Education and Research

Final Report, Summer 2014

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**Executive Summary**

A well-rounded, comprehensive sustainability education is one that includes many frameworks and points of reference. To achieve this endpoint, the Education and Research Working Group works towards integrating a spectrum of players that ranges from operational to curricular stakeholders. These participants are involved in curricular, co-curricular, and research narratives that will ultimately make Indiana University Bloomington a frontrunner in the area of academic sustainability. Since 2008, the Education and Research Working Group (formerly Academic Initiatives) has contributed to and supported sustainability in curricular, co-curricular, and research areas on the Indiana University Bloomington campus. During Summer 2014, intern Brad Lufkin worked towards programmatic organization and preparation for powerful strategic planning.
Introduction

The Education and Research Working Group (ERWG) as it stands today is a result of continuous strategic planning and evolution from the Academic Initiatives Working Group (ERWG) that was formed in 2007. The working group was one of the first seven working groups created under the direction of the Campus Sustainability Advisory Board. Since then, interns have worked with the working group to spearhead major goals and guide the group’s development.

One of the main missions of the ERWG is to support the infusion of sustainability concepts into an integrated program of academic research, service-learning, undergraduate and graduate education, and co-curricular activities at Indiana University. To support this goal, interns have supported the completion of AASHE STARS compliance and the development of research development grants and course development fellowships.

In Fall 2013, the ERWG was renamed to the ERWG as a result of continuous improvement and priority shifts. Moving into the future, the ERWG will interact interestingly with the new BA in Environmental and Sustainability Studies (BAESS) degree program as well as the Integrated Program in the Environment (IPE) as the ERWG’s strategic planning progresses.

Currently, the ERWG has 21 members¹, with Andrew Libby and Jen Meta-Robinson serving as co-chairs. Challenges that the ERWG face include consistency in participation of members, turnover in leadership, and university representation in membership. Moving into the 2014-2015 academic year, the ERWG will aim to streamline membership by determining which members are truly invested in the working group’s mission and have time to participate in meetings and implementation. It is important to retain commitment and participation from stakeholders imperative to sustainability initiatives on campus such as the Integrated Program in Environment, Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, and the Office of the Registrar. Representatives from the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Office of Research Administration should be approached for membership in 2014-2015.

Specifically, short-term goals include:

- Promote grants and fellowships rewarding progressive research
- Promote sustainability courses and research (through grants and fellowships)
- Coordinate with student sustainability organizations on tasks and goals

Long-term goals include:

- Organize and promote Service-Learning Courses related to sustainability
- Establish a faculty learning community
- Provide internationally-recognized degree programs in environmental and sustainability studies at undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels

2014-2015 Academic year goals that will be detailed in this report include:

- Substantial strategic planning
- Development of clear Living Learning Lab plan

¹ See Appendix 1.
• Significant improvements in AASHE data collection strategies
• Establishment of annual timelines for all projects and programs
• Infrastructural website improvements
• Continued support of all projects and programs.
Continued Support of Ongoing Projects and Programs

During Summer 2014, the ERWG and intern maintained an organizational status, as many of the working group’s stakeholders are not active during the summer, and the vast majority of programs take place during the academic year. To avoid stagnancy, however, much planning was completed in order to appropriately prepare for these academic year programs.

1. Internal ERWG Support and Planning

In order to operate efficiently, the ERWG must remain extremely well organized; the working group has such breadth across the university that order is key.

Recent Developments (Summer 2014)

Organization of the working group during Summer 2014 included the establishment of an academic year calendar that will be used into future years; it details the rough timelines of each program as well as the meeting times for all branches of the working group (main ERWG, Sustainability Community of Practice (CoP), and Green Bag Lunches). For instance, the logistical timelines for the Sustainability Course Development Fellowships (SCDF) and Sustainability Research Development Grants (SRDG) are shown.

A New Member Guide was written for the ERWG to ensure all new and active participants have a base knowledge for all projects and programs as well as the overarching mission of the working group.

For future interns, a comprehensive contact list of all stakeholders was created. Roles of each stakeholder and how they will interact with the intern are briefly explained in order to decrease the amount of time needed for the intern to orient themselves to their role. Finally, the Coordinator’s Guide was also updated to increase the immediate effectiveness of all new interns and ERWG organizers.

