

# District of Columbia (University of the District of Columbia)

## Plan of Work for 2023-2027

Status: Final (Approved 9/22/2022)

### Executive Summary Overview

The College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability, and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES) of the University of the District of Columbia is the land-grant college in and for the nation's capital. In addition to offering innovative academic programs in urban architecture and community development, urban sustainability, health education, nursing, and nutrition and dietetics, we also offer a wide range of community education programs through our land-grant centers: (1) The Center for Urban Agriculture & Gardening Education; (2) The Center for Sustainable Development & Resilience, which includes the Water Resources Research Institute; and (3) The Center for Nutrition Diet & Health, which includes the Institute of Gerontology.

CAUSES experienced a significant shortage of employees during the past fiscal year. At one point, almost 40% of the college's full-time positions were vacant. Despite this challenge, the college developed a theme entitled "Building Capacity & Strengthening the Core" that would succeed in galvanizing and focusing our efforts. This report elucidates the combined efforts of Team CAUSES.

### Merit and Scientific Peer Review Processes

None

### Stakeholder input: Action Taken to Seek Stakeholder Input

Virtual Community Listening Sessions with stakeholders were held to collect feedback on program effectiveness and recommendations for improvement. Community Listening Sessions were meant to include a range of participants, including Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs), D.C. and federal government agencies, non-profit organizations, volunteers, workshop participants, community members, and private sector businesses. The goal of the sessions was to determine how the Center for Nutrition, Diet and Health (CNDH) and Center for Urban Agriculture and Gardening Education (CUAGE) can improve their efficiencies and effectiveness regarding community impact and outreach. The sessions were led by a third-party facilitator, who supported session neutrality and allowed all participants' viewpoints to be heard and acknowledged. To accommodate participants' schedules, the sessions were held virtually from 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 16, 2021 and Thursday, September 16, 2021 (second session was 1.5 hrs.). The focus of the listening session in June was CNDH, while the focus of the listening session in September was CUAGE.

## Stakeholder input: Methods to Identify Individuals and Groups

The CAUSES marketing team assisted with designing marketing campaigns via Eventbrite and on CAUSES' digital media platforms. The team delivered email campaigns, inviting CAUSES' mailing list, event attendees, volunteers, and community partners. At the beginning of the virtual Community Listening Sessions, participants were asked to introduce themselves and describe their involvement with CAUSES. There were fifteen (15) total participants for both community listening sessions. The participants were government stakeholders, community partners, ANC leaders, and DC residents.

## Stakeholder input: Methods for Collecting Stakeholder Input

Participants were then divided into small virtual rooms to discuss topic areas (or areas of involvement) identified for CNDH and CUAGE programs. Several questions were used to guide participants' reflections and group discussions. The themes for the three sets of guided questions asked were communication, accessibility, and youth programs. The participants were also asked if they wanted to discuss anything else besides the three identified themes. Following the Listening Sessions, participants completed a survey to assess satisfaction with CNDH and CUAGE programming, the overall structure of the Listening Sessions, and to gather any other feedback not addressed during the sessions. The project team collated notes and developed vital takeaway points to help build the final report, including challenges and recommendations brought up by participants

## Stakeholder input: A Statement of How the Input Will Be Considered

Two (2) key overarching themes emerged from the Community Listening Sessions: Communication and Accessibility and People and Partnerships. Participants at both listening sessions expressed a need for UDC-CAUSES to be more strategic about their communication. The participants expressed concern regarding senior citizens' ability to work technology needed for virtual events and classes such as a computer and logging onto Zoom or other similar programs. They emphasized that without a certain level of familiarity with technology, these specific community members have limited access to available programs. The stakeholders also expressed a concern with the overall way that CNDH and CUAGE advertise their programming. Many of them were unaware of much of the Centers' programming. These community members recommended advertising via flyers, TV, local radio stations, contact with community directors/ward leaders, schools and parents, faith-based groups, buses, and metro ads.

Participants at both listening sessions noted that CAUSES needs to reach out to the community in more ways than by email and online. CAUSES must find out how the community gets their information in order to more effectively reach their audience. The participants identified several recommendations to improve communication processes and accessibility such as adopting a boots-on-the-ground approach to make direct connections with the community.

Related to people and partnerships, the participants expressed a desire for CAUSES to work with community centers across the eight (8) wards in the district, as well as increase communications with low-income communities. One way they suggested CAUSES do this is by partnering with black-owned businesses, as well as partnering with churches and other groups where there is available space that could sustain an urban garden. The participants also expressed a need for access to nutritious food, stating that CNDH education programs about health “will be meaningless if there is no access to food that is part of nutritious diet.” They suggested that CNDH utilize data to identify and target problem

areas where they could focus more programs. In addition, the participants suggested that CAUSES utilize community gardeners to spread the word about UDC programs and get more people involved.

The sessions revealed that the community is looking for CAUSES to be a partner with transparent and reliable communication, an increase in direct community engagement, strategic partnerships that enhance programs and policy issues, and improved organizational structures and processes. The sessions were the first step in achieving CAUSES' mission and vision to provide community outreach programs that measurably improve the quality of life and economic prosperity of people and neighborhoods in the District of Columbia, the nation and the world.

## Critical Issues

### **Climate Change**

Initiated on: Nov 26, 2019

State: District Of Columbia

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

The natural resources in the District of Columbia are in a totally urban environment with urban forestry and gardening. Soil, air and water quality encompass the three environmental factors that affect the quality of life of the residents with water quality being most significant. Providing the relevant research and extension education that provide a balance among growing local food, maintaining urban forestry, and the impact of gentrification as a result of antiquated storm and waste water infrastructures coupled with emerging concerns of environmental degradation has become a significant challenge. This program will continuously assess and monitor natural resources and changes in the urban environment of the District of Columbia. Research activities and extension education in green infrastructures for youth and adults will be implemented to determine new mechanisms to maintain a healthy and friendly ecosystem while educating the residents to appreciate, adopt and maintain these changes.

