Academic Initiatives

Final Report, Academic Year 2012-2013

Emilce Sanchez
Executive Summary

Academic Initiatives covers a broad spectrum of programs and coursework, even as it pertains to sustainability. The Office of Sustainability offers an internship program, which connects students with a working group composed of faculty and staff. Since 2008, the Academic Initiatives Working Group has contributed to and supported sustainability in curricular, co-curricular, and research areas on the Indiana University Bloomington campus. During the 2012-2013 academic year, intern Emilce Sanchez worked towards defining and reaching goals in sustainability course promotion, student outreach, and grant/fellowship advancement. A structured process now exists for future interns to minimize the time spent on orienting themselves to the course updating process, so they can spend more time promoting the current and future offerings. Also, a Community of Practice is set to establish the pedagogical foundation of sustainability studies at IU for the first time on Bloomington’s campus. That Community will explore ways to expand upon the service-learning courses and community outreach initiatives that involve sustainability-related activities. The Office of Sustainability offers many opportunities for collaboration with these community sectors, including the student population. The Office has a mutually beneficial relationship with the Student Sustainability Council, apparent in this year’s first annual Student Sustainability Summit. Other opportunities which have been maintained and targeted for improvement are the Graduate Student Sustainability Research Development Grants and Sustainability Course Development Fellowships. The following report details the actions that were taken in each of the three areas that the Academic Initiatives presides over.
Introduction
Since 2007, student interns have contributed to the growing base of knowledge that comprises sustainability in academic initiatives. The Academic Initiatives Working Group (AIWG), an assortment of Indiana University faculty, students, and operational staff, maintains projects in three key areas of campus sustainability including: curricular, co-curricular, and research. The AIWG has made significant strides in compiling information on classes, research, and student involvement in sustainability topics. All projects and initiatives have been documented and are available on the new Office of Sustainability (IUOS) website.

The central goal of the AIWG is to advance Indiana University Bloomington (IUB) to a position of leadership in the new academic area of sustainability; a long-term goal which depends on the integration of undergraduate and graduate education, research, and community outreach. Such academic sustainability initiatives should use frameworks ranging from ecology to economic and social equity; from public health and wellness to globalization and international relations. On campus, this means integrating the academic, co-curricular, and operational elements of campus life. This report serves as an overview of the AIWG, led by the Academic Initiatives Intern, for the year 2012-2013. Work completed for the 2012-2013 academic year were largely continuations of the goals and priorities of previous interns.

2012-2013 Goals:
1. Curricular
   a. Improve course list offerings by standardizing the updating and adding process
   b. Integrate sustainability in more service-learning courses
2. Co-curricular
   a. Foster student involvement in the working group and sponsor a student led initiative
3. Research
   a. Promote Grants and Fellowships by improving the selection and marketing methods for these opportunities
   b. Emphasize researchers in sustainability by updating and adding researcher profiles
   c. Establish the Community of Practice (aka faculty learning community)

AIWG
Approximately 17 members\(^1\), including co-chairs Lisa Sideris and Robert Meyer, meet every month to discuss current initiatives. Leadership for the working group is constantly changing. Just this academic year, Lisa Sideris became a faculty co-chair with operations co-chair Robert Meyer, who plans to depart at the end of the term. There is a constant need for student participants, who have a critical role in representing the student body perspective. You can join the working group by contacting the current intern or sending an email to sustain.indiana.edu.

