
NEXUS Community Garden

Norwood-Evanston-Xavier Urban Sustainability Community Garden

March 1, 2012

Applicant:

Molly Robertshaw, MSW, LSW
Co-chair, NEXUS Community Garden
Assistant Director, Center for Faith & Justice

Title of Project:

NEXUS Community Garden

Proposal for WOX Grant

NEXUS Community Garden

Norwood-Evanston-Xavier Urban Sustainability Community Garden

Amount Requested: \$9,590.00

Abstract

The NEXUS Community Garden is entering its third season as a 30 plot community garden involving over 250 short-term and long-term participants per year including Xavier students, faculty, staff, and neighborhood residents. NEXUS is a hands-on and collaborative project that engages students, the broader University community, and surrounding neighborhood residents to grow food, learn about sustainable living, and build community on common ground. Course inclusion, volunteer projects, educational workshops, and student leadership ensures that students are engaged on a variety of levels as this project continues to grow, impacting their Xavier University experience from the intellectual to the spiritual into the future. From March through October each year, NEXUS serves as a hub of experiential learning and community engagement. Success is measured through eager and on-going participation and learning between our three communities. Women of Excellence Giving Circle funds are sought to specifically support increased course involvement, educational workshops, and student garden leadership - project pieces most closely aligned with the WOX mission, for most of the 2012 and 2013 garden seasons.

Greg Carpinello, Interim Director, Center for Faith & Justice Date

David Johnson, Interim Associate Provost for Student Life Date

NEXUS Community Garden
Norwood-Evanston-Xavier Urban Sustainability Community Garden

Amount Requested: \$9,590.00

<u>Course Collaboration</u>	2012 Season	2013 Season
Collaborative project pool	\$1500	\$2500
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching funds for accomplishment of projects by professors and courses that are mutually beneficial. • ie: mural paints, native plants, bee hives, sign printing, and others. 		
Faculty outreach meeting & events	\$0 (before grant period)	\$200
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach to faculty including lunch roundtables, Center for Teaching Excellence Brown Bag event, and coffee to brainstorm and discuss possible projects 		
Additional seating for visitors	\$400	\$0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnic table or other seating 		
<u>Educational Workshops</u>		
Speaker Fees	\$150	\$150
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 speakers @ \$50/workshop 		
Supplies	\$200	\$200
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on speakers, may include various participant supplies such as compost bins, rain barrels, food for nutrition workshop, etc... 		
<u>Student Garden Coordinator</u>		
Stipend	\$2,145 (Jun - Oct.)	\$2,145 (April - Aug.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 hours/week x 7.50/hr x 20 weeks (+10% fringe) 		
	\$4395.00	\$5195.00
TOTAL REQUESTED FOR 2012-2013 Seasons	\$9,590.00	

Minimal funding required for this portion of the project for 2 seasons is \$8,000. The Course Collaboration and Student Garden Coordinator funding being the most imperative to continued success of the project. Additional funding for other portions of the project are being solicited from both internal and external sources. Please see the "Student Garden Coordinator Position Description" and "Overall Project Budget" in the Appendix for a complete picture related to the project for the 2012 Season.

Narrative

The NEXUS Garden Steering Committee and the Center for Faith & Justice request \$9,590 over two partial growing season (July 2012 through August 2013) to continue to grow the impact of the NEXUS Community Garden on Xavier's campus. Now, entering its third season, NEXUS has become a thriving hub for the promotion of sustainable living and community engagement on our campus. In 2 growing seasons, thanks to the support of WOX and other generous funders, NEXUS has involved 107 registered gardeners and 501 participants in workshops and events for a total of 1,082 hours of engagement. The garden provides 30 raised beds and a communally-farmed space for students, faculty, staff, and neighborhood residents to grow food and community together from March through the end of October each year. A large amount of produce is shared with the St. Andrew's Food Pantry in Evanston for our neighbors who have little to no access to fresh produce.

