

# SPIIn Report

Siena College  
Summer 2021



SPIIn (Siena Project Incubator) is a partnership between  
The Center for Academic Community Engagement  
and The Center for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity

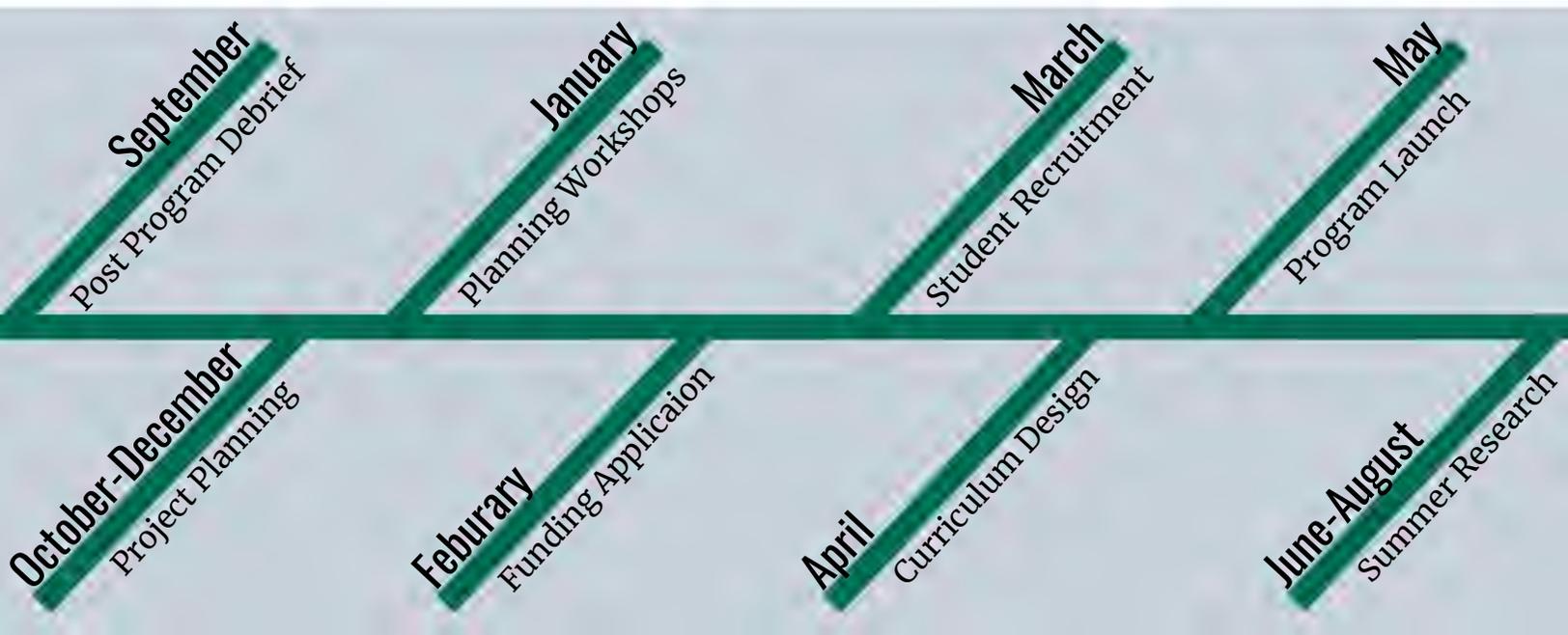
# SPIIn Overview

SPIIn is an intensive summer program that connects faculty, students, and community organizations in multi-year participatory action research projects. SPIIn starts with the assumption that our region's most entrenched problems should be addressed through interdisciplinary and collective impact processes and that meaningful change requires a long-term approach. SPIIn's three-year model allows for projects to grow over time. In year one we explore issues, develop relationships, and celebrate small wins; in year two, we develop and support student and community leadership in implementing a targeted intervention; and in year three, we work collaboratively to ensure sustainable action.



We are very proud of the partnerships and collaborative work in which our students, faculty, and partners participated over the summer. In the following report, we highlight SPIIn 2021 projects. While we focus on the summer, each project continues throughout the academic year as independent studies, community-engaged classes, and internships. Those involved in these projects spend their fall, winter, and spring publishing results, developing the research, and planning for the following summer. This is truly a year-round program that is fueled by focused summer work.