\(^1\) Appendix A
Curricular Course Offerings

Each semester the Academic Initiatives Intern is responsible for compiling the most current sustainability courses for both the IUOS and the Office of the Registrar websites. The process is similar every year; the intern begins by cross checking the self-reported course list of the upcoming semester with the sustainable course list of the prior analogous semester (e.g. Fall 2013 refers to Fall 2012) in order to update courses that continue to be offered. Then, the self-reported course list is examined for courses that could be added to the new sustainability course list which were not listed previously. For the (sustainability) courses that did not even get on the self-reported course list, the intern solicits faculty recommendations through the IUOS faculty sustainability listserv. Course additions consist of reviewing the course description, often available on a school’s website, to determine whether a course is sustainability-related or focused. Requesting a syllabus from an instructor is sometimes necessary in order to determine the right designation. The designations are garnered from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education and are as follows:

Sustainability focused courses concentrate on the concept of sustainability, including its social, economic, and environmental dimensions, or examine an issue or topic using sustainability as a lens. Sustainability is a consistent thread throughout each course component and most assignments are designed to help students develop a better understanding of sustainability and sustainable development.

Sustainability related courses incorporate sustainability as a distinct course component or module, or concentrate on a single sustainability principle or issue.

The completed list should then be uploaded onto the IUOS website and the Office of the Registrar under “Special Course Listings.” Nancy Gambrell, AIWG member and Registrar contact, recently granted IUOS Assistant Director, Emilie Rex, administrative access to the preliminary course list, using the Indiana University Information Environment report, in order to reduce the amount of correspondence between the offices during course updates. Once the new course list is updated on all platforms, promotion of these courses is integral to student access. A task-oriented timeline for course updates was created to standardize the updating process, in hopes that it would lead to more organized and effective marketing. In addition to the updating and promotion of available courses, the AIWG has worked towards developing an undergraduate major in sustainability, which would create a need for more interdisciplinary course offerings.

Sustainability Community of Practice

In order to advance IU’s sustainability-related research and education programs, the IUOS, the Integrated Program in the Environment (IPE), and the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITL) are collaborating to create a faculty-led Community of Practice.

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3 Appendix B
Practice (CoP). The proposed CoP is a response to recommendations made by the President’s New Academic Directions committee, which calls for an undergraduate major and a plan for service-learning (SL) in sustainable development. Ultimately, the goal of the CoP is to establish a pedagogical foundation that faculty can rely on when offering multi-disciplinary courses for a new undergraduate degree, Environmental & Sustainability Studies.

There was no guarantee during the 2012-2013 academic year that the CoP, or faculty learning community, would make significant progress due to many uncertainties, one of which was the availability of funds for a pilot seminar. As of March, Lisa Sideris, Bill Brown, Michael Hamburger, and Jeff White received a $4,000 Ostrom Grant for their Sustainability Community of Practice proposal and will also receive matching funds from the IUOS and IPE. The Ostrom Grants Program is a promising funding resource for future projects, such as a (student outreach) speaker series. Currently, the CoP development team, led by Joan Middendorf of the CITL and Sideris is preparing for the seminar, which is to take place May 8th-10th. The establishment of a CoP will not only integrate sustainability concepts and practices at IUB, but will connect valuable networks for promoting various sustainability-related opportunities, such as SL courses.

**Service-Learning**

One idea that the CoP will develop during the seminar is the integration of SL into the academic framework of the new degree program. Nicole Schonemann, Director of CITL-Service Learning and AIWG member, will contribute to the discussions about SL theories and practices that support the overall SL initiative as it pertains to sustainability.

The IUOS has various working groups that offer on-campus and community opportunities for SL partnerships. The IUOS Campus Garden Initiative, a product of the Food internship which harnesses the power of volunteers on a consistent basis, started with 79 volunteers during the Bryan House Garden growing season. Now, various SL classes help grow produce and compost pre-consumer waste at Hilltop Garden and Nature Center, as part of the Edible Campus Initiative. The Edible Campus Steering Committee created an Academic Initiatives sub-committee to create partnerships with the SL programs at IU and encourage professors to promote garden workdays to their students. During fall 2012, the Edible Campus Initiative worked with an Event Planning and Program Development class (HYPER R430) to coordinate garden work-days and dinners. The course, which meets two times a week, offered students the opportunity to engage the sustainability network through collaboration with the student intern. In spring 2013, the Edible Campus Initiative worked with 15 students in a human biology course (B-300). Although progress was not made in promoting SL sustainability courses this academic year, opportunities for partnering and promotion were researched and clarified for the next intern to build upon.

