Spring 2009
Group Research Project

Over the course of the semester, you will be engaging in an applied policy analysis project for the town of Dartmouth. The goal of this research project is to identify problems in town policy/service provision and propose solutions for those problems. One team will focus on enhancing environmental capacity, and the other team will focus on enhancing governmental capacity. The first team will identify ways in which Dartmouth might make policies more environmentally sustainable, with a focus on those policies that might also save the town money in the long run. The second team will identify ways in which Dartmouth could more clearly communicate with and provide information to town residents.

There are 3 main components to this research project. Each component will have individual grades and group grades associated with it.

The first component is to identify articles and research about your subject areas; we will discuss in class how to find these articles and how to summarize them. Each individual will be responsible for identifying at least 2 relevant articles and summarizing them in the group work space. After this, the group will work to produce a collective summary of what the literature suggests is “good practice” in these areas.

The second component is to interview important actors in the community. I have developed a list of people who are willing to be interviewed for this project. We will determine in class which individuals each team should interview. As a group, you will develop a set of standard interview questions; I will set aside some class time for this task. Next, each team member will be responsible for interviewing at least one person and posting a summary of that interview in the group work space. After this, the group will work on identifying common themes (focusing on key problems and preferred solutions) in the interviews and providing a group summary of these findings.

The third component of the research project will the identification of best practices in other communities. Each team member will be responsible for identifying at least 2 best practices in other communities; these can be identified in a number of places, including but not limited to reading articles, talking to officials and residents of other towns or examining other town’s websites. A summary of this practice should be posted in the group work space; this summary should describe the practice, why this should be counted as a best practice and how this practice might be adopted in Dartmouth. The group will then pick at least 5 changes that will be recommended to the town of Dartmouth for adoption and prepare a description and summary of the changes.

Thus, the final group project to be handed in to me will include a literature review, an interview summary and a set of recommendations. On the final day of class, each group will be responsible for presenting this information to the class. In addition, I will arrange for several
opportunities for public presentations of the findings from these projects (focusing mainly on the recommendations); each team will be responsible for sending at least one member to these meetings to present the group findings. Each group member must attend at least one presentation; those group members who are unable to do so must contact me to make arrangements for an alternative assignment.

Points will be allocated as described below; please note the due dates associated with each assignment.

- **Literature review**
  - Each member in group has to identify at least 2 relevant readings and summarize in group work space. (15 points each, 30 total) DUE 3/5
  - Group has to write a summary of literature identified. (*) (40 points) DUE 4/30

- **Interviews:**
  - Group has to develop interview questions. (15 points) DUE 3/12
  - Each member in group has to interview at least one person identified in class and summarize in group work space. (15 points) DUE 4/2
  - Group has to write summary of common findings from interviews. (40 points) (*) DUE 4/30

- **Best Practices**
  - Each member in group has to identify at least 2 practices in other communities that could be adopted by Dartmouth and summarize this practice in the group work space (15 points each, 30 points total). DUE 4/16
  - Group has to identify and write a summary of at least 5 changes to be recommended to Dartmouth. (40 points) (*) DUE 4/30
  - Group has to present these changes verbally in class and in a public forum (Select Board meeting, UMass Civic Engagement Summit) (40 points). VARIOUS DATES

* Each of these elements will be submitted as a part of a final report.