Recommendations (Summer 2014)

One of the main goals of the ERWG during the 2014-2015 academic year should be to establish stability and consistency in mission and direction. Early discussions have centered on the selection of a “grand challenge” each year; the University’s Academic Strategic Plan also discusses the identification of “grand challenges,” so perhaps the ERWG’s efforts could dovetail nicely with the University’s as a whole. It may behoove the working group to coordination sustainability-related education and research with the official campus challenge, finding the sustainability hook in each of them.

A related challenge is to identify the distinction between the Office of Sustainability as the ERWG and the IPE as projects and programs continue. It should be determined which projects fall under each entity’s individual jurisdiction and on which projects the two should collaborate. With the recent introduction new personnel on both sides, it should become easier to develop a productive relationship.

The Living Learning Lab (LLL) concept at Indiana University as it ties into the Office of Sustainability’s efforts has remained fairly amorphous and perplexing even to key ERWG members. The hire of the new IUOS Associate Director Andrew Predmore should give this initiative clearer direction.
2. AASHE Reporting Data

Indiana University was involved in an accreditation process through the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) is a self-reporting framework for universities to measure sustainability performance. The system was updated to the 2.0 version in 2013. Another IUOS intern, is the main contact for the data collection process; however, the Education and Research working group and intern assisted in data collection for credits relevant to our purpose. The Education and Research working group collected data for credits AC 1-11. More information about these credits can be found in the STARS technical manual.

The most heavily weighted STARS credit for the Education and Research category is the Academic Courses credit. This credit is worth 14 out of 40 points in the category. The credit requires documentation of sustainability courses (sustainability focused) and courses that include sustainability (sustainability related).

**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.

This credit provides a framework for a task that needs to be completed year-round. In 2013-2014, this was completed by working with Nancy Gambrell, ERWG member and representative of the Office of the Registrar. We also combed through the entire course listing archive to find courses that may have not been designated as SU (sustainability courses as recognized by the IU Office of the Registrar).

*Recent Developments (Summer 2014)*

As it stands, however, it is clear that this process for course (as well as research collection) can be significantly improved. The completeness and promptness of past data inquiries has been lacking, so meetings with key stakeholders and responders were held to determine how to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of requests. The hurdle of increasing responsiveness is two fold: (1) how does the working group increase motivation for responses and (2) how does the working group make it logistically as easy as possible for responders to report their data.

It has been determined that close collaboration with the IPE would prove extremely beneficial; the IPE separately maintains an affiliated faculty list onto which university faculty members voluntarily list themselves. This list details the research being done and courses taught by these faculty members – it is the preliminary plan that this will be used as the base listings for inquiry.

To increase motivation to respond, it must be clearly stated that completing this survey will increase departmental enrollment, especially considering the introduction of
the new BAESS program. Additionally, when the inquiry serves multiple purposes (collect AASHE reporting data, complete IPE faculty survey, advancing IU as a leader in sustainability), the motivation to respond increases.

To improve the ease of response, data collection will be moved from an excel file to a live, online form that the participants can see as they respond. Additionally, collaboration with the IU Center for Survey Research may be completed in order to design an extremely effective survey. The online submission form will include STARS resources, relevant definitions, and a designated contact person.

Recommendations (Summer 2014)

Fall 2014 should serve as a trial phase for the new data acquisition strategies. The timeline has been conferred with the Office of the Registrar, and the goal should be to complete the first round of sustainability-related and sustainability-focused course listings for Spring 2015 courses. This first round can also be used to pinpoint overcomplications and redundancies in the process. For instance, it can be determined whether or not the survey is being directed to the proper number of and correct stakeholders; perhaps the request is being directed to individuals who don’t have the proper knowledge to determine which classes in the department are sustainability-related and sustainability-focused. Additionally, there may currently be redundancy in the data itself in that there could be duplicate responses from individuals.

