

Sustainable City Year Program University of Oregon

City of Salem

2023-2024 Press Book



Statesman Journal

Meet our Mid-Valley: Salem resident, UO grad inspired about solving city's problems

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[Whitney Woodworth](#)

Salem Statesman Journal

Published 6:01 a.m. PT June 23, 2024 | Updated 6:01 a.m. PT June 23, 2024

This is part of a weekly series introducing readers to individuals who are passionate about our Mid-Valley community.

Throughout the school year, University of Oregon students in more than 20 courses set their focus on a singular goal — solving problems in Salem.

Students and faculty in the Sustainable City Year Program visited and studied the city, talked with residents and city staff, and set their sights on proposing solutions on a variety of topics, including the role of AI in city government, safe bicycle infrastructure, housing, climate action plans, equity and parks management.

For south Salem resident and recent UO grad Sulwyn De Crozuc, the topic she tackled was personal. De Crozuc earned a degree in planning, public policy and management, and worked on a team led by co-founder and co-director of the Sustainable Cities Initiative Marc Schlossberg to improve the safety and usability of the bike corridor in Salem.

De Crozuc previously worked on the Sustainable City Year Program in Sisters and jumped at the chance to work on a project in her hometown.

She worked on a redesign of Front Street from Commercial Street to Union Street to north of Marion Square Park. The corridor, which passes along Riverfront Park and downtown, is a bustling spot for cyclists, pedestrians and vehicles.

"I grew up going to the park, and I grew up cycling to the park when I was a teenager," she said. "At that time, I was really, really, really frustrated with just how hard it was to bike around Salem."

The ride from Bush's Pasture Park to Riverfront Park was frequently plagued by near misses with cars due to the design of the streets, she said.

De Crozuc said she wanted to work on Front Street because of her experiences and because she cares about safety and making the spaces able to accommodate people as little as a baby to as old as someone in a care home.

"Front Street currently does not do that, but with the design me and my team proposed, we at least made it so people could bike better and be more comfortable entering and exiting the park," she said.

Proposals included widening bike lanes, installing bike foot rests at intersections and improving sidewalks near Riverfront Park.

Students get real-life experience, cities get ideas

De Crozuc and other students presented their projects to community leaders at the Center 50+ in June as part of the program's end-of-year celebration.

The Sustainable City Year Program is in its 14th year in partnering with Oregon communities. Every year, 200 to 500 students focus on a different city or transit district, contributing more than 60,000 hours of work. The nationally recognized program has been adopted throughout the world by other universities.

Courtney Knox Busch, Salem's chief strategy officer, said the program's contributions to the city are massive.

"We were at a point where there was just so much that we wanted to get done, and we were really struggling with capacity," she said. "Being able to invite the students in to help us further the council and the community goals was also a tremendous opportunity for this year."

City staff and leaders can use the proposals and framework for city projects and initiatives. Knox Busch pointed to implementing a project to discourage vehicle idling as part of the

city's Climate Action Plan to reduce emissions. Students developed the low-cost idea of having elementary school students design stickers to spread awareness and post them near schools.

"It's just this huge opportunity and we had never considered (it)," she said. "In 10 weeks, the students produced that for us and the budget. It made it so easy."

Knox Busch also highlighted the bicycle corridor project as something to help further city goals.

"We're in the throes of updating our transportation systems plan, and the bicycle planning course turned out to be a great way to move some of that thinking forward," Knox Busch said.

Salem is the first city to participate twice in the program.

Students in the 2010-2011 school year provided input into the Minto-Brown Island Park Master Plan, proposing trail connections to Riverfront Park, crafting police facility designs, encouraging neighborhood associations to create social media pages to connect with residents and recommending projects to increase revenue and reuse at the city's wastewater treatment facility.

Many of the impacts of those proposals can be seen today, Knox Busch said. Facebook pages have become major hubs for neighborhood engagement, new signs were added to Minto and the Pringle Creek path was undercover and restored and is on the way to becoming a connection to Riverfront Park.

After the 2010-2011 program, then-Salem City Manager Linda Norris said the project was successful beyond her wildest dreams.

"I know we will be using the work for years and years to come," she said.

'These are our future leaders'

This year's participation was made possible through federal funding secured by U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, both Oregon Democrats.

Mayor Chris Hoy lauded the partnership and expressed gratitude for the students' insights.

"The ideas and collaboration these students bring to the city are instrumental in helping us tackle a variety of local problems," Hoy said.

Program leaders said the benefits are far from one-sided.

"What we found through the Sustainable City Year Program and our work with cities around Oregon is that students are just a lot more motivated when they're working on a real project in a real city," program director Megan Banks said.

Instead of a hypothetical question from their professor, students can tackle a real-life problem and see their ideas implemented, she said.

Knox Busch said many students can use her as a reference and put their experience on their resume.

De Crozuc said her experience gave her clarity and confidence about her post-grad plans. She wants to be a transportation planner, growing public transportation networks and pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure while working to solve climate change.

"The fact that all of these wonderful fresh ideas are being given to the like city officials and the city planners of Salem is just so rewarding," she said. "It also makes me feel really confident as someone who's going into the planning field to know that the cities in Oregon — where I'm from — want to seek out ideas to improve and better themselves."

Banks said students don't want to wait until they graduate to start real-life learning and make the world a better place to live.

"These are our future leaders," she said. "We want them to be engaged with communities and think about how to make Oregon a better place to live, so we love that they're doing that while they're in school."

