

Common Ground Center at Kresge College

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Provost's Sustainability Internship Program

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Abstract

The Provost's Sustainability Intern for the Common Ground Center is creating the foundational processes for Common Ground and its Student Board to work together in a way that sustains the future activities of Common Ground and Kresge College through defining communication processes, purchasing systems and event organizing processes. With this work in creating the foundation, this person is also strengthening relationships with on and off campus organizations that hold similar principles (ex. Sustainability Office, BMC, FoCan, Bioneers) by identifying ways to work together, collaborate, co-sponsor and support one another. In addition to the foundational building of the center and its processes and activities, this person will focus on mentoring and working with peers to engage with the center and other organizations in the activities that spark their passions. The main pathways for this work are through engaging with and taking an active role on Common Ground's Executive Council and Student Board, hosting the weekly World Cafe dialogue, organizing a Speaker Series, and supporting Kresge College in initiating tangible sustainability projects.

Problem Definition, Context & Background

The efforts and projects of the Common Ground Center are integral UC Santa Cruz's commitment to being "a participatory community united by shared commitments to: service to society; preservation and advancement of knowledge; and innovative teaching and learning" (www.ucsc.edu). The primary sustainability issues addressed in this project are Awareness, Education, and Engagement. There are over one hundred thousand non profit organizations focusing on environmental and social justice related issues (Hawken). That means that there are thousands of organizations working on similar issues toward the same goal, but only few are interconnected. There is a reflection of this observation here at UCSC with sustainability focused organizations - there are so many students faculty and staff that are working toward a similar interest, but only a handful are actually working together and supporting one another. Common Ground is working to build a symbiotic relationship between these efforts and offering a platform for organizations to work together, and to further extend their reach by connecting and engaging the UCSC community about global, national and local issues. The Campus Sustainability Plan and The Blueprint for a Sustainable Campus call for more participatory education and cross boundary collaboration. These visions are specifically to "increase Co-Curricular and experiential learning models" (Blueprint for a Sustainable Campus page 10) and to "expand knowledge of and engagement in sustainable practices on campus." (Campus Sustainability plan, page 4) There is a need for more cohesion among the students and the work that they are doing to create a more sustainable, just and thriving future. Common Ground and the students working with the center are finding and creating ways to work smarter, not harder.

Project Description

Goal Statement

Through this project, I am helping the Common Ground Center to be an accessible resource for sustainability and social justice initiatives around campus, and to develop a strengthened network of support and involvement from its growing community. I also intend to achieve an overarching beneficial effect in furthering the Common Ground Center and its sustainability efforts. I am strengthening the partnerships between the Center and other organizations on and off campus with similar principals, and I will help to create a lasting bond within the UC Santa Cruz community in regards to the importance of sustainability. As the first PSI for the Common Ground Center and for Kresge College, I hope to make a lasting impression that will allow this position to be available for students in the future.

Project Objectives

This year through the PSI program, I am:

- Co-Create an active Common Ground Student Board that supports Common Ground's mission and activities. I am achieving this through
 - Hosting and collaborating with campus co-sponsors to bring renowned speakers to discuss current issues that we face within the University System and the Santa Cruz community, as well as the revolutionary efforts going on nationwide and around the world.
 - Offer a space and support for students to initiate projects, engage in the community, and integrate and form life-long collegial friendships / working relationships with other visionary leaders through providing information about academic internships, scholarships, and opportunities to connect with our many organization partnerships.
- Hosting regular conversations that matter via The World Cafe program. I am achieving this through
 - Creating partnerships with campus and community stakeholders to synergize The World Cafe process with topics that matter for the partner (ie Climate Action Cafe).
 - Provide a healthy organic meal, hot tea and a chance to connect with peers about common interest in becoming involved with campus organizations and efforts regarding environmental activism, social justice, and sustainability on a weekly basis.
- Furthering Sustainability initiatives at Kresge College by creating lasting systems for the Common Ground Center and Kresge College that ensures all of our activities are as sustainable as possible. I am achieving this through

- Developing a written guide of a system for our speaker series events to be zero waste.
- Developing a written guide of green purchasing systems for the Center (food procurement and food service, office supplies).
- Supporting the maintenance of a functional college wide composting system at Kresge, which does not exist currently. (Spring 2014)

Impacts/Needs Statement

This project builds off of and brings together previous projects started at Kresge College intended to build community and sustainability. It also provides a baseline foundation for future efforts to continue the work of keeping Kresge's sustainability efforts interconnected and strong. I hope to create a network of resources and connections that can easily be picked up by future students that want to continue the work that I have done. This interdisciplinary project is one of the few of it's kind. The concept of community building and transformative education as a necessary component in sustainability practice and efforts is somewhat new, but is just as important as all of the other aspects of our plan to create a sustainable campus. The solution proposed through this project is multidimensional and flexible, in that it is able to address many different topics of sustainability in many different ways while focusing on education participation, and dialogue as a means to strengthen and support the various efforts that already exist on campus.

