. 2002. Touchstones of Memory. *Landscape Architecture*. (June):68-75.
- Harpur, J. 1994. *The Atlas of Sacred Places*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Iyer, P. 1999. *Sacred Places: England before the fall*. 16 Jan 2002 <<http://www.salon.com/travel/feature/1999/08/28/England/>>.
- Mazria, E. 1991. Sacred by Design. *Progressive Architecture* (March): 74.
- Thompson, J. 1999. "Once More---With Feeling." *Landscape Architecture* (March):22.

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**Biography:**

Mary Haque, RLA, ASLA, Alumni Distinguished Professor. She is a professor in the Department of Horticulture at Clemson University. She and her students have received regional and national awards for their work on sustainable landscape design, and she was recognized as the 1993 South Carolina Governor's Professor of the Year. A strong advocate of the concept of community service and environmental stewardship, Professor Haque and her students have designed landscapes including residential, business, institutional, recreational and urban restoration related projects across the state and internationally.

**Author:**

Dr. Ansel Miller  
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**Biography:**

Dr. Miller taught courses in tree physiology, silviculture, hydrology and forest ecology for 28 years. He was the first recipient of the Excellence in Teaching Award which was established in his honor by the Forestry Class of 2000. A licensed forester, he is active in community outreach projects and is spearheading the landscape design of a meditation and memorial garden in Central, S.C. He is president of the Clemson Toastmasters Club and is active in public speaking at the district level as well.

**Author:**

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**Biography:**

Dr. Miller Teaches General Botany, Principles of Biology, and Human Nutrition at Tri-County Technical College. She is a former board member of the Environmental Education Association of South Carolina and council member for the South Carolina Academy of Science. A recipient of Project WILD's Meritorious Service Award, she is involved in many environmental education outreach projects. Dr. Miller is a Sustainable Universities Initiative Fellow at Tri-County Technical College and is the recipient of a 1999 NISOD (National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development) Excellence Award.

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**Biography:**

Lolly Tai, Ph.D., RLA, ASLA, Professor. She is a professor in the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture at Clemson University. She and her students have received regional and national awards for their work on sustainable landscape design. Her own creative activities include award winning design projects characterized by their sensitive, ecological, humanistic and resonant response to site and context as well as by a mix of traditional materials and techniques. Professor Tai has been practicing sustainable design and public service with her students. Together, they have conducted planning and design for new communities, civic/public places, as well as highways.

**Title of paper:**

“Sacred by Design: Shifting to higher ground through the design of meditation and memorial gardens”

Presentation technology needed:

Poster