

Campus News

Students, faculty kick off year-long partnership with city of Monona



The 'UniverCity' initiative will allow students and faculty to work on various urban issues such as housing and transportation.

Image By: Leah Voskuil (<http://www.dailycardinal.com/staff/leah-voskuil>)

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By Jake Skubish (<http://www.dailycardinal.com/staff/jake-skubish>) | September 15, 2016 8:00 am

UW-Madison kicked off a new program aiming to connect the campus community with the needs of cities in Wisconsin with a meeting Wednesday night at the Leopold Nature Center in Monona.

The city of Monona, which borders Madison, will serve as the pilot location for the "UniverCity" initiative, in which faculty, staff and students from UW-Madison will work with the city on projects in areas such as parks and recreation, transportation, housing and economic development.

The year-long program is part of the UniverCity Alliance, a coalition of various institutions on campus focused on urban sustainability. Student participants will be drawn from more than a dozen classes at UW-Madison.

"This is a great opportunity for students to apply knowledge outside of the classroom and get more out of the classroom experience than they might otherwise," said Jason Vargo, an assistant scientist with the UW-Madison Global Health Institute and a leader of the year-long UniverCity project.

UniverCity will also take students from a multitude of disciplines and bring them together on one project. According to Vargo this can be beneficial to students who often spend most of their time with other students in their chosen major.

"With lots of people working in the same place, students will be able to learn from their peers in different disciplines on campus," Vargo said.

The event in Monona Wednesday evening was intended to introduce the program to the community and generate excitement, Vargo said. University faculty, students and community members all attended to show their support for Monona in the coming year.

Part of the reason Vargo says this opportunity is so exciting is its scale: Students and faculty will be working to solve problems for an entire city.

"Part of the appeal of working with cities is there's no shortage of projects," Vargo said. "Cities are so dynamic, they're always changing, and they're always thinking about how to improve."

According to Vargo the UniverCity Alliance will be asking for more proposals from interested communities this fall and has already had discussions with Fitchburg and Watertown for future coordination.

"Hopefully, this is the first of several continuing partnerships," Vargo said.

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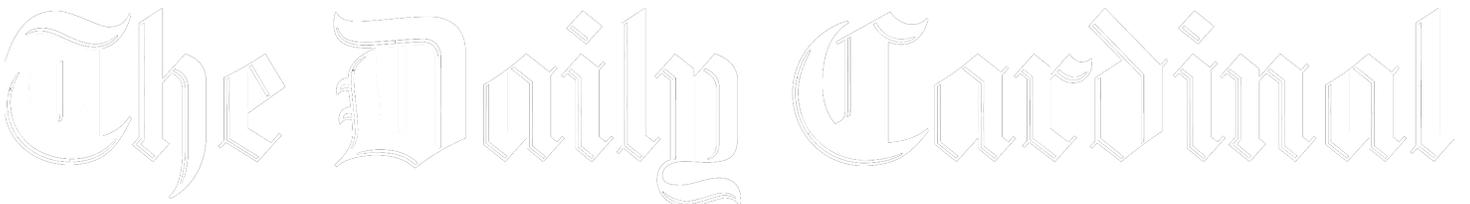
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Monona doesn't just border Madison, it's completely surrounded by Madison. It really should just be merged into Madison, like the Town of Madison soon will be.
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