Arb Complex Design Project Overview

Students in the spring 2015 ENTS 288 course, Abrupt Climate Change, are working in teams with Prof. Trish Ferrett (Chemistry, Environmental Studies) to create several conceptual designs for an enhanced future “Arboretum Complex” at Carleton College. Because the college has not included this area in its current strategic plan, nor is there any funding for this kind of project, we are in a position to think creatively and freely. We hope that our work will inspire others who also want to improve this part of the college and link Carleton to compelling environmental issues in Minnesota and around the world.

The Arb complex today includes a variety of built structures that support varied and disparate college functions: Parr and Farmhouse and the related farms/gardens, the Arb Office and Garage, the artists’ buildings and yard, various buildings and yards for facilities and grounds, and the nearby sports fields and storage areas.

Students will initially research the current situation, gathering information and talking with a range of users of these areas and buildings. Students will be looking into issues of function, needs, history, land stewardship, energy use, sustainability, and a range of community concerns.

After this, design teams will form and use the following questions to guide creation of four 2D site plans for a new Arboretum Complex.

- How can the complex design help us showcase and educate the community on how are we going to live and work in more resilient ways in our unstable climate future on campus, in Northfield, and in Minnesota?

- How can we raise the profile, value, and visibility of the Arb and connect it and its evolving mission and land ethic to the main academic campus and surrounding community?

- How can we use ecological design to better integrate human functions in the built environment into the flows and patterns of the natural world?

The students will present their work in a public setting at the end of the term, along with recording their work and research processes digitally on a public web site.