This should serve as a continuous improvement process, of course, as response percentages and quality can always increase. With the introduction of a comprehensive annual timeline for data requests, there will be a sense of institutionalization that will ground this process, making it more reliable and easier to complete.
3. Sustainability Community of Practice

The Community of Practice is a revolving and growing group of faculty interested in teaching and implementing sustainability in the classroom. The impetus of the Community of Practice in 2013-2014 was the Bachelor of Arts in Environmental and Sustainable Studies. The Community of Practice (CoP) attended workshops to develop curriculum that may be implemented in the B.A. The main deliverables of the CoP are a tentative list of core competencies and a working list of core content that faculty wishes to see in the B.A. The CoP met in May 2013, November 2013, February 2014, and April 2014. The May workshop focused on developing sustainability courses and featured Joan Middendorf of CITL. The November and February workshops focused on developing core competencies and content. The April workshop featured a panel of previous Sustainability Course Development fellows who talked about the opportunities and challenges of teaching sustainability.

The planning of these workshops mainly fell to Lisa Sideris. Lisa served as the main facilitator, organizer, and marketer of the workshops, and will continue to be the main CoP organizer in the 2014-2015 academic year. Ideally, CoP programs should be planned during the summer, but the availability of stakeholders limits the amount that can be accomplished. The CoP workshops should include guest speakers (if financially feasible) and a wide range of faculty departments. It is important to make certain the workshops do not cater too heavily to one discipline – social science, natural science, or the humanities for example.

Furthermore, it is important note that while the CoP is an important support to the Integrated Program in the Environment and the B.A. the core focus is the faculty participants. The CoP workshops should cater to faculty interested in sustainability, not just the development of the B.A. In order to determine relevant workshop topics, a survey could be sent to CoP participants.

Recent Developments (Summer 2014)

The role of the ERWG as support of the CoP was more clearly defined – the CoP will operate as an appendage of the ERWG.

Recommendations (Summer 2014)

Action will take place during the 2014-2015 Academic Year.
4. The Living Learning Lab and Service-Learning

The Living Learning Lab (LLL) as related to sustainability and as concept at the University falls under the ERWG’s strategic planning goal to identify “grand challenges.” A living learning lab is an environment in which students and faculty can practice hands on research and apply what is learned and taught in the classroom.

In the past, this effort has fallen under the Opportunity Analysis project. The Opportunity Analysis is a project inventory of previous, current, and ideas for new projects. The student projects may include internships, student groups, service-learning, and volunteer opportunities. In order to collect information about these projects we interviewed working groups and sustainability stakeholders on campus. There is currently a survey tool embedded on the IUOS website, and the idea was to visualize this project as a live database. In practice, however, the Opportunity Analysis has been seldom used. As it stands currently, the Opportunity Analysis website can be found here. The goals of the project inventory are still valid, however: to maximize efficiency of resources working towards sustainability on campus, document what is happening on campus, and increase coordination between contact people and groups to increase anticipation of projects.

Celia Daniels, IUOS Advocate for Community Engagement, is the champion of this project, particularly on the service-learning side. The ERWG intern should work closely with Celia as her knowledge about the service-learning process and student participation is invaluable.

Recent Developments (Summer 2014)

The hire of new Associate Director Andrew Predmore will prove invaluable to the LLL effort; his background will give more guidance to the initiative.

Recommendations (Summer 2014)

Action will take place during the 2014-2015 Academic Year.
5. Student Sustainability Summit

The general purpose of the student sustainability summit (SSS) is to bring students together for a unified student voice regarding sustainability. It is jointly hosted by the IUOS and the Student Sustainability Council. In 2014, we featured four guest speakers and over 60 participants. The comments of the summit were sent to Provost Lauren Robel for consideration in the Academic Strategic Plan. The general consensus of the 2014 SSS was the requirement of undergraduate students to be exposed to sustainability via First Year Experience programs or general education classes. The role of the ERWG intern will evolve as the SSS efforts shift away from the intern.

See the coordinator’s guide for more information. It is housed in the Student Sustainability Council folder in Google Drive. The notes from the summit can also be found in the Student Sustainability Council folder.

Recent Developments (Summer 2014)
Action will take place during the 2014-2015 Academic Year.

Recommendations (Summer 2014)
Action will take place during the 2014-2015 Academic Year.
Research

Indiana University is home to cutting edge faculty conducting research in sustainability related fields. The Office of Sustainability and the Education and Research Working Group are collaborating with campus stakeholders to:

1. Document and promote current sustainability research to celebrate their achievements and facilitate collaboration through the Sustainability Research Profiles and Sustainability Researcher Clearinghouse,
2. Support and promote sustainability research capable of attracting external funding through the Sustainability Research Development Grant program, and
3. Provide students increased access to faculty researchers.