If you have an idea for someone we should profile for this series, please email Statesman Journal executive editor Cherrill Crosby at crosbyc@statesmanjournal.com

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Capital Community Media

Salem Buzz: Salem Reimagined



Salem Buzz: Salem Reimagined
Capital Community Media YouTube Channel
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7raj7kDv0Mw>

Jun 20, 2024

“University of Oregon and the City of Salem teamed up to make a huge impact in the community. Check out this latest Salem Buzz to learn about the action being taken and what we can do to be part of the change.”

Salem Reporter

University students bring solutions for Salem climate, infrastructure, community projects

University students bring solutions for Salem climate, infrastructure, community projects

by [Abbey McDonald](#) on June 10, 2024



University of Oregon students worked on top Salem issues throughout the school year (Courtesy/ Courtney Knox Busch)

University of Oregon students worked on top Salem issues throughout the school year (Courtesy/ Courtney Knox Busch)

When Sulwyn De Crozuc heard that the University of Oregon's Sustainable City Year Program would be based in Salem this year, she was ecstatic.

De Crozuc, a UO senior majoring in planning, public policy and management, grew up walking and biking in Salem. Both of her siblings were hit by cars in city crosswalks, luckily sustaining minimal injuries.

"I've had multiple near misses trying to get around town, just because of the nature of the way Salem is designed," she said.

De Crozuc got a chance to help her hometown improve through the program, which allows college students to apply their studies of architecture, planning, public administration, journalism and geography to real city projects. Their work in Salem this year focused on topics from boardwalks for beavers to improving the way Salem collects bills. It's intended to help the city further projects and apply for grants.

This year, around 20 classes participated in a partnership boosted by a \$150,000 grant from the federal Department of Education, secured by Senators Ron Wyden, Jeff Merkley and former Congressman Peter DeFazio. The city matched the grant with \$150,000. One student from each class was paid to put together the final report to present to the city.

The city first participated in 2011, and students brought their ideas to city planning at Willow Lake, streetlight maintenance and plans for redeveloping Northeast Front Street downtown.

De Crozuc had already taken Professor Marc Schlossberg's course on bicycle transportation last year, when the program partnered with the city of Sisters.

But Salem was home. She said she immediately ran to Schlossberg's office upon hearing the announcement.

"I was like, 'Marc. I am going to be in your class spring term. I don't care that I've already taken it. I don't care that I passed it, I'm going to take the class,'" she said. Determined, she went to an academic advisor to argue her case to take the same class two years in a row.

"There was no way in hell I was not taking this class," she said.

Substantive recommendations

This year's cohort brought substantive recommendations, especially to further reduce Salem's climate impact, said Courtney Knox Busch, the city's strategic initiatives manager who led the collaboration with the university.

"There were 181-some strategies in the climate action plan, and so that was one thing that we served up to the Sustainable Cities Year Program as an opportunity to really move further than we could on our own," she said. "And they just picked it up and ran with it."

Among the student projects this year was a campaign to limit car idling, especially in parent pickup lines at elementary schools. They came up with a sticker campaign using student art to educate people about the environmental impact, and Knox Busch said that they're already starting the conversation with school employees first, as recommended by the students.

Other students studied ways to incorporate solar power in the upcoming developments at [Geer Park](#), and how to engage neighborhoods in the plans.

One architecture and engineering course was tasked with creating a shelter

for Highland Park. By the end of the 10-week term, they'd come up with a ready-build wooden structure.

“Working architects side-by-side with engineers, that is such a critical skill set to have that language and understand what you’re designing,” she said. “I think that’s been a transformative experience for the students, as well.”



University students test out connecting pieces for a Salem park shelter, modeled in small-scale the background (Courtesy/ Courtney Knox Busch)

As part of the program, Portland State University engineering students helped design a “beaver boardwalk” to allow Minto-Brown Island Park’s growing beaver population to thrive while coexisting with park users. They

studied different options like raised and floating pathways. Knox Busch said that their work to examine feasibility will make it easier to apply for federal money to build the boardwalk.

"They tested it, and threw out the things that don't work, so that we're closer to being able to get some grant funding to solve that problem," she said.

Student work also came up several times during the most recent meeting of Salem's Revenue Task Force. The volunteer group is looking into new ways to bring money in and address the budget shortfall. As part of that work, the city is planning to update its software that collects a monthly fee on utility bills.

Students in a public budgeting class looked at ways to make the fee more equitable for commercial and residential customers, coming up with a 168-page report that rated equity, efficiency, productivity, neutrality, certainty and convenience for each option.

"It's great that they explored it in the detail that they did, because it's showing us pretty quickly which kind of tweaks won't really work," Knox Busch said. "They've tested things really thoroughly down to what the fee structure could be for each of those different machinations on the commercial side or on the residential side."

They also brought perspectives on ways to inspire more young people to volunteer for city services.

Knox Busch said that the students helped push the boundaries and revitalize the city's approach to projects.

“In times where the city is fiscally constrained, we often see training as one of the first casualties. And this is actually bringing new and interesting ideas and new ways of thinking to our community and to our employees,” she said.

In return, the students got to do real, tangible work.

She recalled one in a course about senior services in Salem who was “sort of phoning it in,” at the beginning, and seemed uninterested. By the final presentation, she saw a change in him. Mid-presentation, he remarked, “Wow. This is real.”

She said he thanked her afterward for coming to listen to their ideas, and that he’d never had a class like it before.

“That’s, really, I think what makes this model of applied learning so cool for the students, for the community, for the staff,” she said. “Harnessing it has been one of my favorite all time things I’ve done.”

