Integrating Sustainability into the First Year Experience
Internship Final Report
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Intern: Laura Nading
Mentor: Emilie Rex

Introduction
According to the IU Office of First Year Experience and Programs (FYE), IUB accepts around 8,000 new undergraduate and undergraduate transfer students each year. The concept for my internship came out of the recognition that effectively engaging new students is crucial to growing sustainability awareness and participation on campus. Beginning in December 2009, I collaborated with the IU Office of First Year Experience Programs and with other IUB staff members that work with first year students to develop sustainability programming and to enhance exposure of sustainability-related issues for new undergraduate students.

IU Office of First Year Experience and Programming (FYE)
The Foundation
Since January 2010, FYE has pioneered various new sustainability-based projects, both through collaboration with IUOS and independently. Our partnership grew out of discussions in November and December 2009 between Bill Brown (Director of IUOS), Jack Rhodes (Executive Director of FYE), Emilie Rex (Associate Director of IUOS), Melanie Payne (FYE, Director of Orientation), and Bob Rathbun (FYE Program Manager). The foundation for our partnership was the acknowledgment that immediately engaging new students to in the greater sustainability movement on campus has the potential to enhance the possibilities for their academic, extracurricular, and personal lives. Therefore, a partnership between IUOS and FYE both enhanced the ability of FYE to carry out their mission, and for IUOS to have a closer connection with new students.

The IU Office of First Year Experience and Programs (FYE) coordinates New Student Orientation and programming, Welcome Week, and many of the steps after a student is
accepted to IUB until they begin class. The scope of their mission is broad, reaching through the end of the student’s first year at IUB. Formerly called the Office of Orientation, is it their purpose to see that students’ transition well into their first year at IUB, by connecting them to opportunities and resources, well as through introducing them to their new home and the expectations that come along with it. This behavior normalizing influence, as well as the breadth of their involvement with each undergraduate student at IUB, makes them an invaluable partner to IUOS in the effort to integrate sustainability into the first year experience.

Before our partnership, FYE had existing sustainability-related programs and operations in place that should be emphasized. On the operational end, FYE had made efforts to reduce the size of their orientation guides and to make them multi-functional, as a way of reducing waste. They also involved new students in local social justice issue through their annual NSO Food Donation Drive and through New Student Service Day.

My role with FYE was primarily one of a facilitator. In January, I presented Bob and Melanie research I had collected on what other universities had been doing in the way of sustainability and orientation (see attached). The approaches to integrating sustainability into other new student orientation fell into two categories: enhancing the operational sustainability, like reducing waste, carbon footprint, and overall environmental impact of the event; enhancing sustainability awareness and information, like encouraging sustainability literacy and engagement. From there, we pinpointed projects that seemed feasible to carry-out during orientation that summer.

**FYE-based Accomplishments**

1. *The creation of an internal FYE sustainability initiative.* Program Manager Bob Rathbun led the office’s project of integrating sustainability into the operations and message of FYE. He was my main contact throughout my internship and he was responsible for implementing many of the New Student Orientation sustainability projects. After NSO and Welcome Week had commenced, it was uncertain whether or not Bob would continue to lead this program, and as well as the level of commitment by FYE to the program in the future.
2. Annual topical new student reader and group discussion on sustainability (see attached).
“Welcome to Your Future” was a four page document written by Bill Brown in cooperation with Jack Rhodes on sustainability and its relevance to new students. The significance of this document lies within the fact that each new student was encouraged to read it before arriving to new student orientation, and were encouraged to discuss the piece by the NSO Leaders among their NSO groups. The reader defined sustainability, its role on campus and throughout the greater Bloomington community, and offered suggestions for students to become involved with sustainability while at IUB. Unfortunately, since the reader changes topics each year, sustainability probably won’t be the featured topic again for quite some time.

3. Reductions in NSO lunch waste: eliminated lunch box, silverware, and take-and-go format.
Through the efforts of Melanie Payne, the ubiquitous orientation boxed lunch received a green makeover which included eliminating the Styrofoam box and plastic cutlery. Food waste was considerably lessened by transitioning to a grab-and-go format in which new students take only the food items they plan to eat.