In service of Xavier University's mission, the NEXUS Community Garden supports the promotion of lives of service and solidarity as students and the broader University community are challenged to engage collaboratively with one another and the surrounding communities on a common project. This hands-on project enhances intellectual pursuits through course collaboration (see professor testimonials in Appendix) and holistic development of students, both of which are central to the University's mission. The University is also embarking on the launch of an urban farm demonstration project in coming years and NEXUS serves as a great pilot project for course integration that can then build into curricular involvement in the Xavier Urban Farm project. It is exciting to consider supporting student learning through hand-on interaction in these two companion projects in coming years.

In alignment with the mission and purpose of the Women of Excellence Giving Circle, this grant cycle's funds are sought to support increased classroom engagement with the living laboratory that is the NEXUS garden, to hire an additional Student Garden Coordinator to increase the garden's potential for impact, and to continue educational workshops at NEXUS for all to take part in. All three of these components aim to enhance and impact student experience here on Xavier's campus both through curricular and co-curricular engagement.

Students are involved in and affected by multiple levels of the NEXUS Community Garden planning and participation including:

- Student Garden Coordinator: 13 hours per week position for twenty weeks for two students (funding sought for one position through WOX). The Student Garden Coordinator takes leadership on facilitating community organizing, logistics and garden events. Garden Steering Committee co-chairs hire, train, mentor, and supervise the Student Garden Coordinator(s) in order to provide a strong learning experience. See appendix for position description and reflections by first two WOX supported SGCs.
- Project Leadership: 3-6 students from key campus groups have served on the Garden Steering Committee and in corresponding project workgroups to bring the project to life.
- Course collaboration: several courses have engaged with NEXUS over the first two seasons (see professor testimonials in Appendix). With the support of WOX, we are interested in growing this component of the project to engage more students in learning of various disciplines utilizing the garden. Successfully amplifying this component in meaningful ways will entail:
 - Outreach to professors by Steering Committee members to brainstorm and plan including lunch meetings, Brown bag sessions with the Center for Teaching Excellence, and other means.
 - Matching funds to allow for projects to be actualized between courses and NEXUS. This might include beehives with the biology department, a labyrinth with the Theology Department, printing of educational signage designed by Art Department students to teach about sustainability and so on. Many collaborative projects necessitate supplies and it is imperative that NEXUS have some to offer if additional partnerships with courses are desired. With momentum built by the Eigel Center's Community Engaged Faculty Roundtable, past course participation, the support of the Center for Teaching Excellence, and the launching of Xavier's Urban Farm in coming years, it is clear that involving additional courses is not only in demand, but is well in line with where the University is headed.

- Additional seating is needed to welcome visitors including courses. At the time, NEXUS only has one picnic table to offer classes that visit. Even one additional picnic table would allow for double the number of students to sit during their visit. Additional seating will make NEXUS more approachable for courses to visit.
- Garden Service Days: annually 25 students or more volunteer at the planting and end of season work days in order to prepare the garden for planting in the spring and “putting the garden to sleep” in the winter. These annual days of service are a part of Community Action Day, the University’s twice annual day of service. This NEXUS opportunity for students runs clearly in line with the University mission.
- Season of Events: between March and October each year, three educational workshops provide a chance for hands-on learning for students on gardening, nutrition, and sustainability topics.

The NEXUS Community Garden project is important for a few, primary reasons. First of all, students learn most effectively when content of a course is teamed with context. Whether it’s a theology, biology, art, or history course, Xavier students can learn to apply their book learning in unique ways with the NEXUS garden as a laboratory. There are very few spaces within walking distance that our students can touch and make better sense of the world and NEXUS is one. In addition to the learning opportunities, NEXUS also presents a wonderful chance for Xavier to fulfill its mission of engaging our local communities and building stronger relationships with our surrounding neighbors, with whom we share both similarities and differences that everyone involved can learn from. And, thirdly, in an effort to create a more sustainable campus culture based in the President’s Climate Commitment and the corresponding Campus Sustainability Plan, NEXUS continues to serve and grow as a demonstration project that strongly supports Xavier’s growing efforts in the sustainability arena.

The expected outcomes of the NEXUS project are many. Specifically in relation to the nature of this proposal, some related outcomes include: 1) Marked enhancement of student learning for involved courses; 2) Strong relationships between Xavier students, faculty, staff, and neighborhood residents where resources, skills, and information are shared for mutual learning and growth; 3) Participants who feel more equipped to live more healthy and sustainable lifestyles; 4) Increasing student involvement in and impact by the NEXUS project, bridging into curricular involvement in the Xavier Urban Farm.

