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Joslyn Institute Recipient of UN–Habitat Dubai International Award for Best Practices

OMAHA —For its series of programs to build sustainable, enhanced environmental decision-making and leadership throughout cities and towns in Nebraska, the Joslyn Institute for Sustainable Communities (JISC) has been honored by the United Nations' UN-Habitat Dubai International Award for 2012. The City of Lincoln and the City of Omaha nominated JISC for the award. The Best Practices certification recognizes the JISC's interrelated studies over a 10-year period. These initiatives have the long-term purpose of aiding in the establishment of a balanced vision of the natural environment in harmony with the growth and development of human enterprises and community living conditions:

- 2002-2005 JISC conducted a series of charrettes, model studies and recommendations on growth-management issues and “Envisioning Regional Designs” for the future of the Flatwater Metro region of Southeast Nebraska.
- 2005-2008 The JISC designed and devised tools for the measurement of sustainable development—EcoSTEP™ and SustainometricsSM.
- 2009-2010 JISC packaged the Flatwater tools and strategies into a series of 22 statewide leadership workshops on sustainable development for local officials and community leaders; the resulting book, *Sustainometrics: Measuring Sustainability* has been published and is being adopted in classrooms and by civic officials from California to China.
- 2010-2011 Four public conferences were conducted across the state, “Conversation Conferences on Nebraska's Essential Resources”, to discuss and offer public policy ideas about both the development and conservation of critical resources in Nebraska. These prescriptions for public policy and for moving Nebraska toward a more sustainable future are being synthesized in a video program, to be released later in 2013.

JISC is now engaged in the next step in the process: developing strategies for effective communications among stakeholders. Each of these projects and investigations has led to the next effort for engaging the public, institutions, whole communities, and decision leaders in the quest for Nebraska to become a model of economic and social well-being within a local environment of abundant and sustainable resources.

Sustainability has many definitions, but JISC has established a definitive and tested criteria and framework, the Five Domains of Sustainability™, for working through a given problem-opportunity. Along with EcoSTEP™ and Sustainability Metrics™, the Five Domains will guide communications design and testing.

“Our Conversations Conferences (CCNES) and Nebraska Sustainability Leadership Workshops (NSLW) provided us important records of the ways in which more than 800 citizens of Nebraska view environmental and sustainability issues in the state of Nebraska,” said JISC President and CEO W. Cecil Steward. “In the explorations of the CCNES and NSLW, the participants in these events confirm that these issues are complex, require the attention of diverse and varied points of view, contain no single, self-evident solutions and need to be addressed through processes that are inclusive, rather than exclusive.”

Steward said that the more than 800 participants in these conferences reinforce that environmental and sustainability issues have the following characteristics:

- Local impact but regional and global interdependent implications.
- Complex interdependence requiring holistic ways of thinking and ways to address a given issue.
- No single characteristic or domain of expertise to turn to for complete understanding.
- Fundamentally human in their creation.
- Imperative and, therefore, require urgent attention, best practices, and action.

Through the course of these initiatives, JISC has developed strong relationships not only with Nebraska communities and interested individuals across the state, but also with practitioners and experts in fields including communication studies, environmental science, natural resource managers, design, planning, architecture and public policy that will allow for the creation of an interdisciplinary team necessary for collaborating with community agents to facilitate a democratic strategic communication design process on sustainability problem-opportunities.

For its overall achievements and the effectiveness of these initiatives, the JISC was awarded the Dubai International Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment. The JISC project is now cataloged in the Dubai International Award Best Practices database: <http://bestpractices.org>.

Established in 1996, the Dubai International Award receives entries from more than 140 countries. Best Practices are outstanding contributions to improving the living environment. They are defined by the United Nations and the international community at large as successful initiatives which:

- Have a demonstrable and tangible impact on improving people’s quality of life;
- Are the result of effective partnerships between the public, private and civic sectors of society;
- Are socially, culturally, economically and environmentally sustainable.

Best Practices are promoted and used by the United Nations and the international community as a means of:

- Improving public policy based on what works;
- Raising awareness of decision-makers at all levels and of the public of potential solutions to common social, economic and environmental problems;
- Sharing and transferring knowledge, expertise and experience through networking and peer-to-peer learning.

The original call for Best Practices was launched in 1996 during preparations for the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) as a means of identifying what works in improving living conditions on a sustainable basis. an independent committee of technical experts (Technical Advisory Committee) identifies Good and Best Practices and prepares a shortlist. An International Jury selects the award winners from the shortlist.

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Major local sponsors of the Joslyn Institute for Sustainable Communities include the Nebraska Environmental Trust, Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality and Lincoln Electric System.

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NOTE: Four illustrations in attached .zip file: Dubai International Award Certificate, The Five Domains™ diagram, EcoSTEP™ diagram, photograph from Conversations Conference