Biking in Salem

De Crozuc’s college studies have focused on transportation alternatives to cars. Last summer, she toured European cities like Amsterdam and Copenhagen to study their street design and experience what a bike-centric city feels like. She said she misses it every day.

At the start of the term, De Crozuc said Salem provided a few proposals for roads to improve, like Front Street. She expanded on that list, offering her professor a two-page expansion of suggestions from her personal experience and observations.

One was Southeast Commercial Street. “My brother got hit on his electric

bike going to and from work here twice, he now drives," she wrote, adding a sad face emoji. She also pointed to Mission Street, Silverton Road, Lancaster Drive and more. She highlighted major issues of drivers running red lights, and that low-income neighborhoods have worse infrastructure.

"(Professor Schlossberg) took that list, and those are the projects that my class did which is so rewarding and so absolutely amazing that that happened. Like I'm kind of in disbelief that this class was real, that this year was real," De Crozuc said.

Her class split into groups of three or four people based on their interests to tackle projects including safe routes to school, adding multi-use paths and marketing campaigns to promote biking.

The student work will serve as a base for the ongoing development of the city's transportation master plan, said Knox Busch.

De Crozuc gave a speech at the end-of-year celebration for the collaboration, attended by her Salem family and city leaders. She said it was especially exciting to speak in front of Mayor Chris Hoy, and it felt like the city was really listening to the students.

She was most excited to show her family that people care about Salem.

"Being able to show them all these projects, all of the passion for the things that I've been working on, and the other ideas that my peers have. Being able to look at my family like: 'Look, it's not just me. Other people are trying to improve the place we live in,'" she said.

Read more about the classes and see the students' final projects [here](#).

Contact reporter Abbey McDonald: abbey@salemreporter.com or 503-575-1251

Salem Reporter

UO students to help make Salem more walkable, equitable

UO students to help make Salem more walkable, equitable

by [Abbey McDonald](#) on August 8, 2023



People watch The Reverberations from the amphitheater lawn in Riverfront Park on Salem's Make Music Day, June 21, 2023 (Eric Schuman/Special to Salem Reporter)

People watch The Reverberations from the amphitheater lawn in Riverfront Park on Salem's Make Music Day, June 21, 2023 (Eric Schuman/Special to Salem Reporter)

Over a decade ago, when the city of Salem first collaborated with the University of Oregon for its Sustainable City Year Program, a small group of students brainstormed ways to turn waste into energy, and identified businesses that could be used as sources.

"At the last minute we were just like, 'let's throw in Willow Lake and just see,'" said Courtney Knox Bush, the city's strategic initiatives manager.

That decision, she said, eventually turned into the city's Willow Lake Cogeneration Facility that opened in 2020. The facility generates enough energy from by-products of wastewater treatment [to power 814 homes](#) while reducing carbon emissions.

It's one of several projects serving Salemites that was workshopped in a classroom.

This year, the University of Oregon has again selected Salem as its partner for [the program](#), which allows students to apply their studies of architecture, planning, public administration, journalism and geography to real city projects.

Megan Banks, the program's director at the university, said that Salem is the first city they've returned to in its 14 year history partnering with Oregon cities. She said Salem's plans and proposed opportunities for student learning cover a wide range of disciplines.

"As the state capital, as the second largest city in Oregon, there are aspects of Salem that I think for our students just are magnified in a lot of ways," she said. "The potential for a partnership is their breadth of everything they're trying to accomplish – it's astounding, actually, in a lot of ways."

This coming school year, students from up to 20 courses will work on projects to help implement the city's climate action plan, make the city

operations fee more equitable, improve community engagement and help design infrastructure for future construction.

The partnership was boosted by a \$150,000 grant from the federal Department of Education, secured by Senators Ron Wyden, Jeff Merkley and former Congressman Peter DeFazio. The city is spending \$150,000 to match the grant.

The funds pay to support the program, with a base fee per class based on how many hours of work students will put in. One student from each class will be paid to make a final report of their plans, Knox Bush said.

Each year, students in the program address planning, business, design and policy issues brought forward by their partner community. The program works with [cities throughout the state](#), and has previously tackled projects in Eugene, Silverton and Sisters.

For the Salem partnership, the city put forward their major goals of climate action and equity and provided options for planned projects. From there, the university program looked for planned classes that matched their needs.

This year, students taking Community-Engaged Architecture will work to advance city plans for a network of resiliency hubs for Salemites – places people can shelter during extreme heat or cold. The city is looking to reimagine existing community spaces, like churches and community centers, and incorporate them into a network of climate respite sites and food banks.

The city is also looking for students to give input as it updates its 25-year-old software that collects the operations fee, which shows up on city utility bills.

Residents are categorized as either single-family, who pay \$14.43 per

month, or multi-family, paying \$11.54, with discounts for low-income people over 60 or people with disabilities. Knox Bush said the current organization of customer classes is limited by the system.

"We think the students can help us understand how to apply equity within that structure," Knox Bush said. Students taking Public Budgeting will be considering the topic during class.

Architecture and planning students will also get involved in upcoming infrastructure projects, by considering mixed use building designs for the branch libraries and low-income housing to be built by [infrastructure bond](#) funding. Students will also help conduct a walkability assessment, looking for ways to improve pedestrian safety in Salem.

Students in journalism courses will look into where Salemites get their information, and how to get people more involved in the community through volunteering.

At the end of it, Knox Bush would like students to present their findings in an official setting, like an advisory board or commission, that they can add to their resume.

During the 2011 session, students brought their ideas to city planning at Willow Lake, streetlight maintenance and plans for redeveloping Northeast Front Street downtown.