# SPI by the Year(s)



# SPIIn by the Numbers

48

Students engaged in community projects

8

Team-based community projects

21

Majors represented

17

Faculty mentors

8

Community partners



# Vibrant Communities: Community Wealth

**Y** Community Partners  
**3 +1\*** AVillage  
The Community Loan Fund

Siena has partnered with AVillage, Inc. and other key community stakeholders to gather community input for various AVillage initiatives. While this partnership started to advance a grocery store initiative, it quickly moved to more general wealth building support leading to the expansion of the South End Night Market (SENM) and the creation of the Nascent Black Entrepreneur Fellows Program.

The four-pillar approach to building community wealth is a culmination of best practice and academic research, pop-up and traditional focus groups, review of community documents, and interviews with community thought leaders.

**\*Night Market project (Y3) and the Community Investment Trust (CIT) project (Y1)**

## PROJECT SUPERVISORS:

Ruth Kassel, Ph.D. (Siena College)  
Rui Li, Ph.D., (University at Albany)  
Kaciem Swain (AVillage)

## SPIN FELLOWS:

Kristina Fibkins, Chea-  
Aria Brown, Adebajo  
Samson, Giavanna  
Pitagno, Devyn Tremblay,  
Ethan Hull

# Vibrant Communities: Community Wealth

## Summer 2021 Accomplishments:

- Creation of a community garden table that partially sources from community gardeners to bring fresh fruit and vegetables to the South End Night Market
- Completion of a feasibility study for the implementation of a Community Investment Trust in Albany
- Piloted an online purchasing system for the South End Night Market
- Increased social media engagement on the SENM pages

## Next Steps:

- Build the cultural elements of the South End Night Market
- Further develop connections to community gardeners for the Market table
- Purchase a CIT building and implement the Albany CIT



"The Black Wealth fellowship that I completed this past summer has been not only enlightening but extremely fun and well worth the adventure. The CIT is an amazing model that deserves more recognition, to bring wealth into the community via property investments and semi-incubator spaces. The idea is honestly one that should have come to fruition long ago and I'm glad I could be at the start of the Albany team!" - Devyn Tremblay

# Just Urban Transitions

## Y<sub>2</sub> Community Partners

A Village

The Radix Ecological Sustainability Center

The partnership builds on the existing community resilience and need for justice in the South End of Albany. Amidst ongoing challenges of systemic racism, inequality, climate change and the ongoing pandemic, the aim is to increase local food security and mutual support networks.

Teams apply a social justice analysis to urban ecology and, using a sociological framework, explore the emergent concept of “urban ecosystem justice.” They examine the material needs of city residents and possible ways to regenerate urban socio-ecological health through their research. The team also assists the Radix EcoJustice summer youth employment program. Using the youth participatory action research (YPAR) method, fellows engage youth in documenting ecological conditions in the South End, culminating in the creation and presentation of visual, recorded and written information to benefit the local community and create positive social change.

### PROJECT SUPERVISORS:

Scott Kellogg, Ph.D. (Bard College)  
Griffin Lacy Ph.D. (University at Albany)

### SPIN FELLOWS:

Jaqueline Alcantara, Elisabeth Sundberg, Sophie Rose Kendrick, Talya Matz, Laurel A Del Tufo, Abigail Luscier, Jonah Amron, Katie Lienert, Forrest Levey, Isabella Higgins, and Francis Magai

# Just Urban Transitions

## Summer 2021 Accomplishments:

- Organized applied activities including urban gardening, composting, food distribution, beekeeping, agroforestry management, construction, and street tree planting
- Conducted community-based research, sociological field note-taking, youth engagement and education, and group reading and discussion
- Held an open-house event where the public was invited into the Radix space to learn about the activities and accomplishments of the group.

## Next Steps:

- Host weekly open houses that draw upon visitors to the weekly South End Night Market
- Continue the community-based interviews related to the Innovation Blocks Program as well as the Pandemic Resilience and EcoSystem Justice Project
- Advance the IRB-approved data collection involving Participatory Action Research (PAR), conduct data analysis and final write-up for eventual publication



“The mission of environmental education and food access work at Radix is pretty clear and we as Summer Associates mostly plugged into the work that Radix has been doing and continues to do. I definitely think that continuing to host AmeriCorps at this site will only help the program grow as each group gives perspective on the best way to fulfill what the Radix center stands for and its role in the South End community.” - Elisabeth Sundberg

# Refugee Voice

## Y<sub>2</sub> Community Partners

West Hill Refugee Welcome Center

The goal of asset mapping in Albany's West Hill neighborhood is to heal socioeconomic fractures by engaging directly with local residents. These mapping activities involve community-based research, civic engagement and critical refugee studies.

