

PROVOSTS SUSTAINABILITY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

2016-2017 Rachel Carson College Sustainable Systems Intern

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With Thanks to Mentors

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Abstract

During the 2017-2018 academic year, I acted as the Rachel Carson College (RCC) Sustainable Systems Intern through the Provosts Sustainability Internship (PSI) program administered by the Sustainability Office (SO) at University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC). My position focused on outreach efforts and program assistance for both the Sustainability Studies Minor Program (SSM) and Impact Designs: Engineering and Sustainability through Student Service Program (IDEASS). Both programs are aimed at providing an interdisciplinary, project-based learning experience that prepares students for membership in a green economy.

My capacity as intern included creation of graphics and editorials, website design and maintenance, development of a program assessment plan for the SSM, outreach to students in the program and across campus via presence at campus events, and student recruitment and support of student project teams.

Problem Definition, Context, & Background

Climate change poses a significant threat to human activity around the globe, but many Americans are reluctant to accept it as true or acknowledge their contribution to it.¹ Until the US populace is educated on the gravity of the situation, efforts towards a sustainable future will be ineffective or canceled out by business-as-usual decision-making. In 2013, the Committee on Educational Policy at University of California Santa Cruz voted to address this problem by initiating an undergraduate minor program in Sustainability Studies. This minor program makes UCSC one of few colleges and universities to offer such accreditation, setting an example of sustainable solutions, environmental stewardship, and stronger student engagement through mentorship and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The program has since been in a pilot phase from 2014 to 2017, with around forty students graduated or declared in the minor.² Academically situated within Rachel Carson College (RCC), the SSMP is designed to provide students with a practical, interdisciplinary experience developing projects for the green economy, and solving issues relating to the intersection of "Environment and Society." Within the campus community, the minor works to teach and empower students and the campus community on sustainability topics and projects, in line with the Awareness, Education, and Engagement goals articulated by the Campus Sustainability Plan.³

Realizing this goal takes dedication and flexibility on the part of campus stakeholders who need to step outside their institutionally normalized roles and engage as partners on sustainability projects.⁴ My role was to represent student stakeholders in these programs, to provide support to students and faculty in realizing and implementing these projects, and to bolster campus recognition for the minor through direct outreach and presence at events across campus.

Project Description

I decided to get involved with this project because of my direct prior engagement with the Sustainability Studies curriculum, where I had seen its value as a program that provides students with opportunities for direct engagement and experience with sustainability projects. My primary assignment during fall and winter quarters as intern for this program was to pursue outreach opportunities for both the Sustainability Studies Minor and its recently designated capstone program, IDEASS. The IDEASS program is more established than the minor, and has been operating since 2010 as a non-academic program within the Department of Engineering, with over 160 alumni since the program's inception. Though the program has been affiliated with Rachel Carson College faculty and programs for several years, it is to be offered as a 2-unit academic lab class through Rachel Carson College starting Fall 2017. As a new program, the SSM has had a steadily increasing influx of students due to its more formal academic structure, but both it and the IDEASS program benefit from exposure around the campus community, which is what this internship means to address.

The broad goal of both programs is to empower sustainability research and action through the institutional power of UCSC and the empowerment of its students. To realize this ambition, I worked with mentors to identify and pursue needed tasks that would strengthen and improve the programs, then developed and revised project objectives as I developed a relationship with mentors and learned more about both programs. Specific duties included tabling, recruitment and outreach at campus events, webmaster duties, graphics and material design, and development of program assessment document and survey.

I represented these programs at various campus events, to recruit students to the program and to encourage interdisciplinary cooperation with other groups across campus. These events included the WEST transfer symposium, OPERS fall festival, Student Environmental Center meetings, Program in Community Agroecology events, Earth Week festivities, and the NewTech meetup and the Sustainability Offices InterOrg retreat, where I facilitated a workshop on Environmental Justice. Towards the end of the year, I helped host a workshop on enrolling and participating in the minor and prepared materials for next year's PSI intern to host similar workshops.

Over the course of the year I created many graphics, including materials for both programs to be used for tabling and for distribution to advising offices and around campus. I created several fliers advertising both programs as well as specific projects (see *appendices 1 thru 11*), and other tabling supplies like stickers (*appendix 14*) as well as a banner frame to help with gusty outreach locales (*appendix 15*). I was responsible for maintaining and updating the websites for both programs (see *appendices A&B*). I ensured that project postings and syllabi were updated, improved layout and function of both websites (by including elements such as *Appendices 16 and 17*), as well as implementing new faculty directory pages for both sites.