Science Emphasis Area

Agroclimate Science, Bioeconomy, Bioenergy, and Bioproducts, Education and Multicultural Alliances, Environmental Systems, Youth Development

### **Food Safety**

Initiated on: Nov 26, 2019

State: District Of Columbia

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

The safety of the foods that we ingest is paramount to our health and quality of life. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that every year about 76 million people in the United States become ill from pathogens in food and that about 5,000 of this number die as a result. In particular, young children, expectant mothers and their unborn children and older adults are at the greatest risk. Contamination can occur during the growth, harvesting, processing, storage, and shipping of food. Yet, the poisoning of foods also can occur during food preparation in restaurants or in our home kitchens. Our Food Safety and Handlers Training and Certification Program provides training and outreach for residents, small commercial businesses while promoting personal responsibility for practicing food safety. Food Handler education is also offered to small non-commercial service

agencies in the city to increase the food handler's compliance with food safety principles, hazard analysis, and critical control points. Food safety labs are being built to test soil, water and crop safety in the fields and also during processing for value addition and reuse of food waste.

Science Emphasis Area

Education and Multicultural Alliances, Family & Consumer Sciences, Food Safety, Human Nutrition, Sustainable Agricultural Production Systems, Youth Development

## **Global Food Security and Hunger**

Initiated on: Nov 26, 2019

State: District Of Columbia

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

With 80% of the U.S. population and over 50% of the world's population now living in urban areas, food security cannot be addressed without urban solutions. As one of the fastest growing cities in the US, Washington DC is also the ideal location to address food security as a key solution to economic, social and environmental sustainability. CAUSES is now galvanizing its efforts around the idea of Urban Food Hubs intended to form a network of food security islands to improve food security by creating a resilient network of food production, food preparation, food marketing and 4. food waste management. These food hub sites in food desert communities will provide nutrient dense food readily available, affordable and accessible while creating jobs and spinning off small innovative businesses to improve environmental, social and economic conditions in the District of Columbia. We will continue to build research and outreach capacities in both soilless and soil based production systems for small urban farmers. This will require new technologies and specialty small field equipment for no till conservation.

Science Emphasis Area

Agroclimate Science, Bioeconomy, Bioenergy, and Bioproducts, Education and Multicultural Alliances, Environmental Systems, Food Safety, Human Nutrition, Sustainable Agricultural Production Systems, Youth Development

## **Health, Nutrition and Childhood Obesity Prevention**

Initiated on: Nov 26, 2019

State: District Of Columbia

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

The Center for Nutrition Diet and Health will provide quality research and extension programs that address childhood and adult obesity and major health issues for District of Columbia residents. Programs such as Grocery Store Tours, Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program, Farmers' Market Nutrition Education Program and Food Safety Certification assist recipients with making healthy urban lifestyle choices and are designed to improve the food handling safety and choices of residents as an effort to aid in the reduction of overweight and obesity among low income families and individuals.

Science Emphasis Area

Education and Multicultural Alliances, Family & Consumer Sciences, Food Safety, Human Nutrition, Youth Development

## **Sustainable Energy**

Initiated on: Nov 26, 2019

State: District Of Columbia

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

It is imperative that safe, reliable energy sources are generated so that the environment will be healthy for those of us who reside on earth now as well as for future generations. This program involves using green technologies and infrastructures such as green roofs to conserve energy in buildings. Closing the loop of the food hub concept includes food waste recycling and reuse in production of sustainable bio-energy, Research to improve food and crop waste to bio-energy with an anaerobic digester for easily available and reliable production of sustainable renewable energy will be implemented at the Firebird Research Farm. Two 30 KVA backup generators have already been install and capable of using bio-diesel fuel. The Triple yield research project will demonstrate the harvesting of energy, water and food to increase economic profitability and land valuation for small farm systems. . Composting to grow soils, the use of renewable solar energy to pump ground water for high tunnel controlled environment farming is a model for future urban agriculture in the global food production system.

Science Emphasis Area

Agroclimate Science, Bioeconomy, Bioenergy, and Bioproducts, Education and Multicultural Alliances, Environmental Systems, Food Safety, Sustainable Agricultural Production Systems, Youth Development

## **Urban Families, Youth, and Communities**

Initiated on: Nov 26, 2019

State: District Of Columbia

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

Like most large cities, our nation's capital is dealing with a myriad of public concerns varying from education to housing to economic development. The Land Grant Programs are providing quality program that addresses issues related to sustainable youth, families, and communities in the District of Columbia. The Center for 4-H and Youth Development supports city's youth through leadership and development activities. 4-H program activities implemented through Community Resourcing and Volunteer Training will assist young people in developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, responsible, productive, and contributing members of society. Programs offered are The Advanced Youth Development Training for 4-H Volunteer Leaders and other Youth Development Programs staff, 4-H Military-Kids , LifeSmarts Consumer Education, 4-H Living Interactive Family Education (4-H LIFE), 4-H STEM, 4-H Summer Camp, and The Health Rocks Program. These programs educate youth in arts and sciences, health and fitness, urban ag, technology, environmental science, math, sewing and fashion design, cooking and healthy eating and a host of other subject areas while encouraging fellowship and service opportunities.

Science Emphasis Area

Agroclimate Science, Bioeconomy, Bioenergy, and Bioproducts, Education and Multicultural Alliances, Environmental Systems, Family & Consumer Sciences, Food Safety, Human Nutrition, Sustainable Agricultural Production Systems, Youth Development