Between service projects, club activities, project leadership, course collaborations, and workshops it is anticipated that upwards of 250 students will be directly impacted during each of the 2012 & 2013 seasons. A total of 500 people will likely be impacted through long-term or short-term participation in NEXUS, building on the success of past seasons.

The impact of WOX funds and the NEXUS project as a whole will be assessed in multiple ways. Involved professors will be sought for comment on the impact of learning for their students and subject area. Simple paper surveys will be completed before and after each workshop to assess learning. Ongoing gardeners will take a pre and post season survey assessing satisfaction, needs, and learning outcomes of the project. These three mechanisms will allow for a broad understanding of funding and project impact for everyone from one time visitors to ongoing, committed participants.

If funding is received, the Women of Excellence Giving Circle will continue to be recognized in permanent signage (currently on site), on the NEXUS [website](#), and in project materials and promotions such as informational brochures and seasonal calendars. In addition, WOX Giving Circle members are invited to attend NEXUS community building events or workshops as well as workdays to better understand the project and the impact of their contributions. At these events, the Giving Circle member could be introduced and invited to share a few words about the Giving Circle in order to build understanding and increased interest in the important work of the Women of Excellence. Communication with the Giving Circle will be managed by Molly Robertshaw. Molly is willing to serve as a speaker to present project results and the Student Garden Coordinators may also be made available for written or spoken comment as helpful.

Appendix

- I. Overall Project Budget
- II. Student Garden Coordinator Position(s) Description
- III. Faculty Outreach example
- IV. Letters of Support
 - a. Faculty Testimonials
 - b. Student Garden Coordinator Reflections 2011 – Josephine Lando
 - c. Student Garden Coordinator Reflections 2010 – Christopher Place
 - d. Eigel Center for Community-Engaged Learning – Sean Rhiney
 - e. Xavier Urban Farm Project – Dr. Elizabeth Groppe
 - f. Center for Teaching Excellence – Dr. David Mengel
- V. Garden Steering Committee list
- VI. Project Photos

NEXUS Community Garden OVERALL PROJECT BUDGET – 2012 Season

EXPENSES Anticipated	
Fencing ▪ Materials	\$500
Soil ▪ Top Soil mix ▪ Compost	\$2000 \$1500
Seeds/Plants	\$1500
Water ▪ Rain barrel pump	\$100
Tools & Supplies ▪ Tools ▪ Natural pest management	\$155 \$300
Storage Shed ▪ Covered sign for info sharing ▪ Whiteboard for gardener messaging ▪ Lock and sealant	\$300 \$50 \$50
Seasonal Events (3-4) ▪ Food ▪ Supplies	\$400 \$300
Course Collaboration ▪ Professor Outreach ▪ Collaborative Project Pool ▪ Visitor seating	\$0 \$1500 \$400
Educational Series ▪ Speaker fees (3) ▪ Supplies	\$150 \$200
Student Garden Coordinator	\$4390 (2 positions including fringe benefits)
TOTAL	\$13,795
INCOME Anticipated	
Plot Fees (30 plots x \$25 ea.)	\$750
CGC Neighborhood Gardens Program	In-kind support (expert advice, donated materials)
XU Sources ▪ Center for Faith & Justice ▪ Mission & Identity ▪ Physical Plant	\$1500 (received) \$3000 (received – for expansion of community plots, plants, and one student garden coordinator position in particular) In-kind donation of staff time, supplies, and materials
Grant Requests ▪ Women of Excellence ▪ Keep Cincinnati Beautiful	\$4395 (requested – includes season 1 amt. only) \$4000 (received – for re-landscaping of hillside and solar lighting)
In-Kind Donations ▪ Seeds and Plants ▪ Labor (volunteers and staff)	\$150 (requests in process) Unknown, but sizeable
TOTAL	\$13,795

Student Garden Coordinator Role Description

The NEXUS Community Garden Steering Committee seeks a Student Garden Coordinator to oversee garden operations during the 2012 growing season. Primary duties will include:

- promotion of garden mission and events within Norwood, Evanston, and Xavier communities
- oversight of volunteers in the garden
- support of participant gardeners during weekly work times
- staffing of workshops and community building events
- coordinating produce donation harvest and deliveries to area food pantries partners
- preparing, planting, and maintaining plots
- monitoring and strategizing to mitigate pests in the garden during the growing season
- ensuring that garden areas are kept neat and weed and trash-free

The ideal candidate will have some prior farm or garden experience, be committed to the goals of the NEXUS Community Garden, be a member or be willing to become an active member of the NEXUS Steering Committee, and be able to work well with a diversity of participants including students, faculty, staff, and neighborhood residents.

This position is 13 hours/week for 5 months of the year during the late spring, summer, and early fall (start/end dates and when weekly hours are completed can be flexible, but a summertime commitment is essential to the position). Evening and weekend availability required. Stipend for the position is \$1,950 (pre-tax) for the season (+10% fringe benefits).

For the 2012 Season, two student garden coordinators are sought with the intent to increase project impact. With two SGC's, NEXUS will be able to produce more food for donation, build stronger community relationships with local businesses, non-profits, and community groups, host more groups in the garden due to increased staffing, etc. One SGC position is funded for the 2012 season through a generous individual donor through the Center for Mission and Identity. WOX Giving Circle support will allow two students to take increased project leadership and cause the garden to grow in new and exciting ways.

N.E.X.U.S. Community Garden

Norwood-Evanston-Xavier Urban Sustainability

Overview

The NEXUS Community Garden (Norwood-Evanston-Xavier Urban Sustainability) is a 34 plot community garden shared between the three communities and located on a rise of land between McGrath Health and Wellness and the Cohen lot. It is a unique project aimed at engaging Norwood and Evanston residents alongside Xavier University students, faculty, and staff to grow food, learn about sustainable living, and build community on common ground. From late March through October each year, NEXUS serves as a hub of experiential learning and community engagement. Increased involvement by Xavier courses is invited and encouraged.

Goals:

Our purpose is to build community and increase sustainable lifestyle choices by:

- Providing common space to grow on both in terms of food and community
- Teaching community members how to live more healthy and sustainable lives
- Creating a community of support where resources, skills, and information are shared and relationships are formed



History of Course Involvement

- Sr. Rosie Miller - Theology and Ecology course held Native American rituals, reflection and discussion
- Kathleen Smythe & John Fairfield - Green Urbanism course toured the garden and discussed the benefits and challenges of urban gardens
- Greg Braun - Physics lab course conducted comparative soil testing within and outside of garden plots
- Ann Ray - Native Plant Pollinator Garden installed for future research by Biology courses
- Jonathan Gibson - community mural project called, "Color Your Block", planned and implemented by professor and students on the building behind the garden.

Possibilities for Course Involvement

- Simply hold your course up at the garden on a beautiful day. Molly or one of the Student Garden Coordinators would be happy to meet you and your class there for a short introduction to the space or even to facilitate a discussion based upon how your course objectives intersect with the project.
- Student community engagement opportunities including outreach in Norwood and Evanston
- Design of promotional materials and educational signage (content and layout) to raise the profile of the project and increasingly highlight sustainability learning opportunities for visitors
- Consider spearheading the installation of a labyrinth for use with reflections
- Install and manage a beehive, bat house, or bird houses for research with your course
- OTHER IDEAS THAT ARE ALL YOUR OWN! There are ways for every subject area to plug into our campus' community

Brainstorm Possible Collaboration?

The possibilities are endless for how your courses and NEXUS might benefit mutually from a shared project in the short or the long-term. Contact Molly Robertshaw at 745-3560 or robertshawm@xavier.edu to brainstorm possibilities and make plans. NEXUS is just a short walk away up next to McGrath Health and Wellness, so no transportation needed!

Faculty Testimonials

The NEXUS garden is a great on-campus resource for Xavier biology courses and I anticipate it will become an even more valuable asset with the enhancements you have proposed.

