

IMPACT



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Arco Outreach: A Community Vision

The Situation

Fifteen years ago Butte County acquired the structural steel that was used in three buildings from the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL) located on the Arco Desert. The materials were to be used for a new Butte County fair building, amenities, community classrooms, an auditorium, exhibition halls, kitchen, and offices for the Butte County Extension. The steel for the building sat on the proposed site in Arco, Idaho for all these years. The fair board members were saving funds to build the structure, but needed assistance with consensus building with in the community, idea generation, and taking the appropriate steps to make their dream a reality. By the time the interim Extension Educator began working with Butte County, the fair board had saved \$125,000 for the project. The Extension Educator's inquiries revealed that the fair board would need \$50,000 just for the architectural design of the complex.

Our Response

When Dean Weiss of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences came to visit during the Butte County Fair, the Extension Educator talked to him about the project and wondered if the University of Idaho could help in any way. The Dean recommended that the Extension Educator check with the University of Idaho Department of Architecture and see if they could have architecture students help with the plans for the fair building. Dr. Rula Awwad-Rafferty was contacted and she volunteered to take on the building design as a community outreach project. Seventeen students enrolled in the senior interior design studio focusing on community outreach, adaptive reuse and place making through design

were to be involved. Ideally, the students would have been brought to the site for the project, however, the costs associated with students' travel, the time for travel, and other commitments did not permit all the students to visit Arco. The Extension Educator contacted the fair board with the information and to get permission to use their funds to bring Dr. Awwad-Rafferty to Arco to view the site and get detailed pictures and information for her students. The Extension Educator hosted Dr. Awwad-Rafferty, and gave her detailed information on the history of the area, the demographics, the needs, and organized and held a meeting with the Butte County Fair Board and Butte County residents while Dr. Awwad-Rafferty was in town. This gave her input on the vision of the project and parameters for the students design. The site visit, the general context of town and surrounding county, and the meeting were video taped. Dr. Awwad-Rafferty's students spent 10 weeks designing the project. They viewed more than 5 hours of video taped meetings, site visits, and other pertinent information, students also had access to information that was provided by the Extension Educator, and communicated their questions and concerns via e-mail to the Extension Educator and the fair board. The seventeen students worked in teams to identify the issues, needs, and problems associated with the fair building complex, explore alternative ideas and schemes, and propose design solutions that meet the needs and aspirations of the Arco community and Butte County.

Program Outcomes

On December 11, 2003, Dr. Awwad-Rafferty arranged for the students to televise their series of final presentations called, "The Arco Outreach: A

Community Vision” using compressed video in real time internet connection. This was broadcast from the University of Idaho Education Building in Moscow, Idaho, and was televised to the Idaho Falls University Place for the Extension Educator and the Butte County Fairboard to see and critique the results. Six teams gave an oral presentation accompanied by a Power Point documentation of their design goals, program, concept, final design solution documented in floor plans, site plans, interior and exterior elevations, sections, perspectives specifications and details. Several teams provided cost comparisons and cost estimates as well. Each team also provided a notebook of the teams’ research and specifications as well as final design drawings. Both the Fair Board and the students were very excited with the outcome of the final presentation as the project took on new life with the energy displayed by the students toward the project. The real time interaction, despite the distance, made both parties realize the potential and the possibilities for solutions. The fair board was empowered by the articulated visions and ideas for the building, they loved the designs that were presented and felt that they could use the information to get started on the first phase of the project. The only costs incurred by the fair board involved Dr. Awwad-Rafferty’s travel to Arco and expenses to the department of Architecture for duplication, mailing, videotaping, and room charges for the presentation.

The Future: The Extension Educator has suggested the fair board apply for community development grants to help them continue with their building project. This has been a great example of opportunities available to small communities from the University of Idaho Extension with the collaboration of other colleges within the university. As a Land Grant Institution, the University has a mission of Instruction, Research, and Outreach; this project exemplifies how the three components of the University’s mission can be accomplished.

For More Information

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