Partnership with academia is integral to the success of the Edible Campus Initiative and can be promoted by the AIWG. Promotional guidelines intended for the semester course lists can also be used for the promotion of SL courses. Additional support of

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sustainability SL courses would require a faculty outreach effort and joint promotion of the Sustainability Course Development Fellowship, which supports SL course development.

**Deliverables**
- “Read me” file for course list updates
- Timeline for course list updates

**Recommendations**
- Find out who reports courses and how we can improve self-reporting of sustainability courses
- Highlight sustainability SL courses on website

**Co-curricular**

*Student Sustainability Council*

Created in 2009, the Student Sustainability Council (SSC) developed out of a need for a unified campus sustainability coalition. Now over 20 active member organizations, with missions ranging from slow food to animal welfare, work to promote communication and collaboration among member organizations. They also advise the IUOS (often receiving advice themselves) and promote social and natural environment justice.

For the first time since inception, the SSC directors completed work plans in order to improve accountability measures. In each of their responses, there were clearly identified goals pertaining to the director's position, either Finance, Logistics, Projects & Events, Advisory, and Membership & Publicity. It is apparent from their plans that directors, and member organizations, are working to advance their individual goals, but a joint effort is absent. One director sums up this reality in his work plan:

> My overarching goal is to stimulate member organization interest and involvement in the SSC. This is a larger goal that I think many of the other directors share, but as the finance director, I intend to pursue this goal through a number of means directly related to my position.

Considering this is an incomprehensive way to approach one of the organization’s main priorities, not to mention that no one was voted in as of yet for fall 2013 to carry on the director’s efforts, the whole team should devise a plan to engage members. Other directors identified a need for a composting resolution and a SustainIU Week annual plan.

**SSC Member Organizations**

In an attempt to gauge student commitment and organizational structure, Emilie Rex, Assistant Director of Sustainability, and I conducted meetings with various SSC members. Out of the four groups we met and the ten who responded to the meeting preparation form, no distinct trend could be formulated on the perception of the SSC and

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5 Tom Laddendorf, 2013 Finance Officer Work Plan
its overall effectiveness. Although the information garnered from these respondents are not enough to make secure claims about the overall perception of the SSC, the information is useful for IUOS and SSC collaboration. During the meetings, student representatives were asked the about the following: their organization’s leadership transition process, current and ongoing projects, and their role in the SSC. Many members thought it sufficient to have the SSC as a knowledge base, with some members, like those from the Student Animal Legal Defense Fund, suggesting the need for information sharing during gap periods between SSC meetings. Consistently updating the SSC calendar is a simple and necessary task, which is currently underperformed by SSC directors.

Almost all groups have had contact with IUOS staff in previous years and can identify the office as a resource for their organization. The meeting preparation form contained questions of how to improve IUOS and SSC member relations. The top two recommendations that were the most cited by SSC members were to connect SSC members to operational staff and inform SSC about salient policies related to sustainability. Other recommendations for collaboration included using school connections for large cause mobilization and connecting campus organizations doing similar work. The most requested leadership and organization management training workshops were Web Content Management Services (WCMS) training (for building/maintaining a website) and best practices for conducting meetings (fostering dialogue and discussion).