4. Encouragement to bring reusable water bottles in pre-orientation communications.
New students and parents were encouraged to reduce their waste during NSO through reminders to bring along reusable water bottles. While this was significant both symbolically and in reality, FYE was unable work around the requirement to supply water to NSO students and parents through non-reusable plastic water bottles.

5. Enhanced recycling signage.
Temporary signs were posted to encourage NSO students and parents to utilize the existing indoor recycling receptacles on campus. Unfortunately, we were unable to succeed in securing outdoor recycling receptacles in any locations in the non-residential areas of campus.

6. Sustainability-based team-building activities for Orientation Student Leaders, gardening at Hilltop.
Orientation Student Leaders participated in a team-building activity that involved spending a work day at Hilltop Garden.
7. Encouragement of a paper-free NSO Resource Fair. The NSO Resource fair offers students and their parents an opportunity to connect with and learn about university offices and organizations while on campus for NSO. NSO visitors are encouraged to check out the series of displays and meet with representatives from many of the organizations and offices in the Herman B. Wells Lobby for a few hours each day. Because this is also an opportunity for organizations to recruit new students, it’s common for the organization representatives distribute an unnecessarily large amount of paper-based literature, of which, most would attest, is trashed shortly thereafter. As such, FYE made a point to declare the Resource Fair paper-free a few weeks before its advent, as a way to reduce waste. Unfortunately, not one booth followed this request.

Recommendations

1. Continue to affirm and develop the relationship between IUOS and FYE. It is important that IUOS continues work towards the facilitation of sustainability initiatives with FYE through mutual cooperation between the two entities, especially with Melanie Payne and Bob Rathbun. I found that I could be most productive when focusing my energy towards the projects that FYE wanted to see developed and implemented, in the role they wanted me to play. Facilitator and supporter are the keys words.

2. Focus on building-off and improving upon accomplishment from NSO 2010. Work with FYE to assess what worked, what didn’t, and what could be improved.

3. Conduct a comprehensive FYE sustainability assessment. Work closely with FYE to conduct a sustainability of their entire program.

4. Provide FYE with sustainability resources. Create a resource database or document that FYE can consult for instructional advice in greening their operations and informational content. The database could connect them with sustainability contacts on campus, as well as information on how to green their operations.

5. Increase visibility of FYE’s sustainability-related accomplishment by enhancing communications to first year students and incoming first year students and their parents. The
more clearly and widely their accomplishments are communicated, the greater impact they will have. By doing this, sustainability involvement will be evermore normalized in the first year students’ lives, and FYE will become more recognized and accountable to their actions and their momentum. Look into ways to use both FYE’s and IUOS’s websites to increase the visibility of FYE’s accomplishments. Take and post photos.

6. **FYE sustainability tips video contest for first year students.** This is an idea that Melanie developed herself and was very interested in pursuing. FYE would host a contest encouraging students to film their own short videos, two minutes or less, describing their tips for green behavior on campus and in the residence halls. FYE would then post the best videos on their website for all to see, hence encouraging peer-to-peer education. Carry out this contest could be a great way to re-establish the relationship with FYE after the period between interns.

**NSO Resource Fair and Listserv**

For the first year, IUOS had an organizational presence at the NSO 2010 Resource Fair. The two-hour-a-day, month-long event offered IUOS interns and staff a chance to connect with new students and their parents and to relay sustainability-focused academic, extracurricular and volunteer opportunities that will be available while at IUB. The booth had three posters, Themester bookmarks and an IUOS First Year Student listserv sign-up.

In all, around 100 emails were collected for the listserv. The opportunity was well worthwhile, but it was often difficult to get students/parents to stop at the booth long enough to get the full message across. Because of this, it was decided that our presence would be more effective if there was something to take away from the booth, but something that would be useful and that would not create a lot of waste. I was never able to produce something like this. Also, we were not allowed access to any electrical outlets as to draw people in with some sort multi-media display or video.
Recommendations

1. *Add an interactive element to the display.* Perhaps a game or a “spin-the-wheel” type of scenario.