NEXUS's location makes it a perfect location to bring a small group of students to observe nature. In General Biology II, there is a long unit on the classification of organisms. We spend months and months of studying animals and plants preserved in jars. NEXUS is the perfect spot for a walk on a sunny day in the spring, to observe living things. We can talk about plant identification using plants that are familiar to them. I can point out the insects and the birds and I can talk about their role in the campus ecosystem. The garden also gives me the opportunity to engage students in discussion about urban farming and it piques the students' interest in urban farming.

I will be teaching Introduction to Entomology for the first time in Fall 2012. Entomology is the study of insects and other arthropods, and the students will study the classification, evolution, physiology, ecology, and cultural impact of insects.

The NEXUS garden will be the perfect location for mini-field trips to discuss the biology of insects that pollinate plants, to identify agricultural pests, and to discuss concepts like integrated pest management and biological control of pests. The hands-on experience the students will receive during these field trips will be invaluable and will contribute to overall learning. Students will create an insect collection, and I am sure that the gardeners will be happy to have the entomology students collect Japanese beetles and squash bugs from the beans and cucumbers!

In the coming years, I hope to increase the involvement of biology students with NEXUS. I anticipate that this involvement will include senior research projects for Biology and Environmental Science majors that take advantage of the location and facilities available at NEXUS. I am particularly interested in working with these students to create more habitats for pollinators, including orchard mason bees and honeybees. Nationally, pollinator populations have been in decline due to pathogens, pesticides, and monoculture agriculture. Here at Xavier, we can do our part to help pollinators. NEXUS has already shown a commitment to encouraging native pollinators by installing the native plant garden at the beginning of the 2011 season.

NEXUS is an exciting resource for me as a biology professor. I look forward to working together to enhance NEXUS and to enhance the learning of our students.

Dr. Anne Ray, Biology

We used the NEXUS garden as a source of soil for a soil testing lab in the Environmental Physics course over the past two years. We met in the garden, where I briefly discussed the benefits of urban gardening. We then took soil samples back to the lab to be analyzed. This lets the students collect the soil individually and showed the practical benefit of some of the issues discussed in class. We could then give results of the tests back to Molly to inform future soil additives. Showing science in a context is always difficult on an urban campus and having a working garden as a resource helps this out.

Mr. Greg Braun, Physics

Students in Theology and Ecology spent one class period exploring NEXUS garden at XU. Molly Robertshaw meet with us first over a delightful lunch at their picnic table coupled with a lively conversation on food, sustainable efforts at XU and the garden's history. This class field trip became a point of reference, scheduled in the second week of fall classes, to help us frame our conversations on food for the course intersecting with ethics of eating and theological vision of care of creation. Molly's interactive conversation kept up a lively exchange among the students as they learned about soil, community engagement with the neighborhood, composting styles with discussion on how to enlarge this into the cafe at XU and rain barrels. The highlight was walking the garden, learning creative ways to discourage insects and deer, the balance of permaculture planting, identifying herbs and tasting. The cherry tomato tasting initiated sharing of recipes among the

students for salsa dips. The competitive game of identifying plants was joked about in the class for several weeks afterwards. A few students have never seen how our food is grown and the issues of organic vs. chemical gardening. This experience was revelatory to them and encouraged them to visit some other local organic farmers in Cincinnati. Visiting NEXUS initiated a curiosity about food and confidence in exploring foods they were unfamiliar with and led to a tasting party with unfamiliar vegetables in class from another local farm. We all decided the basil /tomato from NEXUS however won the vote for our second best taste of the semester- besides the Fair Trade chocolate testing contest we had in class.

Sr. Rosie Miller O.S.F., Theology Department

During the Fall Semester of 2011, the Color Your Block public art project worked in conjunction with the Xavier NEXUS garden and the McGrath Health Center to create a mural near the garden. Students from the Department of Art, NEXUS Garden members and community members all worked together to both generate the ideas for the project and the final painting.

Color was discussed with students both theoretically and as a reality. Students worked with the community to educate them on color theory, but also brainstormed with them on the color relationship to the garden as it dealt with growth and decomposition. Students saw on a large scale the issues with mixing colors and how they change based on the time of day and temperature of the light. There is now a colorful mural backdrop to NEXUS, constructed by students and the community, that represents the cycle of growth to decomposition.

