ACADEMIC PLAN

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN ECOLOGY
Community and Regional Development,
Human Development and Family Studies, and
Landscape Architecture + Environmental Design

BACKGROUND

This plan sets forth an academic vision for the new Department of Human Ecology at U.C. Davis, areas of joint thematic interest and educational objectives, and strategies for curricular collaboration, research synergy, and outreach effort. It is an outgrowth of initiatives during the past three academic years to merge Community and Regional Development and Human Development and Family Studies (formerly comprising the Department of Human and Community Development) and Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design (formerly comprising the Department of Environmental Design) into a single Department.

The Human Development and Family Studies program (HD) currently offers a B.S. degree in Human Development, and is home to the Human Development Graduate Group which offers M.S., and Ph.D. degrees. It houses the Center for Child and Family Studies (including the Early Childhood Lab and the Eichhorn Family House) and the Family Research Group.

The Community and Regional Development program (CRD) currently offers a B.S. degree in Community and Regional Development, and is home to the Community Development Graduate Group, which offers a M.S. degree. In addition, it is the primary home for the Sustainable Agriculture major. CRD faculty also lead the Agricultural Sustainability Institute, the Center for Regional Change, and the California Communities Program.

The Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design program (LDA) currently offers a B.S. degree in Landscape Architecture, and has received course approvals for new courses to be included in a proposed Sustainable Environmental Design major. It is home to the Geography Graduate Group, which offers M.S. and Ph.D. degrees, and like CRD is closely affiliated with the Center for Regional Change.

The applied focus of our three programs distinguishes us from many other academic units in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, and elsewhere within U.C. Davis. To assist in outreach activities, CRD currently has one Cooperative Extension (CE) Specialist, HD has two and one-half CE Specialists (the one-half position is shared with Vet Med), and LDA has

one part-time position shared with Plant Sciences. The CE positions in our programs have been considerably reduced in recent years due to retirements.

VISION STATEMENT

Drawing on the comparative strengths of the Human Development, Community Development, and Landscape Architecture units, we envision the Department united around research and curricula focusing on the human ecology of people and place: the human experience that includes the individual, institutions, the community, schools, families, and relationships between people and their environment. This human environment is both social and ecological, and includes different social groups, institutions, built landscapes, ecologies, and physical settings.

Our outlook is multi-dimensional and spans micro to macro-levels—including individual, family, community, region, state, nation and globe. Our work ranges from studies of individual human health and behavior to analysis of community processes and design to considerations of bioregions and global processes. We explicitly focus on social and environmental problems, and solutions to those problems, with particular attention to issues of equity, health, and sustainability. This type of inquiry demands novel approaches to research and places emphasis on mixed method approaches (qualitative, quantitative, historical, theoretical, and design-based), with a transdisciplinary orientation that spans fields of science and practice.

Human ecology integrates themes of *people*, *place, and power*. "*People*" focuses attention on human development and individual relationships with others through family, institutions, and community. "*Place*" weaves together social processes and geographical space. "*Power*," defined as the capacity to shape processes and outcomes related to people and place, is an important focus for understanding contemporary issues such as health, equality, and sustainability, and how they might be addressed.

Conceptualizing human ecology in these ways suggests a breadth of research, curricular, and outreach applications representing unique opportunities for future synergy and collaboration across the three units. This collaboration includes areas such as child and youth development, family relationships, peer relations, human cognition, community health, housing, sustainable development, urban design, landscape ecology, regional policy, food systems, environmental justice, and transnational migration, which are some of the many areas of faculty expertise represented in the department. We aim to make our work relevant to a broad range of audiences such as social service providers, policymakers, nongovernmental organizations, planners, designers, public health practitioners, and local communities.

COMMON THEMES

A number of cross-cutting themes currently characterize the work of many of us, and could expand to form areas of integration in the future. **It is our goal to develop these areas of common emphasis further through new curricular, research, and outreach efforts, and through new hires.** It is important to note, however, that new hires cannot be solely restricted to

these themes, since many other specialties and skills are needed to maintain curricula and overall excellence across our three units.

- **Healthy People, Healthy Places.** The well-being of young people from infancy until adulthood is critically important to the future of societies in California and worldwide. The welfare of other age groups such as the elderly is also of prime importance as our state's population ages. Faculty from our programs currently research multiple areas that affect human well-being: education, health, employment, civic engagement, and relationships with built and natural environments. We seek to expand such research and link it more strongly to education, policy, and advocacy. Through an intergenerational approach we also aim to emphasize family environments and human relationships across time, place, and generations.