Through this process, the community strengths and needs articulated by diverse West Hill residents will be collected to create a narrative map.

Asset mapping is a research methodology that addresses sites of contention in local communities. Trust is built by offering educational community activities for local residents such as college access workshops, neighborhood gardening, mural painting, English language classes, health and wellness events, and organized team sports such as soccer, running, dance and taekwondo. This enables the SPIn team to create, engage and collaborate with a wide variety of community members of all ages. The SPIn team will then invite community members to discuss what specific resources are needed in their particular block and immediate neighborhood.

### PROJECT SUPERVISORS:

Vera Eccarius-Kelly, Ph.D (Siena College)  
Ali Schaeffing, Ph.D. (Russell Sage College)

### SPIN FELLOWS:

Alina Antropova, Fatemeh Amiri, Kimberly Deonarine, Ester Hnin, Michael Averill, Oluwatosin Oluyede, Jessica Williams, Christina Krewson, and Mercy Trouwborst

# Refugee Voice

## Summer 2021 Accomplishments:

- Extensive youth engagement activities
- Offered several well attended workshops to educate young students about College Access opportunities.
- Initiated an extensive community engaged research project.
- English Language courses offered on Wednesday nights (initiated in July and will continue all fall/winter 2021).
- Women's Health and Pregnancy Workshops
- West Hill Asset Mapping in process; continuation fall 2021.
- Eid Celebration with the 518Snug anti-violence team

## Next Steps:

- Increase in year-round programming.
- Refugee Voices Art Exhibit at the Opalka Gallery.
- Publication of our 3-year SPIn project.
- Hiring of Vista
- Hiring of Program Director for the Center



"My eight weeks placed at the West Hill Refugee Welcome Center summed up, were very insightful and opened my eyes to the realities of life in an underserved and under-resourced community. I spent the summer walking through the neighborhood, interacting with the neighborhood youth, and discussing and researching pressing community concerns through semi-structured interviews and daily conversations with community members leading the charge on development projects." - Oluwatosin Oluyede

# Informal STEM

## Y<sub>1</sub> Community Partners

### Cohoes Connect Center

This research focuses on helping to build the Connect Center as a leader in informal learning in multiple ways. The program aims to add a STEM informal learning program to already existing arts and music programming, and to use assessments to better understand what the Cohoes youth are looking for in STEM programming. In addition, the team looks for ways to apply lessons learned from previous research and programming to help the Connect Center create assessments and collect the data and stories necessary for increased funding and improved learning outcomes for Cohoes youth.

### Summer 2021 Accomplishments:

- Built connection with the community this summer; made Connect Center t-shirts, created signs and flyers and canvassed Cohoes speaking to community members to increase awareness of the Center and the summer programming.
- Created an asset database for the Connect Center
- Contributed to the 6-week steam camp programs by running stations and creating engaging activities around robotics, Turing Tumble, button making, free drawing, art collage, painting and coloring, measuring wind speed, minetest, scratch, 7 Billion Humans, Dungeons & Dragons, and video game battles.

### PROJECT SUPERVISORS:

Michele McColgan, Ph.D. (Siena College)  
Megan Kelly, Ph.D. (Siena College)

### SPIN FELLOWS:

Nana Ama Boateng, Lindsay Clark, Sarah Ahmed, Tinu Thomas, Brandon Smith

# Informal STEM

- Conducted a one-week FLOSS STEAM camp. In this camp, the Vistas facilitated the children in their exploration of and engagement with computers and coding.
- Began a research project examining student behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement as well as their sense of community at the FLOSS camp. The research project was approved, and the analyses are underway.

## Next Steps:

- Further develop analyses and write up of the research project conducted this summer
- Create a follow-up project for next summer
- Continue and expand upon the community outreach and STEAM programming for next summer utilizing what was learned this summer.



“I applied to the SPIn program because I wanted to assist a nonprofit organization and was interested in learning more about my surrounding communities; what I didn’t expect though is how much I learned myself. Having to deviate daily from my original motives not only helped me acquire new skill sets, but helped me understand the community more- I was able to create sustainable relationships because my team and I were listening to their needs instead of what we thought they needed. SPIn helped me become conscious of how I’m serving and if the service I am providing is what the community has expressed they need” - Sarah Ahmed-Weidman

# Urban Farmers

## **Y**<sub>1</sub> Community Partners Albany Victory Gardens, a project of Eden's Rose Foundation

Urban Farmers Project uses photographs by community members to reflect everyday social and political realities that impact people's lives. This project promotes participant empowerment and engagement and has the ability to inform policy makers to bring about change.