The final portion of my internship was the research and development of a program assessment tool using a method developed by the UCSC office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Policy Studies (IRAPS).⁵ As the minor program and the IDEASS programs will be undergoing programmatic changes as well as a change in leadership over the next two years, my mentors and I agreed that the programs longevity and strength could be bolstered by documentation of the programs goals. Spring quarter focused on design and development of a document that expresses program goals, translates them into student learning outcomes, then identifies what courses address those learning goals. This is meant to provide students with academic transparency, and to provide faculty in the program a way of standardizing curriculum planning assessment, and maintaining and improving quality of program. While there was not enough time in this year for me to start assessment of the program, I was able to create an assessment plan that includes both a student portfolio and survey questions.⁶ This replicable survey is designed to be re-administered to different classes in the minor, probably by the 2017-2018 PSI, and collects demographic data as well as assessing student knowledge. The assessment document is also intended to succinctly express the goals of the program, and should be made available to students that could bolsters the interdisciplinary nature of the program to the betterment of future cohorts of students at UCSC. If interested, please see Project Clearinghouse Page for a copy of the document (*Appendix C*).

The previous year's PSI maintained a newsletter of sustainable events around campus, and this year I collaborated with the Sustainability Office's calendar to collect relevant campus sustainability events and publish them on their calendar- this was intended to help address the silo effect between different sustainability efforts and interested campus stakeholders. This was one area that could be explored and expanded on by the next PSI intern as a method of outreach and visibility.

Timeline

Fall: gain familiarity with projects, meet internal/external stakeholders, attend and recruit students at campus events, create graphics and begin website updates

Winter: project support, Calendar integration, attend and recruit students at campus events, InterOrg workshop, continue website updates, draft of press releases and visioning for spring program assessment

Spring: website completion, graphic completion, complete project assessment document and design survey, compile resources for 2018 PSI intern, minor workshop, pursue networking and recruitment opportunities

Project Stakeholders

Activities and efforts of this internship impact many campus stakeholders, especially students, staff and faculty in both the minor and IDEASS programs. This project worked closely with mentors Tamara Ball; Asst. Project Scientist and head of the IDEASS program, and Ronnie Lipschitz; Professor, Provost of Rachel Carson College and Director of the SSM. I worked as an assistant to them both in their functions within these programs, specifically through representation at different campus events, documentarian tasks like videography, graphic creation and website design, and through creation of project editorials. Through creation of survey questions and program assessment plan I will impact future students. I also interacted regularly with those involved in the Sustainability Studies Minor, Sustainability Office staff and students, members of campus environmental/sustainability organizations like Student Environmental Center (SEC), the recently opened Sustainability-Lab (S-Lab), and People of Color Sustainability Collective (PoCSC), as well as the campus public at tabling events. Many individuals involved in sustainability work at UCSC belong to more than one group or faction, and it was great to nurture connection with many different community members over the course of my project.

Measurable Results

My position is aimed at outreach, where impact can be difficult to determine, but I did directly recruit students to our mailing list (50-80), courses (around 40 students over multiple courses), and positions on project teams (DROPS, Trash Toss). The program assessment document and accompanying survey I created will be available as a resource to future staff and faculty, students, and assessors of the program (attached, and accessible through Project Clearing House). The SSM and IDEASS programs each have updated and improved websites and plenty of graphics (see appendix). My work this year will also be successful if it results in a smooth transition to next year's PSI intern, and continued support of these programs.

Resources:

¹ Howe, P., Mildenerger, M., Marlon, J., & Leiserowitz, A. (2016). Yale Climate Opinion Maps – U.S. 2016. Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. Retrieved from <http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us-2016/>

²Lipschitz, R. (Jan 15, 2017). Memorandum to Committee on Educational Policy. Retrieved from https://drive.google.com/a/ucsc.edu/file/d/0BxVgSF6HKX_4b29DU2JGc0htQWs/view?usp=sharing.

³ UC Santa Cruz. (2013). 2013-2016 Campus Sustainability Plan. Retrieved from http://sustainability.ucsc.edu/governance/files/CSP_2013_2016.pdf

⁴ Beaudoin, F.D., Brundiers, K. (2017) A Guide for Applied Sustainability Learning Projects: Advancing sustainability outcomes on campus and in the community. Philadelphia: Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). Retrieved from: https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/aashe-hub-production/uploads/A+Guide+for+Applied+Sustainability+Learning+Projects_v1.0_03.03.17_Final.pdf

⁵ A Systematic Approach to Assessment. (2013). University of California Santa Cruz: Guidelines for the Development and Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes (p.3). Retrieved from: <http://mediarchives.ucsc.edu/iraps/assessment/plo-guidelines.pdf>

⁶Robelia, Beth., Murphy, Tony. What do people know about key environmental issues? A review of environmental knowledge surveys. Environmental Education Research Vol. 18 , Iss. 3,2012. Retrieved from: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13504622.2011.618288>