

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

River Life

A program of the Institute on the Environment

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To Whom It May Concern:

Located in an urban area, straddling one of the world's great rivers, and situated in the boundaries of a national park, the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities is a one-of-a-kind campus. The River Life program at the Institute on the Environment works to capitalize on this confluence of circumstances by bringing the strengths of the University—its research, teaching, and programs—to the National Park Service and, through that body, to partners and collaborations locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. A signature program of this effort is the River Rangers.

River Rangers provide students at the University an opportunity to make the Mississippi River a substantial part of their educational and career development experience. By participating in River Rangers, students get an on the ground—or should we say 'on the water'—experience with the river - from invigorating snowshoe hikes to summertime canoe trips. River Rangers also gain valuable expertise through classes, specialized study programs, capstone/thesis projects, community service projects, internships and more. In addition, River Rangers provides the next generation of river leaders knowledge in river science, planning, design, management of river-related places, and in engagement with river communities and populations.

In 2010-11, our inaugural year, River Rangers numbered some 175 students, including both undergraduates and graduate students from five of the University's 12 separate colleges. We held two recreation events and a service river cleanup event, posted over two dozen jobs and internships for 15 local partners, and employed 6 interns on our own account as a program. Nearly 100 students enrolled in half a dozen courses directly related to river restoration, planning, and design, and 10 graduate professional students undertook Mississippi River-related projects for their professional capstone thesis projects.

In 2011-12, we expect to increase our participation and influence in all areas of the River Ranger program. We also expect to concentrate our efforts on the social and ecological realms that point our partners toward a future for the Mississippi that is more sustainable and more inclusive. The Mississippi is such a multiple and dynamic system that questions of what would make it “sustainable” are quite complex, requiring contributions from many areas of University and community expertise. Moreover, many community redevelopment projects on the river are not as inclusive as they might be, tending to attract audiences and community populations who are already predisposed to be attracted to the river or who have the resources to live in high-end riverfront housing. Our community partnership with the National Park Service, which extends to the NPS's broad association

of community partners, allows us to explore both questions of inclusion and sustainability to great breadth and depth.

I have worked on Mississippi River-related planning, interpretation, and management programs for nearly 15 years, encompassing responsibilities that have included the full length of the river as well as more locally focused efforts. I have a Ph.D. in American Studies, with a focus on “sense of place” in literature, history, and politics, and have taught at the University of Minnesota since 2002. My primary teaching responsibilities are in urban planning and design with the College of Design, and with the University’s Honors Program.

I am pleased to submit the River Rangers initiative as an innovation credit for the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities’ AASHE STARS submission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pat Nunnally". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Pat" written in a slightly larger, more distinct font than the last name "Nunnally".

Pat Nunnally
Coordinator, River Life Program
University of Minnesota