Students were engaged at every stage as they were working with actual people and places, not just hypothetical situations. Molly Robertshaw of the NEXUS Garden was a critical collaborator and helped with the brainstorming, promotion, and energy behind the project. This project has inspired me to do more projects like this, to integrate them into my curriculum, and to find passionate community partners to build relationships with.

Mr. Jonathan Gibson, Art Department

In the fall of 2011, John Fairfield and I co-taught HIST 399: Green Urbanism and Urban Gardening. We incorporated a number of experiential components including field trips and community work in urban gardens, farmers' markets and building community resilience. Overall, the students found the experiential component an essential element of the course, allowing them to experience and explore historical trends of decreased engagement in food production and self-reliance among other things.

Our field trip to NEXUS garden was early in the semester at the end of September. Molly Robertshaw spoke as part of a panel on urban gardening and then lead the students on a tour and discussion of NEXUS and urban gardening. During the tour, she first had the students walk on their own around the beds, exploring with their senses. Then we gathered to discuss what we saw and what we thought it meant. I was struck by the number of students (maybe 5 or so out of 20) who said that this was their first contact with food growing in the ground. Others commented that they did not know that the garden existed and now that they did know, they would make a point of walking by it as they enjoyed looking at it and seeing what was growing. Others wondered about adding to the compost bin at the garden. This was our first field trip and it helped to provide the students with an immediate and local context for both class discussions as well as the other work that they did in the wider community. We were grateful to Molly for her time and expertise in sharing the NEXUS garden with our students.

Dr. Kathleen Smythe, History

2011 Student Garden Coordinator Reflection – Josephine Lando

Flower gardens grow flowers, vegetable gardens grow vegetables, and community gardens grow communities.



I have always been a very introverted person. I love to grow flowers, and for me gardening is an escape. It is a perfect way to spend my quiet time. When I began my role as the student garden coordinator, I had a rough idea of what to expect; I would assist people in setting up their gardens, ensure the community plots are well taken care of and harvest food to donate to the food pantry among others. I was very excited about the possibility of learning new skills and meeting new people. Now as the end of the growing season is approaching, I can look back and say my experience with NEXUS has been so much more than I imagined it would be!

My skills as a gardener have definitely improved. I can grow more than just flowers so that's a plus! My mom would be so proud of me if she heard me explaining how to grow plants like squash, zucchini or herbs like basil or dill, because I had never heard of them before my gardening experience at NEXUS. I am marveled by how much information I have gotten this summer. Be it from learning how to grow different plants I had never heard of, or how to take care of them. Answering questions about why some plants grow the way they do. One of research projects I enjoyed the most was composting. I had never thought of compost as anything more than decomposing matter.

One of the things I enjoyed the most about my experience as the student garden coordinator was all the people I got to interact with. These are the gardeners from around Xavier, Norwood, and Evanston and the wonderful people at Saint Andrews' food pantry. These people taught me to break out of my shell. I love how as we got deeper into the season, friendships became stronger and stronger. It's so wonderful to see a bond formed between people and the fact that it all starts from a seed. It is always a joy for me to get an email from one of the gardeners telling me about the produce they harvested from the garden, it's even a greater joy to see gardeners help each other out and in the long run share the produce they get because they acknowledge the role that their neighbor played. This is team work!

I count myself lucky to have gotten the chance to be part of this project. Aside from the friendships that were formed, and the gardening skills I gained, I have learnt patience; to get good produce you have to make sure you take care of your growing plant and your fruits will be proof of how hard you worked. I have learnt perseverance; at times you may feel like you are giving all you can, but sometimes a little extra boost is all you need to give and you'll get your fruit.

The NEXUS garden lives up to what is stated below the sign, Norwood, Evanston and Xavier Urban sustainability. "Flower gardens grow flowers, vegetable gardens grow vegetables, and Community gardens grow communities."

2010 Student Garden Coordinator Reflection – Christopher Place



For me, this was a season of beginnings. It was the beginning of the garden, of community, and of my lifelong goal to grow food. Most simply, this season launched the NEXUS Community Garden, and *that*, in and of itself, is an accomplishment. We did it! We established a garden on Xavier’s campus that will remain for many years to come. Food and connection with the earth is now “rooted” in Xavier’s campus. Additionally, we have made it a *community* garden. Projects, learning, and movements are often internally enclosed on a Xavier’s campus, but we established a precedent of working alongside our Norwood and Evanston neighbors and will continue to do so.