2. *Add some type of useful take away item.* Emilie Rex suggested printing IUOS’s contact information on seed-embedded paper.

3. *Continue with the effort to collect new student’s email addresses in order to create a first year list serve.* Their email addresses will be crucial to marketing the IUBeginnings trip and other sustainability-related opportunities for new students.

**IUBeginnings**

Working closely with the IUBeginnings and Sustainability project manager Bob Rathbun, Emilie Rex, and Alex Luboff (former student), I assisted in the development of “Thrive-ability”, a five-day long freshmen-only adventure that will be focused on the many different elements of sustainability—social, economic, and environmental—and how they affect and enhance the college experience. “Thrive-ability” was to be one of the newest of almost 15 IUBeginnings excursions offered by FYE for incoming freshmen. Taking place on campus and throughout Bloomington, the trip was slated to offer freshmen the opportunity to meet other students, campus staff, and community members with interest in sustainability. The trip itinerary was packed with engaging activities like eating at local restaurants around town, meeting with campus and community sustainability experts, touring the Bloomington Bike Project, and foraging for local seasonal food on an afternoon hike.

Unfortunately, we were unable to meet the minimum registration requirement in order to go forward with the trip. I believe that the lack of participation stemmed mostly from how late the trip was developed and available on the FYE website for parents and students to view as an option. Also, I theorize that the name “Thrive-ability” may have been too ambiguous and not fun-sounding enough to attract students and parents.
Recommendations

1. Work from the schedule and activities list that Emilie, Alex and I developed this year. Emilie has an utterly thorough itinerary, as were expecting to go through with the trip up until 20 days before it was scheduled to begin.

2. Begin the planning and marketing phase very early. Begin contacting speakers and food donations in January or February. Contact FYE to learn when will be the earliest date at which information about the trip can be posted to their website, and post it then.

3. Develop a new name for the trip to replace “Thrive-ability”. “Thrive-ability” the goals of experience, but it just doesn’t sound right. Host a brainstorming session with the IUOS interns to come up with something more appropriate.

Green Dorm Room Certification Pilot Program

Introduction
The IUB Green Dorm Room Certification Pilot Program (GDRCPP) has been designed to provide residence hall students with a tiered set of personal actions they can pursue in favor of lowering their carbon and environmental impact footprint. Together, Emilie Rex and I worked to develop a concept for the program, buy-in different key partners, as well as a fully functioning website from which students will be able to self-certify and learn more ways to enhance the sustainability of their residence hall lives.

Program Description
Housed within IUOS, the certification program will offer IUB students living in the residence halls ability to have their room certified as a “green dorm room”. Students seeking certification must meet a certain amount of sustainability criteria across categories such as “energy use” and “involvement” pertaining to the content and composition of their residence hall rooms and the action they commonly take while in them.

In the pilot program, students become certified by self-selecting into a minimum amount of criteria on the GDRCPP’s website, which is currently available on the internet and functioning. I worked closely with IUOS web designer Ian Goode to create the page, but it
still needs tested and adjusted. Students who meet the minimum number of required criteria or more are to be sent a certification confirmation via email (this still needs to be programmed with the help of Ian). The students will also receive a certificate, that is posted on the outside of their residence hall room door, that proves their certification.

Impact
The implementation of the GDRCPP at IUB has the potential to provide improve the educational and living experience of residence hall students, while also enhancing campus sustainability on a larger scale. The impact of the program extends beyond the individual participating through the normalization of sustainable living practices in residence halls. Specifically, implementation of the GDRCPP at IUB could:

- Provide students a model for green behavior and living in the residence halls
- Reward and recognize sustainable behavior
- Encourage peer-to-peer education on sustainability measures and awareness
- Create responsible, life-long living habits within individuals
- Enhance and encourage the existing sustainability efforts in residence halls
- Engage students in greater sustainability movement on campus
- Conserve resources and decrease utility costs
- Lower total campus carbon footprint/ environmental impact

