

November 18, 2013

Reference: Ithaca College submission - AASHE STARS Innovation - Retirees in Service to the Environment

I attest to the innovative nature of our Spring 2013 development and implementation of our version of the *Retirees in Service to the Environment* (RISE) program. Co-developed by a team of gerontologists from Cornell University and Ithaca College, *Retirees in Service to the Environment* (RISE) was based on research evidence about older adult learners and environmental education. This comprehensive training program for retirees wishing to become involved in environmental volunteerism and civic engagement provides two types of learning experiences:

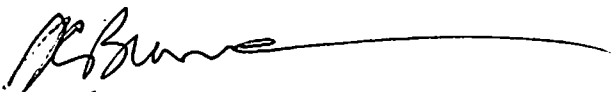
- Factual knowledge about pressing environmental issues such as water quality, climate change, waste management, air pollution, and other topics; and
- Training in leadership and communication skills that increases the retiree stewards' effectiveness in working in environmental organizations.

The Spring 2013 RISE program was a joint project of the Ithaca College Department of Environmental Studies and Sciences, Ithaca College Natural Lands (ICNL), Ithaca College Gerontology Institute, and residents and staff of *Longview*, a residential community for older adults located adjacent to the college campus. Ithaca College maintains a strong programmatic relationship with *Longview* residents and staff through our Gerontology Institute, including student-resident interactions in Aging Studies coursework, Health Sciences clinical and therapeutic settings, and a number of other liberal arts academic disciplines.

RISE involves local retirees in the programs underway on the Ithaca College Natural Lands – including our natural areas active management plans and volunteer land stewards program - and it also offers diverse opportunities for student involvement. This type of trans-generational teaching and learning has a very important role to play in long-term land management and in solving long-term environmental problems. Collaboration among people from many walks of life is like collaboration across different academic disciplines—it opens great opportunities for creativity and innovation.

RISE trainings for the senior participants were on held Friday mornings at *Longview*, launching with an initial orientation session and six two-hour workshops that involved expert presentations, field trips, and experiential exercises to develop leadership skills. RISE culminated with group participants choosing a volunteer role in a local environmental organization, including but not limited to work on Ithaca College Natural Lands, with assistance by Ithaca College student interns. The first RISE cohort proved so successful that we plan to continue to work with *Longview* residents to engage them in our Ithaca College Natural Lands continuing efforts to preserve and effectively manage the ecosystem services of the undeveloped areas of the Ithaca College campus and perhaps even extend this kind of active management protocol to the *Longview* property.

Respectfully,



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