- **Sustainable Communities.** Ensuring long-term social and ecological welfare is a crucial need in the twenty-first century, given threats such as climate change, resource depletion, overpopulation, and increasing inequality. Many of our faculty currently have interests in various dimensions of sustainability, and as a department we are uniquely positioned to translate sustainability science and theory into policy, design, and action. Our existing Landscape Architecture and Community Development degrees deal with environmental and social aspects of sustainability, respectively, and our Human Development degree concerns healthy people, an essential element of sustainable communities. We will be seeking approval of a new Sustainable Environmental Design major.

- **Social Equity and Access to Opportunity.** One hallmark of our time has been widening inequalities between rich and poor, and the need to address injustices related to class, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, age, ability, and sexual orientation. We seek to develop research and educational opportunities that address issues of inequality, both in the United States and internationally, especially through our Community Development program but also through Landscape Architecture's consideration of the built environment and Human Development's consideration of human welfare at different points in the life-cycle.

- **Community Food Systems.** Food systems are crucial to the health and sustainability of communities and individuals. Our department has a central role to play in applying technical research related to food systems to the real world of policy, design, and education. We house the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems major, and have strong interests in urban greening, community gardens, and agriculturally oriented local economic development strategies.

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

In response to requests from administration, each program has developed teaching objectives for its curricula. However, certain common objectives extend across our programs. **It is our goal to develop courses and curricula that meet these shared educational objectives.** In particular, we note that our programs have an applied, real-world emphasis that focuses on training students

to address contemporary problems. Thus, service learning, experiential learning, internships, and other "active" educational strategies are important within our curricula. Skills such as critical thinking, understanding context, collaboration, and leadership are also central.
Our shared educational objectives include:

- Critical thinking and analysis
- Understanding context, including types and scales of influences and their effects on humans, communities, and environments (an "ecological model" of individuals, communities, and places)
- The ability to identify key concepts, tools, and research within each field
- The ability to identify opportunities for constructive social change and propose creative solutions
- The ability to work with others and take leadership
- The ability to effectively communicate concepts to the public

CURRICULAR STRATEGIES

Since the start of discussions of merging our programs into a single department, we have already taken certain steps to coordinate curricula, such as opening many of our classes to majors in the other programs on first pass, adding sections to classes such as LDA 150: Introduction to GIS so as to accommodate students from multiple majors, and allowing upper division undergraduates from all three programs into certain graduate classes on a space-available basis. However, other steps are possible. **It is a goal of our department to explore ways to coordinate courses and curricula more closely.** Some of the longer-term strategies described below will depend on the availability of faculty with interdisciplinary backgrounds, teaching assistant support, and/or resolution of teaching credit issues.

Near-Term

1) **Guest lectures in each others' classes.** As one starting point, we will identify opportunities for faculty in each program to guest lecture in other programs. For example, LDA faculty might provide a lecture in each of HD 100A (Infancy and Early Childhood), 100B (Middle Childhood and Adolescence), and 100C (Adulthood and Aging) on environmental factors and design strategies related to development of that age group.

2) **Increased use of existing courses in other programs within our majors**. We will explore possible inclusion of courses in the other programs as requirements for each of our existing majors. For example, LDA 3 (Sustainable Development: Theory and Practice) might be included within the CRD major, CRD 20 (Food Systems) might be required within LDA's new Sustainable Environmental Design major, and ESP 171 (Urban and Regional Planning) might be considered as a three-way shared course with ESP, useful in Sustainable Environmental Design, Community and Regional Development, and Environmental Policy and Planning majors.

3) **Develop/refine coursework related to common themes.** We will develop or expand courses and degrees related to the above themes. For example, LDA's proposed Sustainable

Environmental Design major relates to the Sustainable Communities theme, and CRD's new Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems major relates to both Sustainable Communities and Social Equity and Access to Opportunity themes.

Longer-Term

1) Cross-cutting themes within classes. We will seek to develop cross-cutting content within existing classes, incorporating the common themes described above plus other material from each others' programs into our course syllabi when appropriate. This could at times be done through guest lectures (Near Term Strategy #1 above). For example. LDA 2 (Place, Culture, and Community) might include sessions on public health and youth development, or CRD 156 (Community Economic Development) might include sessions on place-making, urban design, and/or land use planning strategies to promote economic development.

2) Joint classes. If resource and teaching credit issues can be resolved, we will explore a team-taught collaborative lower-division course for majors from all three programs, with one faculty person from each program involved each year. The lead person would probably rotate among departments so as to distribute funding equally. This class might become a feeder course for all majors. It would need good TA support, and clarity is needed about whether faculty would receive credit for their contributions to shared courses. We will also explore other joint course opportunities, including possible merging of existing courses that might be taught by faculty from different programs in alternating years. For example, LDA 2 (Place, Culture, and Community) and CRD 1 (The Community) might possibly be merged into a single shared course.