Key Actors
- Residential Programs and Services (RPS): Academic Programs and Services, Resident Assistants, Diana Jacobs, Pamela Sprong, Steve Akers, Bob Weith
- Residence Hall Associations (RHA): Environmental Director and Representatives: Will McHenry, RHA Environmental Director
- Office of First Year Experience (FYE)
- Living Learning Centers (LLC’s): John Galuska, Director of Foster International LLC
- Volunteers in Sustainability (VIS)
- IUOS interns and staff, especially Energy Challenge intern and others pursuing student involvement
**Project Status**

The GDRCPP is ready for implementation. I was able to complete the necessary groundwork for project implementation through consulting with the above group of key actors to create a structure and criteria for the program, as well as through the completion of the GDRCPP website.

Recommendations:

1. **Develop an implementation strategy.** I recommend selecting a target group for the pilot phase of the project, perhaps certain LLC’s, and then market the program specifically towards them. Work with the LLC directors, especially John Galuska, on developing a strategy. Set a timeline for the pilot phase. Look into ways into incentivize students to participate. Work with Volunteers in Sustainability and RHA Environmental Director Will McHenry.

2. **Collect feedback.** Using that target group, collect feedback from those students involved in order to improve the program for future implementation.

3. **Keep the group key actors involved and informed.** They are considered co-sponsors of the program, and should be informed about every major step in the progression of the project.

4. **Make necessary adjustments and additions to the website before initiating the pilot phase of the project.** The website needs edited and adjusted for content and usability. Work with Ian Goode, the IUOS web designer, to make these changes. The confirmation email after a student self-certifies themselves, informing them of the next step in the process, needs to be developed.

5. **Develop certification certificate and method for delivery.** Develop the certificate that is placed on the outside of the certified-person’s door. Make the certificate as “green as possible”, i.e. reusable, recycled content paper, etc. Work with VIS to look into a method for delivery.
RPS Green Packing List

At the request of Diana Jacobs, RPS Director of Academic Initiatives and Services, and Pamela Sprong of RPS Marketing, I developed a green packing list students moving into the residence halls that emphasized packing items that would facilitated low-impact, low-energy usage, and low-waste lifestyles. The idea came from our discussions about the GDRCPP. It was never utilized due to time constraints.

Diana brought the idea before the RPS Board of Directors, from which they decided that the Green Packing List would be a valuable part of next year’s RPS Move-In Guide that is distributed to all students who will be moving into the residence halls.

Recommendations
1. Speak with Diana as soon as possible about the status of including the Green Packing List in the Move-In Guide. Contact Diana via email and assess what needs to be done to the document so that it is ready for print. Ask for her project timeline.

Freshmen Check-in

This past summer, I assisted Emilie Rex and Mckenzie Beverage (Energy Challenge Intern) in facilitating sustainability awareness booths at each one of the Freshmen Residence Hall check-ins on the Wednesday of move out week. Each table had information/posters about the Campus Energy Challenge, handed out Themester Bookmarks, and offered students the option to sign-up for the IUOS First Year Listserv and the IU Green Initiatives Fund.

One person was at each booth, and signed up for either a half a shift of a whole shift (the entire length of check-in on that day). Volunteers were garnered by Emilie and me, with Mckenzie and Emilie doing much of the organizational work. Emilie and McKenzie took the lead on setting up the details with Bob Weith, the RPS Director of Residential Operations Administration.
On that day, we were able to gain many signatures to the Green Initiative Fund petition and many new email addresses for the FYE listserv. Because students and their parents were in such a rush to get moved-in to the dorm, I got the impression that only minimal discussion happened between the people staffing the booth and new students. I believe that the sustainability-based visibility and presence at check-in made the event worthwhile.

Recommendations:
1. Work with Emilie and Mckenzie again to put on the sustainability booths again next year.
2. Utilize the Listserv as much as possible, to the extent that it isn’t overdone to the point in which it loses its usefulness. This mode of contact with first year students is very important and potentially very effective, because these students have voluntarily expressed interest in sustainability, and is still in the process learning what their interests are and where they fit in.