Since then, Banks and Knox Bush have kept in touch hoping to collaborate again but not finding the right time. They said the federal funding this year made it possible.

"We are ecstatic that this came together," Banks said. "And being able to work with Salem is kind of a dream come true again."

Knox Bush said the student work will advance council and community priorities faster than the city could do it on its own. As someone who previously studied public policy in college, she's happy to help students apply their learning.

"To me, it's just so powerful from all perspectives. The community wins, the students win and the city just advances further," she said. "So I think it's fabulous."

Contact reporter Abbey McDonald: abbey@salemreporter.com or 503-704-0355.

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Abbey McDonald joined the Salem Reporter in 2022. She previously worked as the business reporter at The Astorian, where she covered labor issues, health care and social services. A University of Oregon grad, she has also reported for the Malheur Enterprise, The News-Review and Willamette Week.

University of Oregon College of Design

Transformative Education: SCYP, the City of Salem, and UO Kick Off Year Long Partnership

Transformative Education: SCYP, the City of Salem, and UO Kick Off Year Long Partnership

On a Wednesday afternoon at the University of Oregon in the historic Gerlinger Hall, guests and stakeholders of all ages came together to celebrate the start of another Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) service year. The fourteenth year's partner is a special one, as the City of Salem returns to the program. The city was one of the first partners for the nascent SCYP back in 2010–11 and comes back to the program in year fourteen with the full knowledge and experience of having gone through the rigors of the program before, and knows to expect a high-quality engagement, courtesy of the innovative faculty and students.

The kick-off on Wednesday saw university, state, and city leadership come together to preview the work coming in the following weeks and months. The excitement from the stakeholders in attendance was palpable, as the presenters and speakers talked at length about the forthcoming partnership.



“This is an exciting opportunity for our community,” said City of Salem Mayor Chris Hoy. “Our goal is to move further, faster than we could on our own. The students’ capacity and faculty expertise bring more resources to Salem, accelerating our environmental and equity work. We are fortunate to have been selected for this partnership.”

In addition to the City of Salem's mayor, Sustainable City Institute Co-Director and Planning, Public Policy and Management (PPPM) Professor Marc Schlossberg, UO President Karl Scholz, College of Design Dean Adrian Parr, School of Journalism and Communication Dean Juan-Carlos Molleda, College of Arts and Sciences Dean Chris Poulsen, and other faculty and research leadership gave remarks and previewed the work to come in the following year. Leadership was especially proud of all the work SCYP has completed over the years.



"The Sustainable City Year Program has been helping communities of all sizes since 2009 and is emblematic of the University of Oregon's long-term commitment to providing a dynamic educational experience while also improving our community," said Dean Parr. "At the core of this program is a synergistic alignment of state leadership for research and academic energy, where students and faculty work in concert with community leadership. The program continues to build on the successes of the past, thanks to the dedicated involvement of our faculty, our students, and community leadership."

University of Oregon students and professors work on up to 20 courses that will focus on a number of high-priority projects for the City Council and Salem community. The cross-disciplinary course list includes classes in journalism, architecture, landscape architecture, geography, planning, and public administration, with more to be added throughout the year as project and course matches are made and city priorities are identified.

When the city last worked with SCYP, it was during the 2010–11 academic year, which saw 27 courses completed with over 500 students contributing

to the research and work. The impact that students can create for their community cannot be overstated, as Hoy mentioned the community is still feeling the effects of SCYP's efforts from their first partnership, with Salem's 1,200-acre park and fee administration exemplifying the lasting work of the university's students. Experiential education and applied learning opportunities are unique hallmarks of the UO's educational experience.



"This is hands-on, applied education that serves the broader community," President Scholz said. "It's an essential part of modern higher education, connecting students to classroom material in deeper ways and developing real workforce skills. Likewise, it can be transformative for the communities as they look to meet their various community goals."

The mutually advantageous work that will be undertaken by students and faculty at the university under the SCYP umbrella helps our local communities address hardships and local issues with access to resources that might not be available. The university course gets matched with the

needs of an Oregon city creating a unique, experiential educational opportunity that will prepare students for entry into the workforce while helping create a more positive and sustainable future for our local community. This model has been a proven success for Oregon for the past fourteen years and helps communities adopt solutions quickly, thanks to the help of the student and faculty participants.

"UO's SCYP is a proven model of success, using the drive and expertise of students and faculty to discover solutions that move Oregon communities to

a clean energy future faster," Senator Jeff Merkley said. "The entire Salem community will benefit from being an idea-sharing hub that will provide students with tangible, real-world learning opportunities to make the city more sustainable and resilient to climate chaos."

Thanks to the hard work and support from U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, as well as former Congressman Peter DeFazio, this year's program and work is supported thanks to the secured federal funding for SCYP through Congressionally Directed Spending and the US Department of Education. Thanks to the additional funds from the City of Salem, this year's partnership is poised to create a lasting impact in Oregon's second-largest city for years to come, thanks to the proven track record of the students and faculty at the university.

"None of us actually quite know what amazing ideas students are going to produce this year for Salem's challenging questions and ambitious goals," explained Schlossberg. "Yet we know that good things will happen."