Project Timeline

Many aspects of this project are very fluid and ongoing, with specific dates to come along over time each quarter. Progress will be monitored through quarterly and mid quarter evaluations from the Staff Mentor, as well as a self-evaluation from me, with close attention to the project workplan and timeline. Here is a list of proposed timing and "milestones" for each objective:

- Connect UCSC and SC with leading thinkers and activists building a just and sustainable world.
 - Host and collaborate with campus co-sponsors to bring renowned speakers to discuss current issues that we face within the University System and the Santa Cruz community, as well as the revolutionary efforts going on nationwide and around the world. (Minimally 4x per quarter FWS)
 - Schedule 4 different guest speakers to appear throughout the quarter by the first week of each quarter (Winter - 01/10/14, Spring - 04/04/14)
 - Offer a space and support for students to initiate projects, engage in the community, and integrate form life-long collegial friendships / working relationships with other visionary leaders through providing academic internships, scholarships, opportunities to connect with our many organization partnerships.

- Hold open “center hours” each week to engage with students about the Common Ground Center’s projects, partnerships, events and opportunities (beginning Fall 2013 going until Spring 2014)
- Host regular conversations that matter via The World Cafe program
 - Create partnerships with campus and community stakeholders to synergize The World Cafe process with topics that matter for the partner (ie Climate Action Cafe, Real Food Cafe, etc.)
 - Find at least one potential collaborator for each quarter by the 3rd week (winter - 01/24/14 spring - 04/18/14)
 - Provide a healthy organic meal, hot tea and a chance to connect with peers about common interest in becoming involved with campus organizations and efforts regarding environmental activism, social justice, and sustainability.
 - every week, fall winter and spring.
 - Produce a quarterly report of our proceeding and graphics on our website
 - after the last cafe of each quarter (winter - 03/17/14 spring - 06/06/14)
- Sustainability initiatives at Kresge College
 - Develop written guide of a system for our speaker series events to be zero waste. (Fall 2013)
 - by week two of Winter Quarter (1/17/14)
 - Write a guide for green purchasing systems for the Center (food procurement and food service, office supplies).
 - by week 8 of winter quarter (2/28/14)
 - Support the maintenance of a functional college wide composting system at Kresge, which does not exist currently.
 - by week 8 of Spring quarter (5/23/14)

Project Stakeholders, Student & Mentor Roles

The main goal is to impact all areas of the UCSC community, including students, faculty and staff, and the greater Santa Cruz community. We will reach out to these communities through email, social media, and flyering. For outreach to other organizations on campus for collaboration, I plan to use emailing, phone calls, and/or personal meetings to communicate and coordinate. The stakeholders involved in the actual execution of this project include myself, my mentor- David Shaw, the Common Ground Center Executive Council and Student Board, and Kresge College Staff and Faculty. As an intern, I am responsible for coordinating and organizing (with the help and support of the other Common Ground Committees) the Speaker Series, The World Cafe and University Cafe, and the new Sustainability Initiatives for Kresge. I will also be responsible to hold open “Center Hours” each week to keep the doors of the Center open and to connect with students, faculty and staff about what is going on and ways to get involved. My Staff

Mentor is responsible to co-develop a work plan with me, hold regular meeting, and provide mentorship and access to institutional knowledge and networks.

Evaluation

In addition to ongoing dialogue about my successes, challenges, and learnings, David and I will both participate in a quarterly written and oral evaluation process, involving both self-evaluation and evaluation of the Center and mentor at the end of each quarter. Each weekly mentor meeting will serve as a time to check in about progress, and notes will be recorded during each meeting to look back on and to track activity and successes.

Results

In 2013-2014, Common Ground hosted 12 events Fall Quarter, 12 events Winter Quarter, and 11 events in Spring Quarter, not including the weekly World Cafe Dialogues. These events were a combination of speakers, workshops, films, and dialogues around the themes of sustainability, permaculture, social justice, NVC and restorative justice, and many more. Each event drew from 10 to 200 people from the Santa Cruz community including staff, faculty, students, and community members. Collaborators on the events included the Sustainability Office, Bioneers, Take Back the Tap, Santa Cruz Forest Keepers, Brain Mind Consciousness Society, The Kresge Garden, The Kresge Natural Food Co-op, Sierra Institute, the Sierra Club, and many more. The Common Ground PSI for 2013-2014 made these possible with extensive organizing around logistical details, hosting, cooking, and handling fiscal business related to funds awarded from Campus Sustainability Council. An archive of photos, videos, flyers and other media from these events can be found on the Common Ground website (<http://ucsc.edu/commonground>).

This year's PSI also was fundamental in the development of the sustainable structure by which the Common Ground Student Board now operates. Students make decisions cooperatively based on consensus, they play a critical role in the function of the center, and they manage any and all funds that they themselves generate. The details of this structure is available to the public on the Student Board section of the Common Ground website (<http://kresge.ucsc.edu/commonground/about/student-board.html>)

The World Cafe was hosted about 10 times each quarter throughout 2013-2014. It was organized by a group of students, but was guided by the Common Ground PSI, who organized the dialogue themes, coordinated with collaborators, managed funds for food and organized cooking, set up and cleanup for each cafe. This person also supported the rest of the team in their efforts of cooking the meals and hosting the dialogue, all of which related back to sustainability. Topics included Water, The UCSC Long Range Development Plan, the City Repair Project in Portland Oregon, Gender and Sustainability, Systemic Oppression, Personal Sustainability and many others.

References

Campus Sustainability Plan

Blueprint for a Sustainable Campus

<http://ucsc.edu>

<http://ucsc.edu/commonground>

[Hawken, Paul. "To Remake the World." Orion May. - Jun. 2007: n. pag. orionmagazine.org. Web. 27 Jan. 2014.](#)