3) A joint minor. We will explore developing a Social Ecology minor (or other similar theme) composed of 5-6 existing courses across our three programs, as a way to promote interdisciplinary thinking and cross-campus interest in our department.

4) Combined or new joint majors. We will explore the possibility of new joint majors in the long term. For example, one option would be to combine the proposed Sustainable Environmental Design and Community and Regional Development majors into a single degree with two tracks. Possible advantages of this would include adding more social theory to SED and more environment and place-making material to CRD, and combining some lower-division intro classes to reduce demands on faculty.

RESEARCH STRATEGIES

Faculty in our programs already have many overlapping research interests, and many of our existing Agricultural Experiment Station projects already relate to the themes mentioned earlier. Issues of youth and family, sustainability, equity, and community food systems are prominent within these research projects. **It is our goal to further coordinate our research and seek new synergies through the following strategies, overseen by a Research Committee**:

1) Interdisciplinary research symposia. We will continue the current series of research symposia, and expand opportunities for cross-departmental discussion.

2) Faculty browbags. We will initiate an informal research seminar in which faculty from each program share their research with faculty across the department. One strategy might be to have one faculty member from each program presenting for 15 minutes at each session. We would seek to emphasize collaborative work.

3) Electronic working papers. In order to foster intellectual interaction, promote social cohesion, and help mentor younger faculty, we will make available electronic working papers that present pre-publication research from faculty members for collective discussion through brownbags or electronic means.

4) Joint research around new themes. We will consider forming study groups or conducting shared research around unifying topics such as "social ecology," as well as the themes listed above, potentially with an eye to developing new understandings of these terms, new research directions and publications, and a stronger identity for the department. We have already established a research fund to incentivize cross-program collaborations.

4) Joint institutes and centers. We will create joint institutes and centers, such as the recently discontinued Center for Youth Development, and/or expand existing institutes and centers as research and outreach units of our new department.

OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Given the applied nature of our programs, **it is our goal to strengthen and expand our department's outreach activities, linking research and teaching with off-campus constituencies and opportunities for constructive change**. Strategies will include the following:

1) Interdisciplinary AES projects. We will seek to highlight the diversity and impact of the AES projects that we currently have, to coordinate our AES work around common themes, to encourage new AES projects to adopt an interdisciplinary approach that addresses such topics, and to link this research to outside stakeholders concerned with current problems in California.

2) Service learning projects. We will seek to expand existing service learning courses, internships, and fieldwork, looking for synergies between our programs and opportunities to serve off-campus communities, institutions, and professions. For example HD field placements working with facilities for children, youth, or seniors might identify site design issues that LDA students could then propose solutions for through theses or studios.

3) Joint institutes and centers. As noted above, we will explore the creation or expansion of centers and institutes connected with our department, and will seek to link these to external constituencies. The Center for Regional Change is an example of a center enabling us to reach out to multiple constituencies.

4) Coordinate work of CE staff. We will seek to coordinate the work of existing CE staff across the three programs, explore new synergies related to common themes, and acquire new CE positions in line with the preceding themes.

HIRING PRIORITIES

Our goal is to hire new faculty that will help us pursue the above goals and strategies as well as meet curricular needs and maintain departmental excellence.

Since the time that our merger discussions began in 2009, our searches and hires have consisted of the following:

Unit	Date	Description	Status
CRD	2011	Regional Policy and Governance	Visser hired 2012
HD	2011	Quantitative Methods	Liu hired 2012
LDA	2012	Green Design	Milligan hired 2013
HD	2013	Infancy and Early Childhood	Hibel hired 2013
HD	2013	Middle Childhood/Adolescence	Recruitment underway 2013
LDA	2013	GIS Methods in Social Analysis and Public Involvement	Recruitment underway 2013

Additional FTE needs include (priorities will depend on actual retirements):

CRD	2013-14	Food, Agriculture, and Community	High priority
CRD/HD		Youth Development & Social Policy	
LDA/CRD		Urban History and Theory	
CRD/LDA	2013	Community Participation	POP hire – de la Pena*
HD/LDA/CRD		Environment, Behavior & Development	
HD/LDA/CRD		Ecology & Human Development	

*We were fortunate to obtain a POP hire that filled one of our future hiring priorities:

All three programs expect a number of retirements in the coming years, and the exact timing of these transitions is difficult to predict. While direct replacement of retiring faculty is not necessarily feasible or desirable, programs will prioritize new hires based upon the skills necessary for curricula and for maintaining desired internal balance. In addition, we will strive to find and give priority to candidates that can offer something to one or more of the other programs.