### **Summer 2021 Accomplishments:**

- Got to know our community partner, Albany Victory Gardens, and the urban farmers quite well
- Built trust with community members, including members of the Garden Committee
- Helped with farm care and special events for our community partner
- Helped transform a lot on 1st and Quail into a pollinator-attracting garden and community tabling space
- Facilitated the Apothecary Garden Partnership
- Hosted an event showcasing photographs from the summer work, which served as a networking event for the community partner
- Conducted research on plants and their ecological and medicinal value

### **PROJECT SUPERVISORS:**

Nora Boyd, Ph.D. (Siena College)  
Sarah Toledano, LMSW (Siena College)

### **SPIN FELLOWS:**

Kathleen Nielsen, Erin Spence,  
Juliana Barriere, Jack McKeena

# Urban Farmers

## Next Steps:

- Continue to develop the Apothecary Garden Partnership
- Recruit faculty mentors from anthropology, sociology, nursing, environmental studies, and/or business
- Analyze the data from the Photovoice project and publish that work
- After analyzing the data from the Photovoice interviews, determine with the partner and garden committee what the next steps in the project will be



"I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to work with this organization. I've learned so much about urban farming, environmental justice, and the importance of community. I've also gained a better understanding of the impact of empowerment and community support. The passion that these urban farmers have for this work is truly inspiring, and I am honored to have had the opportunity to listen to their stories and be a part of their mission." - Erin Spence

# Apothecary Gardening

## Y<sub>1</sub> Community Partners

Albany Victory Gardens

The medicinal plant and apothecary garden project focuses on building community partnerships around a deep connection with the earth, human health, and well-being. Community organizations that are already involved in gardening tend to focus on culinary and aesthetic properties of plants. Our mission is to learn from, share with, and work alongside communities which are interested in the medicinal properties of plants that grow abundantly in our region. By building apothecary gardens and sharing knowledge freely, we hope to inspire others to look closely at their own health and well-being as well the health and well-being of the community around them.

### Summer 2021 Accomplishments:

- Installation of two apothecary gardens: Interfaith Garden Cooperative in Saratoga and Albany Victory Gardens in Albany
- Creation of 40 monograph entries with information about the qualities, taxonomy, uses, and research on 40 different plant species

#### PROJECT SUPERVISORS:

Donnean Thrall, D.N.S. (Siena College)  
Dan White, Ph.D. (Siena College)

#### SPIN FELLOWS:

Kendall Paluch,  
Meagan Reilly, Sara Smith

# Apothecary Gardening

- Creation of 20 plant tags for use in the new gardens
- Held two educational herbarium sessions for the AmeriCorps team and the Saratoga partner

## Next Steps:

- Further extend this project with more garden installations next summer with additional community partners; build partnerships and gaining trust for further collaboration
- Offer more educational sessions and community building activities centered on healing medicinal gardens and to study the impact of this work



“This is an incredible project to be a part of because you can witness the direct response of our work throughout communities. The supervisors for this project make it fun while also getting down to the work at hand. At the end of this project, I felt like our team had become a small family because we worked hard, and we’re all driven but still knew how to have fun and get along.” - Kendall Paluch

# Living Museum

## Y<sub>3</sub> Community Partners

### Historic Cherry Hill

This interdisciplinary project used theater, dramaturgy, visual arts, and virtual reality to explore and interpret a unique slice of American history through the lens of Historic Cherry Hill and the van Rensselaer-Rankin family. Using the museum's extensive collection of the family's possessions and documents, the team researched the changing physical, societal and familial landscapes of Albany as experienced by the van Rensselaer-Rankin family who occupied it for five generations.

#### **Summer 2021 Accomplishments:**

- Completed a guided virtual reality tour of the site. This will allow people of limited mobility to access floors of the site as well as making the historic site accessible to people in different geographic locations.
- Created a "Murder at Cherry Hill" tour. This will allow more people to access this interesting story, and provide a new fundraising opportunity for Cherry Hill.
- Worked on editing the full-length stage play "Tell Me That You'll Not Forget Me," about Minnie and Jimmy Knapp, detailing their unique experience as African American wards of the Van Rensselaer family.