Sustainable City Year Program

SCYP Kick-Off on October 18, 2023

University of Oregon College of Design

UO and OSU Work Together to Create New
Concepts for Park Shelters in Salem

UO and OSU Work Together to Create New Concepts for Park Shelters in Salem



[*Timber Tectonics in the Digital Age*](#) is the first and only collaborative course between the University of Oregon's [Department of Architecture](#) and the Oregon State University's [Department of Wood Science and Engineering](#). The course, co-led by the UO's Nancy Cheng and OSU's Mariapaola Riggio, teaches the art of looking at material characteristics, technological constraints, and structural requirements in shaping a design. It explores how digital processes are creating new technical and design possibilities. Students study timber structural systems and then design and detail a small team project using digital workflows. In the 7th year of the course, the goal was to design for the circular economy by designing components that can be cut from scraps and can maximize future re-use. With the support of the

Tallwood Design Institute and material donation from Roseburg Forest Products, the class was able to build their prototype at Oregon State's [A.A. "Red" Emmerson Advanced Wood Products Lab](#).



Over the 2023 fall term, the class partnered with the City of Salem through the [Sustainable City Year Program](#) (SCYP). SCYP is a year-long partnership that pairs students with local communities in a unique experiential learning program that aims to help solve the problems communities are currently facing and lay the groundwork for sustainable, future projects. Each partnership creates unique educational opportunities for classes and can lead to strengthening relationships.

"What I think is amazing about this class is how it connects the University of Oregon (UO) and OSU because the UO doesn't have engineering or wood science, and OSU doesn't have architecture," said SCYP Director Megan Banks. "We've taken these complementary disciplines to create something

for the City of Salem. I'm proud how we represent our public universities."

Thanks to the SCYP and the work by Banks, many of the course's crucial expenditures were funded and students were able to gain valuable access to Salem's Strategic Initiatives Manager, Courtney Knox Busch, and Parks Planning Manager, Rob Romanek. One issue in Salem that is shared throughout Oregon is the lack of availability of covered structures and shelters in its parks. The class looked to develop novel solutions for this issue that impact Oregonians throughout the state.

"The State of Oregon does [its own planning](#) for outdoor recreation, detailing the needs of Oregonians when it comes to outdoor recreation, in both cities and rural areas. One uniform thing we've heard through the planning process time and time again is that people really want covered areas to gather in our parks," explained Romanek. "Often this can be more difficult to accomplish than people realize due to the high costs of permanent shelters. When the opportunity to collaborate with the Timber Tectonics class came to Salem, I immediately knew I wanted to work with them to develop a cheaper alternative to covered areas – something like a kit that could quickly be deployed at an under-developed park and add immediate benefit to the neighborhood. I am thrilled to see what these students have been able to accomplish so far."



After the initial meetup to understand the park and try building with scale elements, the class began in earnest with regular virtual meetings.

"We started as two different schools communicating through Zoom, three days a week. Nearly every class period there was something new that was happening or something had been designed that most of us were unaware of," said UO architecture student Sage Fetkenhour. "The beginning of each class usually was all about examining the work that had been designed and figuring out how to integrate the pieces to create the 'newest, current thing.'"

As Oregon State students bring various expertise in wood science, emerging engineered wood products, woodworking, civil, construction and architectural engineering, UO students need to listen carefully to understand how to draw on their different strengths for the project. "Solving how to virtually collaborate with teams is something everybody is facing right now, and it is great that we had a chance to experience it in an educational environment," added UO architecture student Elisia Alampi. "At first, it was a challenge to get into a good workflow, but eventually, we were able to find our rhythm and communicate effectively with one another. I think this is a skill that can easily transfer into the workplace."

"I was initially interested in this studio because it is not like anything I could have experienced in South Korea. We were going to be able to construct something in full scale almost entirely out of timber – a material that is relatively uncommon in our country. The class interested me because I realized I could learn to work with something entirely new to me," said South Korean UO architecture student Seunghyeon Park. "In addition, I didn't know how to use the Grasshopper modeling software yet, and concepts like reciprocal frames and using notches for wood connections were entirely foreign to me. This is a project that will hopefully be used in real life, so it needs to be done correctly. Through the challenges, I was able to learn a lot from this class. I'm really proud of the work I've done in my group and the

things I've been able to accomplish through this studio."

With support from Tom Coates, the College of Design's computer numerical controlled (CNC) fabrication specialist, the class worked through these early challenges to produce several potentially workable concepts for the midterm review. Insights from the city of Salem staff including engineers Aaron Kimsey and Ryan McGraw and other visiting professionals helped the class consolidate small team ideas into a new direction. A UO-OSU team composed of Charlotte Kamman, Elisia Alampi, Nick Thielsen and Andrew Kesterson created a design, inspired by Kengo Kuma Architects, that provoked the most interest. The whole joint class, then quickly designed, detailed, prototyped and refined the concept. The final design improved the stability of both the connections and the overall form.

By working with physical components, students were able to see what worked, what didn't, and how the project could be improved, allowing for a smooth, iterative process to finalize the newest ideas for the shelter. Each version of the shelter during this iterative process improved the structure's functionality, stability, safety, or visual design until finally, the teams felt they had created a design that met practical requirements and aesthetic goals. With support from Phil Mann and Mark Gerig of the Tallwood Design Institute and CNC Woodcutters, the kit of 11 different kinds of components (total 486 pieces) were digitally cut from timber provided by [Roseburg Forest Products](#). In two days, the students built the full-scale prototype in the OSU lab and presented it Dec. 1 to reviewers and stakeholders for the final review. At the end of the week, it was dismantled in sections so that it could be re-installed in more prominent locations.

