Spatial Justice Research Coordination Network (SJ-RCN) Project Summary

Overview – Spatial justice is an intriguing theory that has the potential to provide a framework from which communities can better understand and deal with many place-based challenges. However, many questions related to spatial justice still exist and applying the concept to the 'real' world has challenges. The objective of the SJ-RCN is to engage scholars from across disciplines and universities in an effort to further develop the theory of spatial justice. Specifically, the objectives of this proposal include exploring the following questions: What is spatial justice? What would spatial justice look like? How do you measure spatial (in)justice? What are the goals of spatial justice? How do you teach spatial justice? Best practices/pedagogy, application – Theory to Practice? These questions will be examined through a series of quarterly small group workshops around specific spatial justice themes, a yearly major conferences on spatial justice and guided network readings/activities that engage academics to explore spatial justice from a variety of lenses. Additionally, the proposal seeks to foster a discussion around the development of methodologies by which spatial justice can be explored qualitatively and quantitatively. Scholars from a wide range of disciplines will engage with the theory as it applies to their area of expertise. Additionally, through the inclusion of different campuses (i.e. Arts based, HBCU, PWI, etc.) a wide range of students will also have the opportunity to explore spatial justice. A unique aspect of this RCN is broad-based integration across education, infrastructure engineering, justice studies, urban planning, behavioral and social sciences, public history and public health toward the goal of spatial justice. Cross-discipline integration, coordination of data across scales, and cross-city comparisons are expected to advance the science of spatial justice.

Intellectual Merit – This project will explore the relatively understudied theory of spatial justice. The intellectual merit of the SJRCN will be to build knowledge in the following areas: best practices for support of spatial justice education and practice; respectful ways to do community-based research using both qualitative and quantitative scientific research methods; research projects that are community inspired and of significance for communities of color and disadvantaged communities; and innovative undergraduate and graduate development programs and strategies. These activities will lead to a fuller understanding of the theory of spatial justice, develop new methodologies for applying/examining spatial justice and establish a mechanism by which spatial justice can be measured.

Broader Impacts - The project will have broader impact on education, training and research by 1) connecting a variety of disciplines across different campuses around the theme of spatial justice, 2) disseminating the resulting ideas, methods and tools developed to the appropriate scientific communities through project website, publications in referred journals, presentations (including student research presentations) at state, national and international conferences, 3) involving undergraduate, graduate and post-doctoral students in challenging and timely research/discussions on an emerging issue that is of growing importance across the country, 4) providing valuable education and research experience to undergraduate, graduate and post-doctoral students by revising courses to include the concept of spatial justice, 5) exposing women, minority, and underrepresented students to spatial justice content and skills that may influence their choice about further education and future careers and 6) enhancing the

infrastructure for research and education through the development of a research network that will break down silos across individual campuses and all campuses involved.

Methods – The project will include the use of quantitative and qualitative techniques to explore issues of spatial justice. The project envisions the creation of new methodologies that will be employed to explore spatial justice. Qualitative techniques centered on interviews and community engagement with spatial justice will be especially important. Quantitative techniques will also be developed to help identify spatial injustices and measure spatial justice.

Data Analysis – GIS will play a pivotal role in the identification and development of measures of spatial (in)justice. It is anticipated that a larger volume of spatial data will be collected and share across the network to help develop a model of spatial justice that can be utilized by researchers and communities in an effort to tackle persistent issues of spatial inequality facing communities across the globe. This quantitative data will also provide the basis for exploring more qualitative issues of spatial justice.

Outcomes of RCN –
1. Foster new and collaborative relationships across geographies and disciplines
2. Identify research agendas related to spatial justice
3. Expose students to spatial justice theory and research methodologies/techniques
4. Identify future funding possibilities to support research agendas