The appeal and connection to “community” was my original attraction to the position that Women of Excellence so generously funded and proved to be the most rewarding aspect of the position. Reflecting on how intimidating the world’s issues may appear, I desired to seek out developing and belonging to a community. Community is so crucial because it is bigger than an individual or a dyad but smaller than *everything*. It is something you can actually feel and I began to feel it building as the season moved onward. When I walk through the greenspace on campus and run into Joe or Walt, two great Physical Plant guys, who regularly spent extra hours up at the garden; when I went to a lecture and was chased around by John David (one of our 5 yr. old gardeners); when I chatted with Miss Linda about weeds, classes, and weather; I felt the community.

True, Xavier did not become food independent this season; Norwood, Evanston, and Xavier did not sort out all their differences and become full neighbors; yes, not every gardener met one another or became a “farming” community. However, we started. We planted the seeds for development. We grew food, we started to build relationships with local organizations, and a number of friendships will continue to flourish from this season. We also had tremendous accomplishments. We were featured in the Civic Garden Center’s Neighborhood Gardens Tour as well as being awarded two prestigious awards from Keep Cincinnati Beautiful for the scope and impact of our project. We grew and donated over 50 pounds of produce. We hosted two wonderful gardener get-togethers. We built a trail. We got our name out. Yes, we did not change every person at Xavier, in Norwood or in Evanston, but I felt the community, I saw the tremendous progress from nothing, and I identified the urge within myself to continue this food-growing process.

Growing food is miraculous. It is awe-inspiring to watch a cucumber plant that I planted at 7 inches long grow 7 cucumbers 7 inches long. It is amazing to plant a tiny sunflower seed and soon find a plant staring me in the eye. It is mind-blowing and heart-warming to have a “favorite” cherry tomato plant thanks to the unique taste of its fruit. To be able to share its bounty with friends and passersby and to be congratulated is rewarding, but more so, humbling. I know what I contributed to our garden, which was a fair amount, yet I appreciated even more the beauty of nature to take water, dirt, and a little love from a new gardener to produce little red pieces of delight. The experiences I have had with the garden encourage me to continue to pursue this respect for the earth as a way of life: connecting to the land, appreciating the interdependence we share with our food, and to enjoy the “fruits” of my labor. It is an experience that only *began* this season.

Letter of Support – Mr. Sean Rhiney, Director, Eigel Center for Community-Engaged Learning



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February 28, 2012

Women of Excellence Giving Circle
Xavier University
3800 Victory Parkway
Cincinnati, Ohio 45207

RE: Letter of Support, NEXUS Community Garden WOX Grant Application

Dear Women of Excellence Grant Committee:

I write in support of the NEXUS Garden Steering Committee and Center for Faith & Justice's application for a Women of Excellence Grant. As Director of the Eigel Center for Community-Engaged Learning, my primary role involves the creation and support of engaged course development and community partnerships. It's my opinion that this proposed project will further engage faculty and students who seek engaged experiences and expand our learning environment in exciting and innovative ways.

This past fall I had the opportunity to work with the Nexus Community Garden as part of a collaborative art project involving faculty, students, staff, and neighbors. The project allowed me to observe and interact with the Garden's leadership and engage community participants in a unique and refreshing way. There might not be a more singular experience demonstrative of the potential outcomes of engaged learning than the Garden. The existing space provides a myriad of teaching tools for disciplines from science to theology, as well as an opportune place for discussion and reflection. The programming enhancements currently being submitted for your consideration are built solidly on core experiential learning principles and will seamlessly blend the lines between classroom and community. It promises to be impactful on the learning outcomes of students, beneficial to our community partners, and a catalyst for the further development of our faculty's teaching and engaged scholarship.

There is a palatable energy on campus for this type of engaged experience, and I fully support it. Thank you for your consideration and ongoing efforts to acknowledge important endeavors that impact our campus and community.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sean Rhiney".