After Fall term ended, Cheng brought some of the students' scale wood components to two European schools to give a hands-on workshop to the type of reciprocal frame structure. In her 4th visit to Hochschule Rhine-Main in Wiesbaden, Germany, she and former UO instructor Marziah Zad guided Joachim Kieferle's students in designing their own pavilions. At University of

Hasselt, Rafael Novais Passarelli's students in the Building Beyond Borders program are considering how ideas from building with the components can be applied to wood reclaimed from houses slated for demolition.





The project no doubt prepared students for working with industry best practices and safety in mind, well beyond the classroom. Graduate student Nick Thielsen of OSU's Wood Science and Engineering department had this to say about his role in the project. "Being part of an integrated design team in Timber Tectonics brought me face-to-face with the same challenges and opportunities that the timber construction industry is talking about today." Thielsen's contributions to the team included examining relevant structural codes and design guidelines to ensure the safety of the team throughout the project.

Students involved in the course see great value in the skills they have learned through this collaborative class setting and hope this is not the only time the schools cross paths in the future.

"I think the class was a great experience. In the real world, architects, engineers, and builders are together all the time," said UO architecture student and tectonics project manager Charlotte Kamman. "It seems like a

logical collaboration to bring together wood science and engineering students from Oregon State and UO. It was a lot of fun, and everyone's skill sets complemented each other well. I hope to see this kind of work more often between these schools."

"I really enjoyed the opportunity to work with and learn from colleagues of different disciplines. I hope more courses like this are offered in the future," added Oregon State engineering student Andrew Kesterson.



[Highland Arch: Timber Tectonics 2023 - Alireza Yari video](#) from [Nancy Cheng](#) on [Vimeo](#).

University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication

How one SOJC class is building community
trust in media

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UO Professor of Practice Andrew DeVigal presents a survey about local news and information gathering to North Salem High School leadership students. Photo by Daniel Teitelbaum.

[Andrew DeVigal](#) believes that journalists have a superpower they don't use often enough — listening to their communities. The professor of practice at the [UO School of Journalism and Communication \(SOJC\)](#) says that as journalists get caught up in their daily work, it's easy to forget about community information needs and the role of journalism in local community cohesion.

"We're thinking about our deadlines, and we're trying to listen for a quote that fits the narrative in our head rather than going into a community being wide open about possibilities of what we're hearing," said DeVigal, who

directs the SOJC's [Agora Journalism Center](#).

To remedy this issue, DeVigal created the Engaged Journalism class in the SOJC's [journalism major](#) — a course where students are paired with specific communities and conduct a needs assessment to understand how information flows through a community. Through this process, the students identify information gaps and assets, and then write a report at the end of term, outlining survey results and making data-driven recommendations to bolster the local news and information landscape.

Listening to community builds trust in media



Isabella Albin '24, a fourth-year journalism student, facilitates an icebreaker with Willamette Academy students at Willamette University in Salem. Photo by Daniel Teitelbaum.

According to a [2022 Gallup poll](#), only 34% of Americans trust the media to report the news "fully, accurately and fairly." Just 7% of Americans have "a great deal" of trust and confidence in the media, and 27% have "a fair amount."

“One of the things we emphasize in my class is: How do we better listen to community members?” DeVigal said. “How do we better understand their needs? How do we better facilitate conversations between diverse community members to improve community connection? The role of journalists as facilitators is a new skill.”

[Journalism major](#) Isabella Albin, who took the class winter term working with [SCI’s Sustainable City Year Program](#) and the city of Salem, helped identify information gaps in that community and propose creative solutions. One question the class addressed was how the youth of Salem accessed trusted information that mattered to them. Albin found that a lot of young people rely on social media to get their news, and that gets into a murky area because the quality of information can be hard to verify.

“One of our recommendations was for news organizations to look at social media almost like a digital newsstand,” Albin said. “It’s a way to engage younger audiences, and a pro of social media is that it’s free and really accessible.”

As part of the class, Albin traveled to Salem to talk about journalism practices to students at [Willamette Academy](#), a college access program that serves students in grades 8-12 in the Salem-Keizer area. She also canvassed residents about their news habits and used the data in the end-of-term report.

“I worked with a small group of seventh to eighth grade girls, and we went through their day-to-day and how news in Salem played a part in their life, and how they viewed those things,” Albin said. “It was great to see how younger generations engage with local news.”

SOJC is a national leader in community and relational journalism



Colleen Bogdan '24, fourth-year journalism student, prepares to engage with Willamette Academy students at Willamette University in Salem. Photo by Daniel Teitelbaum.

Albin took the class because she wanted to expand her knowledge of journalism practices while getting involved in local news in her community.

“As a young journalist, I think it’s really important to not only take classes where we go over the hard skills of journalism and how to do the job, but also take classes that take a step back [and cover) ethics, morals and different roles of journalism,” Albin said. “The industry is in a precarious situation, especially with print, but (we’re) looking at ways it can be revitalized through journalism that is really impactful and deeply connected to communities.”

The Engaged Journalism class is just one way that the SOJC is a national leader in [community journalism and relational journalism](#) — approaches that attempt to repair public trust in the media and rebuild community relationships.

“So often, people’s relationships with journalists are only when you want a story,” said SOJC Professor of Practice [Damian Radcliffe](#), Carolyn S. Chambers Professor of Journalism. “It’s like, I want a quote, I need a fact, I want this, and then I get this from you. I extract that and then I disappear, and you never hear from me again, until the next time I’m on deadline and I need something. That dynamic is not a good way to build sources and relationships, and it’s a surefire way to piss people off because it feels so transactional.”

Community-centered journalism focuses on relationship building



Jason Aguilar Cortez, an 11th grader at McKay High School (left), and Adrian Greene-Orta, a 10th grader at Carson High School (right), take an online survey about how they get local news and information. Photo by Daniel Teitelbaum.