6. Sustainability Course Development Fellowships (SCDF)

The Sustainability Course Development fellowships are the instructional component of the initiative originally developed by the Indiana University Task Force on Campus Sustainability. The fellowships are jointly sponsored by the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs, the Office of Sustainability, and the Integrated Program in the Environment. Fellowships have been offered since 2009.

In 2014, six fellowships were awarded to Stephanie Kane, Scott Schakelford, Jim Capshew, James Farmer and Doug Knapp, Majed Akhter and Darren Ficklin, and Stacey Brown.

Recent Developments (Summer 2014)

A tentative timeline that should be followed for all future rounds of grants has been developed. Additional action will take place during the 2014-2015 Academic Year.

Recommendations (Summer 2014)

1. Establish a decision committee for awarding the fellowships early in the academic year. Schedule a decision period early in the year.
2. Require new fellow participation in the Community of Practice.
3. Require previous participants to serve on the decision committee
4. Require a culminating deliverable at the end of the course development fellowship, such as a presentation to faculty peers.

Further action will take place during the 2014-2015 Academic Year.
7. Graduate Student Sustainability Research Development Grants (SRDG)

This grant program is sponsored jointly by the IU Office of Sustainability, the University Graduate School, the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Public Health, the Ostrom Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, and the Graduate and Professional Student Organization. The program is intended to support efforts of graduate students to develop new research programs related to sustainability. It was piloted in 2008 and has since occurred annually.

The 2013-2014 grant cycle awarded nine projects funds ranging from $2,000 to $10,000. In order to better publicize this grant program, the 2013-2014 grant recipients were asked to answer interview questions which were then published here. These interview questions should be archived for the 2013-2014 recipients. The interview series may be continued with the 2014-2015 recipients. It may be interesting to include more interactive responses, such as a video blog.

Recent Developments (Summer 2014)

A tentative timeline that should be followed for all future rounds of grants has been developed. Additional action will take place during the 2014-2015 Academic Year.

Recommendations (Summer 2014)

In order to sustain the graduate grants program, a steady source of funding must be found. This process should be started as soon as possible. Furthermore, graduate grant recipients should be required to present a culminating report or presentation- perhaps at the internship symposium.

Additionally, a comprehensive list of national and international sustainability-related grants should be completed and publicized to the University as a whole. Further action will take place during the 2014-2015 Academic Year.
8. Website

The IUOS Website serves as an important resource for all sustainability-related efforts on campus. As it pertains to the Education and Research Working Group, it houses many of the major programs that take place during the academic year.

Recent Developments (Summer 2014)

The Office of Sustainability’s website is continuously improving, and Summer 2014 served as a time of moderate edits to the Education and Research (ER) section of the website. Clerical edits were completed on all pages of the ER section – misspellings, outdated information, and broken links were fixed to improve the functionality of the website.

As a combined product of many other ERWG initiatives, a plan for “hub” of sorts has been developed. While AASHE STARS reporting was completed, there was little utility given to the campus and students upon completion of this data collection. There is a course browser currently on the IUOS website, but it is poorly advertised and rarely updated. Alternatively, there is a “Sustainability Studies” course designation incorporated into the Registrar’s course listings that is poorly maintained. It is a parallel case for sustainability research listings. In order to synergize many of these disparate products, the hub will be a single page on the website that will link to outside pages that will contain course listings, research listings, service-learning, and sustainability-related student groups. Rather than reinventing the wheel, the ERWG will focus on the improvement of these already existing products.

A plan has been discussed for more intensive, infrastructure improvements to the ER section. There is some redundancy in information and webpages that is inherently connected to the serious strategic planning that the ERWG will undergo during the academic year. Once planning is completed, the structure and content of the website will follow.

Recommendations (Summer 2014)

The plan for large-scale infrastructure improvements that has be loosely laid out should be completed. The website should serve as a hub for existing resources.
Conclusion

The future of the ERWG and duties of the intern will be largely shaped by the results of the heavy strategic planning that will take place during Fall 2014. During and after that time, however, all current projects and programs should be maintained and continuously improved. In addition to program maintenance, key projects include the improvement of AASHE STARS data collection processes, CoP strategic planning, and website renovations.
**Appendix**

Education and Research Working Group Current Membership

<table>
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See Coordinator’s Guide for more logistical guidance.