Rust2Green
ADVANCING GREEN FUTURES for NEW YORK’S RUST BELT CITIES

Students play a vital role in R2G’s engagement in Utica and Binghamton, NY...

From the beginning, the role and contribution of students to R2G’s purpose—advancing green futures in Upstate NY’s Rust Belt cities—has remained key. We, the R2G faculty, want our students to be challenged by the messiness and complexity of real life and wicked problems and to learn and benefit from putting theory into practice through direct interactions and collaborations with people and place. To R2G’s work with communities, we hope our students will bring optimism, imagination and ideas and exercise as well as stretch the limits of their knowledge. Above all, we hope they’ll be agents of social and environmental change helping to propel Utica and Binghamton towards greater urban sustainability and resilience.

Over the years, as R2G has evolved in Utica and Binghamton, student participation has taken many forms. R2G students typically experience one or several ways of working along with faculty, fellow students and community partners on different community design projects or research endeavors. They may participate in a R2G community-engaged course or Capstone Design Studio, or undertake an exit project, Honors or Master’s thesis. They might be part of a research group, independent project, or serve as a R2G Civic Research Fellow, Teaching or Research Assistant during the summer or academic year.

For all participants, and particularly students in the midst of pursuing their college degrees, being part of R2G is typically a boundary bridging and crossing endeavor involving interrelated activities and experiences in both campus and community geographies. This requires relationships and responsibilities in both geographies too, and with them, also added demands and complexity. It requires learning and drawing from relevant theories and practices and applying and learning design approaches and research methods central to community-engaged research and practice including participatory community design, placemaking and action research. It requires learning and performing reflection practices, undertaking group and teamwork and collaboratively working with others on developing and making creations, producing and conducting workshops, events, presentations, and meetings. And it often requires such tasks as organizing, activism, and shared decision-making.

THANK YOU STUDENTS!

R2G students have played an important part in R2G and we thank them for all they’ve contributed over the years. Now we are eager to learn more about how R2G’s impacted them. As we move forward in undertaking the R2G Collaborative Evaluation Project in 2018-2020, we’re reaching out to former R2G students asking them to tell us about ways their participation in R2G might have impacted them. We’re hoping to learn such things as: if the R2G experience influenced choices and decisions made concerning students’ education and career pathways; types of knowledge, skills, attitudes, ethics and values gained; changing perspectives on civic engagement; citizenship and community; ...and more!

... Since 2010, nearly 300 students have participated in and contributed to R2G’s work with Utica and Binghamton NY. They have taken on R2G’s many challenges and demands and combined their knowledge, creativity and vision with that of local people living in places where losses and distresses may loom large, yet where inherent strengths and assets as well as hopes and dreams, flourish and thrive.