Instead, relational engagement focuses on community-centered journalism, stepping away from previous models of journalism that were more transactional and focusing instead on building trusted relationships within a

community. This has been a big focus in [Radcliffe's work](#), inspiring his [current research](#) on advancing community-centered journalism.

"So much of the distrust stems from the way in which people have been treated," Radcliffe said. "They don't feel seen, they don't feel heard, they don't trust the media. The reason they don't trust the media is because they don't understand the processes that are going on to create the end product. So taking time to invest in that can also help to rebuild trust."

That time investment often doesn't match the economic and journalistic pressures of news organizations.

"To rebuild that trust, we need to operate on timelines that accommodate the community we serve," DeVigal said.

The Agora Journalism Center, which DeVigal directs, is described as the "forum for the future of local news and engagement."

"We wanted to rethink journalism, civic engagement and the role of journalists to create and hold space, to bring community members together so that they can present new information while we listen and tell the stories of the community collectively," DeVigal said. "That's why the center is named after the gathering place of ancient Greece. Our center is that 21st century [agora](#) — a space for people to deliberate, identify solutions from the community to resolve and take on some of the challenges that the community is facing."

Analyzing coverage gaps is key to creating sustainable models



An Information Ecosystem Assessment Survey distributed to leadership students in Salem queries students about their local news- and information-gathering methods. Photo by Daniel Teitelbaum.

A plethora of research has shown that local news coverage gaps — also known as news deserts — are increasing across the country, leading to a lack of community cohesion and accountability for those in power. To better understand Oregon’s landscape, in 2022 the Agora Journalism Center researched and published the [Oregon Local News and Information Ecosystem report](#), mapping the state’s local news organizations and tracking further contraction or growth over time.

“The current state of local news is often a story of decline — highlighting dwindling resources, decreasing readership and the ongoing struggle against misinformation,” DeVigal said. “We can also tell the story of resilience, collaboration and untapped potential within Oregon’s local news and information ecosystem.”

One of the Agora Journalism Center’s primary missions is to support local news ecosystems across Oregon. For DeVigal, this includes expanding his Engaged Journalism class to specifically serve local communities, assess their news and information landscape, identify civic information partners to fill gaps and create sustainable business models for media organizations.

“The role of training journalists of tomorrow, and even of today, is critical,” DeVigal said. “Time-tested processes, such as investigative reporting and

fact-checking, remain crucial in today's journalism. And the skills the SOJC teaches in community listening, media collaboration and entrepreneurial approaches can lead to that untapped potential to bolster and sustain a healthy information ecosystem that serves all Oregon communities."

—*Ella Norton, public relations '24*

Ella Norton (she/her/hers) is the executive print editor for [Align magazine](#), an account supervisor for [Allen Hall Public Relations](#) and an ambassador for the SOJC.

University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication

PR Campaigns is more than a class - it's a PR
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SOJC public relations students Kayleigh Knight and Madison Plumney discuss their ideas to increase heat pump installations with representatives from the city of Salem. Photo by Ella Norton.

As a UO School of Journalism and Communication (SOJC) [public relations](#) student preparing to graduate and enter the workforce, I had one final step to take before I received my diploma at the end of this term: Take Public Relations Campaigns.

In this course, students are paired with a real organization, conduct research, build client relations and develop strategies and tactics, before pitching their final ideas to the organization at the end of the class. I was excited to take this course, as I knew it would give me real-life experience and help prepare me for my first job, post-grad.

I am taking this course with SOJC Professor of Practice [Atilla Schillinger](#), and my client is the [city of Salem](#), which is working with the [Sustainable](#)

[City Year Program](#) to increase the number of households switching to heat pumps from less efficient energy sources. I chose this project over two other clients because I was drawn to the possibility of using public relations for good.

Students lead campaign for city of Salem

Our team began by setting up a meeting with several city council members so we could learn exactly what our clients wanted from us. Their goals were simple: They wanted to increase the installation of heat pumps, an energy-efficient heating and cooling system, in Salem. Next, we began researching Salem's demographics, analyzing state and national energy trends, learning the mechanics of heat pumps and interviewing early adopters to create a client brief.

As we began to familiarize ourselves with our client and the campaign, we found that there were two benefits to emphasize with people considering the switch to heat pumps: lower utility bills and fewer environmental impacts.

We used these findings to create our strategy, a storytelling community approach that used simple language and emphasized peer-to-peer communication. We sent our ideas to the city of Salem, adjusted our strategy according to client feedback and got to work on the tactics, otherwise known as the deliverables.

Our team wanted to think outside the box for tactics and go beyond social media posts. We came up with several ideas, including an interactive heat pump tabling experience that would allow residents to learn about heat pumps in person through peers, a summit for landlords that focuses on the potential future savings and a plan to distribute yard signs to residents advertising that the house uses a heat pump to foster conversations between neighbors.



SOJC public relations students talk with representatives from the city of Salem during a client meeting. As part of their Public Relations Campaign class, the students were paired with real clients and tasked with promoting the use of heat pumps in Salem. Photo by Ella Norton.

Hands-on web design work will bolster portfolio

I wanted to focus on the peer-to-peer communication aspect, so I mocked up a [website](#) that would be a hub where Salem residents could find all the information they would need about heat pumps. While I had done some website design before, this class allowed me to create hands-on work that I can use in my portfolio as I was creating real communication materials for an organization.

