

Connecting Universities for Resilience Research Accessible to End Users (CUR2ATE)

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SHORT DESCRIPTION

This project connects university resources – faculty and staff expertise, student interest and learning capacity – with coastal resilience needs of community partners (government agencies, nonprofit and volunteer organizations, businesses, neighborhoods or communities). The project will create and disseminate a comprehensive toolkit for use by university faculty, staff, and students, and partner organizations or groups to pursue collaborative university-community projects focused on addressing coastal resilience issues. The toolkit will include resources to support engagement efforts throughout project development and execution (such as establishing and communicating requirements and expectations), provide examples of successful collaborative projects, and highlight best practices for university and community partners to work together on the topic of coastal resilience.

ABSTRACT

Increasingly universities are seeking to better engage with their communities while also enhancing students' learning experiences and increasing the value, applicability, and utility of academic research. Simultaneously, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and grassroots collectives are looking to universities to provide expertise and cutting-edge knowledge to fill gaps or expand capacity for addressing a variety of on-the-ground issues and problems. Coastal resilience issues such as environmental sustainability, preparedness for and response to hazards such as hurricanes, development in the floodplain, and nuisance flooding, are examples of areas where university-community collaborations can help address challenges and build resilience. However, making the connection between community needs and university activities can be challenging, and building capacity for making these connections through providing supportive resources can significantly contribute to efforts to not only leverage university resources to meet

community needs but also build synergies across community partners and university resources. Hence, this project seeks to improve, build on, and expand the connection between university resources (including research expertise, faculty/staff expertise, and student knowledge and time) with needs of end users, such as community and government organizations working in the coastal resilience domain. For the purposes of this project, community-university collaborative projects may include, but are not limited to, short-term student community service events, and longer-term (a semester or more) in-class projects, directed research or independent study, and internships.

The project's deliverable is a toolkit that includes resources such as best practices, templates, and checklists, videos, information sheets, sample agreements/learning contracts, and other materials that are ready for use by community partners and university faculty, staff, and students pursuing collaborative projects. We will develop these resources through:

- Discussion with university faculty, staff, and students about issues and challenges in connecting with the end user community;
- Discussion with end users such local, state, and federal agency staff and nonprofit, business, and community leaders about issues and challenges in matching their projects and needs to university resources;
- Collaboration with other CRC PIs/projects to identify successful university-community projects, and develop lessons learned, case studies, and information sheets to highlight how these projects benefit end users;

Discussion with faculty and practitioners who have successfully partnered to undertake projects that leverage university research expertise to address problem on the ground.

The proposed work builds on our applied research activities engaging stakeholders and end users in coastal resilience efforts in the Hampton Roads region of coastal Virginia and our educational activities supporting MSI Summer Research teams and SUMREX students.

Throughout our activities in Years 1-6 our focus has been on connecting university resources with coastal resilience needs of community partners. The project consolidates that knowledge and also builds on our previous and ongoing work on (1) engaging stakeholders and end users in identifying community needs, (2) connecting faculty and researchers with community partners, and (3) developing and conducting university-community collaborative research projects for coastal resilience.