

PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

I. Abstract

The Garden Project, San Luis Obispo is a program that rehabilitates inmates through restorative justice practices at the San Luis Obispo County Jail. The program offers inmates at both the men's and women's honor farms opportunities to connect to the land through physical gardening practices, establish relationships with other inmates as well as outside volunteers, gain vocational skills that will benefit inmates upon their release, and ultimately empower inmates to become confident and productive members of the community.

II. Introduction

The positive impact that the garden has had on inmates is the driving force behind continuing our project. One particular story that stands out is that of Cindy. Cindy has been incarcerated at the San Luis Obispo County Jail for over a year and a half. The caustic toll of incarceration on Cindy's mental and physical health was evident. However, through the meditative practice of mixing soil, sowing seeds, and watching her vegetables blossom, the garden has supported her positive rehabilitation. When discussing the impacts of The Garden Project, San Luis Obispo, Cindy explained, "[the program] makes me feel normal again... It gives me intellectual stimulation." It is this self-esteem boost and vocational skills we hope to continue to implement, with the goal of lowering the recidivism rate.

Cindy is one of an expanding inmate population, many of whom are not being rehabilitated effectively. Michelle Alexander, professor of law and former director of The Racial Justice Project at the ACLU in Northern California, states that "The United States now has the highest rate of incarceration in the world [...] In the United States, the rate is roughly [...] 750 per 100,000 [people]" . This burgeoning inmate population continues to

grow, due in part to a lack of rehabilitation. According to a 2011 California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation report, the recidivism rate for inmates from 2006-2007 was 65.1% and increasing.

High recidivism rates have encouraged jails and prisons throughout the state to implement innovative rehabilitation practices. Recent research has shown that gardening programs have helped to reduce recidivism as well as create positive self-images for inmates. For example, the Garden Project at the San Francisco County Jail in San Bruno noted:

The reason the prisoners were so enthusiastic about it was because for the first time they were able to do something they were able to give, give of themselves, the only thing they had ... We grew a lot of food for a lot of people; but mostly what I began to see was that these people were saying, 'I'm better. I'm not just a prostitute. I'm not just a thief. I can grow cabbages, lettuce, broccoli.' (Pudup)

Productive use of inmates' time can lead to a personal transformation and help rehabilitate inmates. Through the production of vegetables for the community, inmates realized that they had the capacity to be positive and productive members of society, especially their community.

During our six month project, we have seen many of the same positive benefits of inmates at the San Luis Obispo county jail. Not only have the inmates taken it upon themselves to innovate in gardening techniques (e.g. irrigation), they have also built new storage and a greenhouse for future seed cultivation and production. Most impressively, the production of vegetables has been so high that the entire jail is being fed in part by food grown organically by inmates themselves.

Beyond the benefits of the garden project for inmates, it also has clear benefits for Cal Poly and its students. As sociology majors, our focus is on integrating different communities as well as further examining the different aspects of the criminal justice system and ways it

can be improved. However, through the growth of the program and greater collaboration between the social sciences, agriculture sciences, and landscape architecture, students will be able to increase the success of the garden and the impact that it has on the inmates, students, and the overall community. Student participants in all disciplines will be able to engage and serve a marginalized population in our community, work in an interdisciplinary atmosphere, and affect positive social change. Ultimately, the success of this project will be enhanced through monetary contribution, and the money awarded will aid in expanding the project to allow for future students and inmates to be involved.

III. Objective(s)

- (1) Expand the project to benefit more inmates and students, as well as have the means to build and create projects for the garden.
- (2) Create a relationship between Cal Poly departments of sociology, agriculture, and landscape architecture and the San Luis Obispo County Jail.
- (3) Inmates will gain vocational skill as well as self-empowerment.

IV. Methodology

- (1) The expansion of this project will occur as follows: money granted will be used to purchase new materials, such as seeds, soil, soil amendments, wood for building planter boxes, and tools. With these new materials, expansion of the project will be feasible by creating and developing a tea garden and a flower garden at the women's facility (as requested by the inmates), having more tools so more inmates can get involved, and allowing inmates and students to work collectively on new projects to expand the garden and sow a new orchard.

V. Timeline

- June 2014: Talk with inmates and officers at both facilities about creating a specific design and layout for the garden
- July 2014: Test soil and purchase materials needed for specific projects

- August 2014: Implement new garden/orchard designs
- September-December 2014: plant produce and have weekly visits to continue working on/implementing projects, harvest produce
- January-March 2015: Implement workshop series for inmates to learn specific vocational skills
- April-June 2015: administer surveys to inmates and students to investigate positive/negative effects of The Garden Project, conduct final report of the project and how to improve in the future

VI. Final Products and Dissemination

The final product of The Garden Project will be an organic, fruitful, and sustainable garden that is created between inmates and students at Cal Poly. Inmates will be able to reflect on their time in jail as being productive and empowering, and will re-enter into society with vocational skills. Students will create positive social change in the community, will leave with a greater knowledge of both the positive and negative aspects of the criminal justice system, and will leave the garden as a foundation for future student involvement. As one of the premier agriculture schools in the state, we want to educate not only the students who are privileged to attend our university, but to “pay it forward” to our neighbors in jail the benefits of agriculture for both personal and professional growth. Without being too idealistic, our hope is to share the success of our project in San Luis Obispo with other local jails and prisons, including California Men’s Colony, Lompoc Penitentiary, and the Santa Barbara county jail.

VII. Budget Justification

The money requested will be used to purchase new materials for the garden and orchard: seeds, soil, soil amendments, wood for building planter boxes, and tools. In the future, we plan to establish a workshop series where members of the community teach specific skills to the inmates, and the money granted will be used to compensate for their time.

PROPOSAL BUDGET

Student Applicant(s): Ellie Gertler Georgia O'Farrell Jillian Broeckel		
Faculty Advisor:	Ryan Alaniz	
Project Title:	The Garden Project	Requested Baker Endowment Funding
Operating Expenses	<i>subtotal</i>	\$ 2,150.50
Non-computer Supplies & Materials *see attached table		\$ 2,150.50
Contractual Services	<i>subtotal</i>	\$ 1,200
Contracted Services		\$ 1,200
Equipment Rental/Lease Agreements		\$
Service/Maintenance Agreements		\$
TOTAL		\$ 3,350.50

Material	Cost	Quantity	Total
Soil Test	\$8	3	\$24
Soil/Compost	\$45	10	\$450
Seeds	\$5.95	30	\$178.50
Tools: snips, gloves, trowels	\$15 \$5 \$10	15 15 15	\$450
Pots	\$15	20	\$300
Soil amendments: neem oil, sulfur, gypsum, nitrogen	\$54 \$20 \$15 \$15	1 3 3 3	\$204
Wood	\$9	50	\$450
Material for greenhouse	\$94	1	\$94
Total			\$2,1250.50