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River Leadership Curriculum Week #2

University of Dayton

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Friday, September 9, 2011

River Leadership Curriculum Week #2

Week two of the RLC had the students working together and developing leadership skills.

The students had several tasks to complete during class. They read an excerpt from the book *Hope and Hard Times* which talked about the idea of sustainability, how to deal with competing views of sustainability, a case study of the Monday Creek in Ohio, as well as other important topics regarding sustainability. The students led a discussion on the reading asking each other significant questions about the reading. Next, Maggie Varga led the students in a nominal group technique exercise. Maggie, an alumna of the River Steward program and UD's Business school and MBA program, is also a former Graduate Assistant for the Rivers Institute. She acted as the GA for the RLC during the Fall 2010 semester. It was great to have her back in the classroom with us. Leading the nominal group technique, Maggie helped the students develop their own definition of what sustainability means. This idea came out of our brainstorming planning that occurred two years ago. Our partners realized the confusion that can come about when talking about the topic of sustainability. Many people have different definitions of the term which makes it hard to have a conversation about it. Using the nominal group technique, we were able to decide on one definition that the students could agree on, feel comfortable with, and refer back to throughout the semester. In addition, the activity gave the students the chance, early on in the semester, to work together and take ownership of the material they were studying. The students responded well to the activity and now define sustainability as:

Sustainability encompasses the engagement of all parts of society equally and fairly, in order to protect natural systems and create reliable solutions for all future generations. Sustainability involves all community stakeholders working toward the common good through best management practices and the application of the five R's (reuse, recycle, reduce, restore, renew). This is achieved by individual communities and society living within their means.

The students and presenters will refer back to this definition throughout the semester as we talk more about our water resources.

Below is a picture of the students working through the nominal group technique.