Sean L. Rhiney, J.D., Director
Eigel Center for Community-Engaged Learning

Letter of Support – Dr. Elizabeth Groppe, Xavier Urban Farm Project



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XAVIER
UNIVERSITY

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Cincinnati, Ohio 45207-4442
Phone 513-745-3026
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February 27, 2012

Dear Women of Excellence Giving Circle,

I write in enthusiastic support of Molly Robertshaw's application for WOX funding to support the continued development of the NEXUS Community Garden Project. NEXUS has an impressive record of advancing Xavier's mission to form students intellectually, morally, and spiritually. It contributes in a very concrete and practical way to education and community engagement about some of the central ethical challenges of our day, including ecological sustainability, human health, and justice in the production and distribution of food.

The dominant forms of agriculture now practiced in America are reliant on dwindling reserves of fossil fuels; erode soils at a pace that far exceeds natural regeneration; and employ chemical pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers that have been implicated in a wide array of ecological disorders and human health problems. These forms of agriculture also require large capital investments prohibitive to most small farmers, resulting in the loss of many family farms. Meanwhile, many people in urban areas lack both meaningful work and access to healthy food. There are a growing number of courses at Xavier that engage students in constructive ethical reflection about our food and agricultural systems, including Biol 120 (Ecology and People), Hist 399 (Green Urbanism), Theo 388 (Theology and Ecology), and Professor Wyett's sections of Eng 205 (Literature and the Moral Imagination.) The NEXUS project is an essential part of these academic courses, providing students with the opportunity for hands-on practical experience growing food organically and building community with neighbors in Evanston and Norwood. I have spoken with a number of students who have taken these courses and without fail they emphasize the importance of hands-on work in community garden projects to their learning experience in the class.

Molly Robertshaw is the ideal NEXUS coordinator. I have attended a number of the community garden events she organized and was highly impressed with her leadership. She is personable, passionate, committed, knowledgeable, and very gifted at working with both students and community members. She is an excellent role model and mentor for young women leaders at Xavier, and I recommend her project enthusiastically for a WOX grant.

Cordially,

Elizabeth Groppe

Associate Professor of Theology



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February 29, 2012

Dear Women of Excellence Giving Circle members,

I am writing in support of Molly Robertshaw's grant proposal for the NEXUS Community Garden. As the Faculty Director of Xavier's Center for Teaching Excellence, I am pleased to recognize in this proposal specific, concrete goals that align very well with the CTE's own mission. These include the cultivation of environments and relationships to build networks and communities of learning. The NEXUS Community Garden has already begun to play such a role at Xavier, as the faculty and student testimonials included in the grant application document.

The CTE welcomes creative efforts such as the NEXUS Community Garden, and especially Molly Robertshaw's intentionality about using the garden as a hub and stimulus of learning and teaching. I would be very pleased to see it receive support from the Women of Excellence Giving Circle.

Sincerely,

David C. Mengel, PhD
Faculty Director, Center for Teaching Excellence
Associate Professor of History
Phone: (513) 745-3870
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NEXUS Garden Steering Committee List 2012

- Brad Rogers, Co-chair, Norwood resident
- Mary Phillips, Co-chair, Evanston resident
- Molly Robertshaw, Co-chair, Xavier staff
- Josephine Lando, Sophomore, Student Garden Coordinator (2011)
- Linda Meador, Gardener, Evanston
- Jessica Stavole, Senior, Community Engaged Fellow
- Dr. Mollie McIntosh, Assistant Professor, Biology and Environmental Science
- Dick Menke, Grounds Supervisor, Physical Plant
- Joe Wolf, Grounds Crew, Physical Plant
- Rosalynd Erney, Senior, Philosophy, Politics, and the Public major

2011 Season Sample Photos



Students, Faculty, & Community Volunteers, Spring 2011



Sifting compost for the season, Spring 2011



Student Garden Coordinator 2011, Josephine



Gardeners working together to plant and care for community plots, Summer 2011



Student volunteers clearing plots at end of season, Fall 2011



Student volunteers and gardeners clearing plots at end of season, Fall 2011



Color Your Block Mural Project, Art Dept. & NEXUS, Fall 2011



Emily, Art Student & Color Your Block Project Leader, Fall 2011