

Summer Project 2003 – “My Community, My Perspective”

Dear First-Year Student,

You have a special academic mission to complete by August 26, 2003.

What will you be doing? For this *required* assignment, you will research and write down specific data about your community (whatever you consider your community to be) and present it to students, faculty, and staff. See the attached assignment sheet for more information, including specific expectations.

When and Where? Your assignment is due on the first day of classes, and you will refer to it throughout your first year. Do your research and take your notes during the summer, and make sure you take your completed assignment to your writing/history course on the first day of classes.

Why is this important? The project will help you start thinking about themes and skills you will address in the first year. First-year faculty and staff have designed this summer project to give you an opportunity to learn more about your community and thus become better prepared for understanding and appreciating others and their points of view—a vital, valued aspect of the University community.

Why does quality matter? Doing a good job on this project will assist you in your first day of writing/history. You will draw upon the information you have gathered as you write your first in-class essay. In addition, the effort you put into “My Community, My Perspective” will help break the ice in your discussions in other first-year courses and in Student Life and Orientation activities. Your completed project will be a reference point for you and others, so do it well!

How and How much? For specific details and expectations, as well as ideas on getting started, see the attached assignment sheet. If you have questions about the “My Community, My Perspective” summer project, please contact the Learning & Advising Center at (215) 951-2730. Remember, this is a mandatory assignment that you must complete during the summer and bring on the first day of classes in August. We look forward to meeting with you and learning about your community.

Sincerely,

The First-Year Faculty and Staff at Philadelphia University

Philadelphia University – Summer Project 2003

“My Community, My Perspective”

Please complete this assignment by August 26.

Background: In *The Middle of Everywhere*, a book most first-year students will read once classes are in session, psychologist-author Mary Pipher argues that we see the world through “our own cultural lenses” and that our communities help shape our “view of reality.” To understand others, she suggests, we must first become aware of the particular “cultural lenses” we are looking through (Pipher 12). In the interest of heightening your awareness of your local area, first-year faculty and staff have created a summer project that gives you an opportunity to learn new things about your community—the area you call home.

This project enables you to bring insights into first-year assignments and discussions about topics such as identity, community, environment, the growing diversity within America, and the increasing intersections between American lives and the lives of people in and from other countries.

Directions: Your mission is to compile significant places, events, trends, and facts that could introduce Philadelphia University students, faculty, and staff to these aspects of your community:

- Cultural and Community Life
- History
- Environment and Science/Health Issues

Getting Started: Answer the questions below, using a variety of sources, ranging from your own observations to interviews with your family and friends to your local library, historical society, and Chamber of Commerce. You will also need to use online resources, as directed. Record your notes with care, including the sources of your information. Though they do not have to be in sentence form, your notes must be complete and legible. Secure all writing, drawings, photographs, or other materials inside a small loose-leaf binder or folder with pockets.

1. Cultural and Community Life

- a. **Community Events.** What special event brings together people in your community and represents the cultural life of your community? A county fair? A street festival? A neighborhood cookout? Include a written description and, if available, posters or flyers as a means of answering this question.
- b. **Clothing/Fashion.** What clothing/accessory trends do you notice in your community? What kinds of clothing do people wear? What do the different varieties suggest about the identity of your community? Include a written description and, if available, posters or flyers as a means of answering this question.
- c. **Gathering Places.** Where do people in your community meet to talk? Where do teenagers tend to congregate and socialize? Where do adults tend to congregate and socialize? Places of worship? Use a written description and, if available, photographs or sketches as evidence.

2. History

- a. What can you find out about Native American communities that lived in your community before and after those settlers arrived? Who were the first non-Native American settlers in your area? When did they settle? Where did they come from? Why did they come?
- b. What historical events are important to your community?

Write down your answers to these questions, and then choose a place that best represents the history of your community. Possible evidence includes descriptions, photographs, and brochures.

2.1 Business, Industry, and Commerce

- a. What kinds of occupations do the men and women in your community have?
- b. Where do people who live in this area work? Do they commute out of the area? Or do they work in key businesses or industries in town? What are these key businesses or industries?
- c. Where do people in your neighborhood shop for food and basic household goods? Is there a corner store that you frequent? Or do you and your family shop at a large supermarket or mall? Describe the place where you do your basic shopping. What does it look like? Who shops there? Is it a social place? Or is it anonymous?

2.2. The Built Environment

- a. Describe several ways in which space is used in your community. Think about recreational, industrial, public vs. private, and other uses of space.
- b. What kinds of buildings exist in your community? Places of worship? Schools? Businesses? Other?
- c. Choose a building that best represents your community, from your perspective. For example, this might be a house or a business. Write a description and draw or photograph this building.

3. Environmental and/or Health Issues

- a. What place do you think best represents the environmental condition of your community? Does your neighborhood have lots of green space or very little green space? You might choose a park, a parking lot, a local dump, or a local wildlife refuge.
- b. What specific plants and animals live in your green space? Are any considered to be invasive? In other words, are there plants or animals that out-compete or completely take over an area? To answer this question, go to the Federal Invasive Species homepage at: <http://www.invasivespecies.gov/>).
- c. Are plants or animals in your area considered to be endangered? To answer this question, go to the US Fish and Wildlife homepage: <http://endangered.fws.gov/wildlife.html>.
- d. How is your green space used? (parades, picnics, sports, litter, graffiti, dumping, crime, or wildlife and plant preservation? Are any of these events or activities unique to your community?
- e. What are some of the environmental issues in your area? To answer this question, go to the online scorecard provided by the Environmental Defense Fund (<http://www.scorecard.org>). Enter your zip code in the box in the upper right corner of the homepage. This will generate a report that compares your zip code to the rest of the country on key environmental standards. Read through the list and pick at least three facts that surprised you.

Reminder: You will be sharing the results of your summer project with students, faculty and staff throughout your first year at Philadelphia University. **Complete this project by August 26, 2003.**