In addition to the client work, Professor Schillinger invited professionals from the communication industry to speak to us each week and provide advice and feedback on our ideas. One speaker talked about the importance of making an event sound exclusive, and we used that information to guide our mock-ups of invitations to the heat pump summit.

Meeting these professionals also offered the opportunity to network, and several of these professionals shared information about internships.

Around Week 7 of the term, our team completed a first draft of our research, strategy and tactics. We made a site visit to Salem, where we walked city council members through our presentation, learning what they liked and

where we needed to make adjustments. This trip allowed us to expand on our professional development by forging relationships with city government officials as public relations professionals.

The experience broadened my knowledge of the communications industry and taught me many things I hadn't considered before, such as how a city can't sponsor individual companies because they legally can't show favoritism.

Class offered preparation for future PR job

In Week 9, we took our pitch deck with our research, strategy and mockups, and presented the campaign to the city of Salem. While we were all very nervous to pitch to an actual client, we had practiced several times and the presentation flowed smoothly. At the end, our client asked us several questions, allowing us to expand on our work and respond to feedback.

Now, in our final week of classes, all students are preparing a portfolio slide deck that they must present to faculty and professionals for a portfolio review. The portfolio focuses on all the work we have accomplished in our time at the SOJC, and gives students the experience of pitching themselves to a company.

Throughout this class, I've gained valuable insight about being a professional in the public relations industry, from working with teams to creating sustainable campaigns and working with a government organization. I feel more prepared than ever to enter the industry, and I am glad I'm getting real-world experiences to guide me.

—*Ella Norton, public relations '24*

Ella Norton (she/her/hers) is a third-year student majoring in public relations and French from Kansas City, Missouri. She is a copy editor for [Align Magazine](#), an account executive for [Allen Hall Public Relations](#) and an ambassador for the SOJC.

University of Oregon School of Planning, Public Policy and Management

PPPM Class Hosts Information Session about
AI for Salem Community Members

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On Monday, November 16, the Salem Public Library hosted a one-time collaboration between University of Oregon (UO) students from Professor Ric Stephen's Green Cities PPPM (Planning, Public Policy and Management) 445 class and Salem residents eager to delve into the world of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This unique information session was organized in partnership with the University of Oregon's [Sustainable City Year Program](#) (SCYP) and arranged for 45 students to take a bus from Eugene to Salem to engage with a full room of attendees from Salem.



Accompanied by City of Salem staff and SCYP representatives, UO students led the hands-on learning session exploring the realm of artificial intelligence (AI), focusing on the concept of "Prompt Engineering". The students and Salem residents delved into the intricacies of refining large language models using specific prompts and recommended outputs.

The event showcased the students' creativity and adaptability as they employed ChatGPT utilizing prompts inspired by hypothetical instances and people. The students experimented with different tones, voices, and role assignments to study the impact on the generative capabilities of AI programs.

The interactive event allowed Salem residents to analyze and discuss the implications of AI from various professional roles. The students guided Salem residents through the nuances of AI and its potential applications in different sectors, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas.



Sophia Sebastian, a fourth-year student majoring in Public Relations through the School of Journalism and Communications, participating in the Green Cities PPPM 445 class and serves as an account executive on Allen Hall Public Relations (AHPR) for SCYP.

"I found the event not only intellectually stimulating but surprising to know how much us college students knew about AI compared to the Salem

residents," said Sophia. "With AI being fairly new, my classmates and I did not know an extreme amount about AI prior to Ric's class. I have not only learned about how AI works on a coding level, but I have a clear understanding of what I can envision it to do for us in the future."

The engagement between UO students and Salem residents exemplified a commitment to community-driven education, a core principle of SCYP. Students participating in the event found it to be incredibly rewarding to teach the Salem community about AI as most of the participants were older who know very little about basic technology.

Sophia partnered with Julie, a retired Salem resident who loves to take road trips with her grandchildren and wants to know more about new-age technology.



"The interactions with students is my favorite part," Julie said. "I have a

better understanding with what AI can do and I feel more comfortable with it, and I think it's something I can use in my everyday life to explore different options for communications and things that I'm interested in."

Established in 2009, SCYP is now in its 14th year of partnerships with Oregon communities. After more than a decade, SCYP is [returning for a second time to partner with the City of Salem](#) for the 2023-24 school year to connect UO courses to implement real change drawing directly from community-identified issues. Through hands-on learning, SCYP harnesses the innovation of students and faculty to offer communities unique perspectives and ideas.

Communities emerge from [SCYP partnerships](#) with increased community outreach, expanded conversations, and cutting-edge solutions, while students emerge better prepared to enter the workforce. Over the course of the academic year, SCYP will continue to forge meaningful partnerships through more than 20 courses to bring innovative educational experiences to the Salem community. The success of this AI outreach event exemplifies the importance of bridging academia to help strengthen and impact Oregon communities.

Article by Sophia Sebastian.

Edited by Lindsey Hayward of Sustainable City Year Program.

Parting Thoughts

The journey between SCYP and the city of Salem included many firsts—the first repeat partner in SCYP’s fifteen-year history, five new SCYP faculty focused on Salem, four courses never taught before including a collaborative effort between UO Architecture and Oregon State University Wood Science and Engineering students focused on Salem’s Highland Park, and participation from 12 different city departments. The year led to new discoveries for students, faculty, city staff, and city stakeholders. This journey of collaboration and creative problem-solving resulted in practical, strategic, and visionary tools; designs; and policy recommendations on the city’s priority topics, all of which we hope Salem and its partners will use today as well as in the future as the City responds and adapts to the challenges ahead.