#### **PROJECT SUPERVISORS:**

Scott Foster, M.F.A. (Siena College)  
Robin Flatland, Ph.D. (Siena College)  
Krysta Dennis, Ph.D. (Siena College)

#### **SPIN FELLOWS:**

Jack Ellis, Kate Frisch, Hayley Kalukin, Timothy Ryan, Mike Schneider, Megan Stuart, and theatre students

# Living Museum

- Led a well-attended calligraphy workshop at Cherry Hill using ink made from the walnut trees onsite.

## Next Steps:

- The students will showcase their virtual "Murder at Cherry Hill" tour at Siena in October- dates TBD
- "Tell Me That You'll Not Forget Me" will be performed in June of 2022 at Siena as part of a broader celebration and exploration of the lives of Jimmy and Minnie Knapp in the Capital Region. It will be directed by Jean-Remy Monnay of the Black Theatre Troupe of Upstate NY, our partner on the project. We are currently seeking funding for this production via a Humanities NY Grant.



The Living Museum Project was an amazing experience and learning opportunity. On the transdisciplinary project I was able to write, research, design, and create an interesting and interactive product with a diverse team of students who were all able to use their expertise, with the help of advisors, to make it the best it could be. It gave the opportunity for us students to learn to work with people outside our own studies to make a final product, and me the opportunity to teach a whole range of theatre skills I had learned over my years at Siena. We saw where it came from, worked together and imagined what it could be, then worked hard to make it happen. " - Megan Stuart

# Siena College Beverage Institute

## Y<sub>1</sub> Community Partners

### Capital Craft Beverage Trail

The newly formed Siena College Beverage Institute is a research project that aims to serve the craft beverage community in the Capital Region by providing assistance in marketing, social media, design, photography, video, data tracking, and other areas of interest.

As the institute grows, it will offer additional services, including scientific analysis, and the SPIn team will research other needs of the Capital Region craft beverage producers, to see how the institute can serve them best.

#### Summer 2021 Accomplishments:

- Established relationship with Craft Beverage trail and assisted with Craft Beverage passport launch
- Starting a 3 year plan for partnership with president of Craft Beverage Trail / Upper Hudson Wine Trail
- Established relationships with community partners
- Made mead from “hive to glass”
- Learned to blend cocktail bitters

#### PROJECT SUPERVISORS:

Dan Moriarty, Ph.D., (Siena College)  
Fr. Roberto Serrano, O.F.M. (Siena College)  
Krysta Dennis, Ph.D. (Siena College)

#### SPIN FELLOWS:

Michael Anderton, Katherine  
Facteau,  
Evan Blust, Dominic DiCaprio,  
Matthew Gerrain

# Siena College Beverage Institute

- Engaged in a series of tastings culminating in blind tastings
- Brought various community members together for tasting, education, and brainstorming about the future of the SCBI
- Created logos for the SCBI
- Purchased video equipment for the SCBI and taught students how to properly capture images and video with it; created a great deal of media for students to learn to edit and present finished work to community partners.

## Next Steps:

- Establishing SCBI as a year-round research entity
- Bring additional faculty and students into the SCBI
- Continuing to work with established partners
- Continue to bring community members together to learn more about the beverage industry and how Siena College can help promote it locally



"Being in the Siena College Beverage Institute has allowed me to bring so many different parts of my world together, and combine Creative Arts, English, Education and a love for wine in one nice and neat package. I was able to learn about Advertisement Filming, the proper ways to attend a beverage tasting, Film editing, Business Tactics, even a bit of Water Chemistry. The heads of the institute were so welcoming and open to exploration of all areas, allowing the group to not only work together, but to explore what things we can do that we never thought we could before." - Dominic DiCaprio

# New to SPIn in 2021

## Flexible Trainings

Six micro-credential trainings were provided by faculty, ACE staff, and guest speakers that focused on three areas: equity and racial justice, professional development, and food insecurity. Students were able to gain skills and experience they could apply to their projects and beyond the SPIn Program.

## Social Media

The SPIn Leadership Team was successful in providing each project with the opportunity to participate in a Take Over Tuesday on the ACE Instagram team. Each project was able to show what a typical work day looked like and what they had accomplished as a project.

## Virtual Research Summit

Each project presented their research, work, and accomplishments via Zoom and in-person events to the SPIn program, community partners, stakeholders, and local politicians. Projects were able to form new connections for community partners and start important discussions.

# Thank you to our Funders

AmeriCorps VISTA

Seymour Fox Foundation

United Way of the Greater Capital  
Region



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of the Greater Capital Region



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