

Working on the Groton Climate Communications Strategy has been one of the highlights of my academic career thus far. The goal was to assist the town of Groton in developing a climate communications strategy for its impending climate action plan. The communications strategy would determine the best pathways to engage residents and stakeholders across Groton, from posting on social media and attending community events to holding town meetings centered around climate change and its many impacts. It would reflect that outreach and messaging will need to be tailored based on who we are trying to reach, the subject matter we are trying to engage them on (for example, heat impacts versus flooding), and what the town is trying to gain from the interaction. The strategy would also set up an accountability pathway so that the town can responsibly show the community how they will use the information provided to us to inform climate action plan development. We also established four sub-goals congruent in accomplishing such a task. Those goals are as follows:

- Promote youth engagement through developing relationships at schools in Groton and collectivizing youth opportunities.
- Work with, not for, the community. Establish relationships, consult locals, and attempt to understand and consider Groton's many layers to develop a strategy representative of the community.
- Strive to understand barriers and cascades on inequalities impacting traditional engagement methods and develop solutions that may overcome those obstacles.

We also set out on providing deliverables throughout the semester that included assisting in developing Groton's town sub-page, communicating the role of their excellent, newly hired, Sustainability and Resilience Manager, Megan Granato, and identifying resources and organizations the town could collab with as they continue developing their climate action plan.

Some of the challenges we faced in developing the communications strategy was communicating with the many entities involved. At times, my partner and I weren't on the same page regarding the best pathway to continue forward with strategy development, so there were some points that we had to regroup and communicate effectively with each other to then provide consistent information to the community partners we engaged with. Though frustrating at times, I'm so grateful for the opportunity and the lessons I learned in navigating such a project with a two-person team.

My favorite part of this project was navigating the socio-cultural factors that influence such decisions. Groton has many unique characteristics that make it unlike many other communities in Connecticut. In considering factors like commuters' role in the local economy, historical impacts on affordable housing, and many other components, we were able to cultivate a strategy that would impact how climate change, one of the most impactful forces our generation will face, is communicated with a community. As I've continued to encounter more opportunities in university, the projects that tend to be the most impactful are also the most applicable. These projects may take more effort and patience, but the payoff is worth far beyond a course grade or bragging item on a resume. I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to assist in influencing and guiding an impact that will be sustained by generations long past my own's. I recommend the Climate Corps course to anyone who strives to have impact and recognize that a dilemma as daunting as the looming climate crisis requires us working together to tackle it.