**Student Sustainability Summit**

In an effort to address issues in SSC effectiveness and student commitment, the IUOS and the SSC collaborated to coordinate the first Student Sustainability Summit. Emilie Rex and SSC directors, with my aid, organized the event. It was structured to include a background on the Sustainability Initiative at IU, explained by Michael Hamburger, Bill Brown, and Jacob Bower-Bir. Then, students connected with other students, faculty, and staff, while individually defining sustainability. Later, students had the choice of attending two of the following seven breakouts: Energy and the Built Environment, Environmental Quality and Land Use, Food, Resource Use and Recycling, Sustainable Computing, Transportation. After lunch, a student visioning session took place where the role of the SSC was clarified to be an information hub. The session facilitator Lisa-Marie Napoli, of the Political and Civic Engagement certificate program at IU, asked questions regarding the role of SSC on campus and various recommendations were made about how to improve the influence of the SSC. Many organizations spoke about the SSC as if it was a detached entity, separate from their own control or responsibility. During the visioning session a question was raised about the job of SSC representatives at the General Assembly meetings, where Emily Jackson, Logistics Director responded with a call for increased participation in the form of resolution submissions.

When registering to become an official student organization, students are asked about their leadership-training plan. This assumes that student organizations have some organized method of transferring responsibility, but we still do not know how exactly the transition is made for most organizations. Due to the lack to consistent knowledge of SSC structure, made apparent through group discussions and individual meetings, the SSC may wish to organize members by providing more (or better) organizational support. A transitions folder was developed for SSC member organizations so they can benefit from a successful leadership transition in early spring (turnover time for most student
The SSC directors can offer these materials if they wish, and can use the materials to manage their own recurring events. Materials in the folder include a work plan template, an organizational chart template, and a resolution template.

The AIWG co-chairs have expressed interest in expanding student outreach efforts, but no coordinated action has been taken to develop this idea. With the summit becoming an annual event and SSC requests for operational support, there is ample opportunity for collaboration. Emilie Rex suggested creating an internship solely to support the SSC, where the intern might conduct the requested training workshops or help organize events, such as a sustainability lecture series, a campus-wide service day, and/or a sustainability case competition.

Deliverables
- leadership resources
  - work plan template
  - organizational chart template
  - resolution template

Recommendations

Research
Sustainability Course Development Fellowships (SCDF)
The fifth annual Sustainability Course Development Fellowship program offers faculty up to $8,000 to develop courses that engage IU students with sustainability principles. Preference is given to courses that are interdisciplinary in nature and courses can be at the undergraduate or graduate level.

Since 2008, the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs and the IUOS administered the program jointly, but now the IUOS can unilaterally determine the number of recipients, eligibility, and all other matters. Due to various outreach efforts, the number of applicants went from 2 or 3 in previous years to 7 applicants this year. An increase in quality applicants is a result of a good promotion plan and one was created specifically for this Fellowship.

Graduate Student Research Development Grants (SRDG)
The grant program began as a pilot initiative in 2008 to support students and faculty in developing new, externally funded research programs related to research on sustainability. Up to $10,000 are available for graduate students in research and professional programs. It is sponsored by the IUOS, the IPE, the University Graduate School, and the School of Public Health-Bloomington.

Although there were more SRDG applicants (11) than ever before, the number of applicants seems to vary every year. This could be due to the deadline extension or because of inconsistent promotion of the grant program. Along with the SCDF, a targeted promotion plan was created in order to support further development.

To expand upon the opportunities highlighted and offered by IUOS, the next intern could compile a list of national and international sustainability-related grants. The opportunities on this list could eventually be integrated into the annual timeline of
sustainability-opportunity promotion. A list has been started for the next intern to develop.

**Deliverables**

- Promotion plan for grant & fellowship

**Recommendations**

**Conclusion**

There are many exciting opportunities for growth in the Academic Initiatives Working Group. From SL courses in sustainability to researcher profiles, the potential for improvement is unbound. The small, but significant developments that were made during the 2012-2013 academic year, including the standardization of annually recurring tasks, should free time for other projects, such as student engagement and the CoP. The working group depends on effective and conscientious contributors, and it has fortunately been composed of tremendous student, faculty, and operational staff leaders since 2008. The work that needs to be done now and in future years assumes a continuation of this tradition of excellence.
## Academic Initiatives 2012-2013 Working Group

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