

GEOG 480 Internship: SIU Sustainability Fellows Program

The Sustainability Office at Southern Illinois University Carbondale has an internship program called the 'Sustainability Fellows Program'. This is a volunteer internship program in which students can gain hands on experience working at the sustainability office on projects and programs that they are passionate about. I feel that this program is really an amazing opportunity for SIU students interested in sustainability or who wish to improve their skills in time management, creating educational materials, coordinating and facilitating events, professionalism in the workplace, networking, public speaking/presentations, and working together or leading others in a group setting. These are all skills I feel have been particularly improved upon or enhanced thanks to my time at SIU Sustainability. In addition to the skills a sustainability fellow will gain, another attribute to this program is that—as long as it is within the needs of the campus—students in this program pick projects or tasks that they are passionate about. Aside from general organization or office work, students will never be assigned to a project they are not interested in. Rather, our Sustainability Coordinator, Geory Kurtzhals, does a great job of discussing personal interests, schedules, and career/professional goals, and the internship is then shaped around those interests. Also, because sustainability is far reaching and relates to every department on campus in some way, the Sustainability Fellows Program is open to all majors. I think these previous reasons make this program especially appealing for students. I have included a screenshot from the Sustainability Fellowships page on the Sustainability website, which can be found [here](#). The webpage states the objective of the Sustainability Fellows Program.

SUSTAINABILITY FELLOWSHIPS

The creation of the Sustainability Fellows program addresses a critical need, getting students fully involved in green thinking and planning through education and advocacy. Sustainability Fellows focus on one or more projects of particular interest to them that meet university needs. Through the program, students also develop professional skill sets that will help them promote sustainability in future careers.

STUDENT FELLOWS



Outreach and Education Sustainability Fellow: Julia Sanabria

Julia is a master's student studying urban sustainability and climate change with the Geography and Environmental Resources Department. She believes that "integrating sustainability into all aspects of life will better serve our environment and economy in a more equitable way."

As mentioned above, my internship was shaped around my personal interests and goals as a student and future career woman. When I spoke with Geory, we discussed my interest in outreach and education work with regards to sustainability and climate change, and my desires to improve my public speaking and presentation giving skills. After some thought and discussion, my official title was chosen as "Outreach and Education Sustainability Fellow". Clearly, I couldn't be happier. My title says it all and it is exactly what I want for my career. This internship has truly provided me with the experience and confidence I will need to pursue a job in the same field, and I am excited to continue to work with SIU Sustainability for as long as possible.

As I said, my position as clearly been perfectly catered to my interests. My tasks and projects are also a good compromise between my interests and the office/university's needs. Throughout this paper, I will speak about each task/project individually, but have listed them here as well: General Outreach, Green Tours, Pop-Up Classes, Newsletters, Data Tracking, "Sustainability is for All Majors", and Green Fund Markers. In addition to these tasks, I also do general office work, attend team meetings, and

attend a weekly one-on-one meeting with Geory to discuss tasks and progress. I have scheduled office hours in which to get my work done (Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30-4:30pm, and Wednesdays noon-2:30pm).

General Outreach

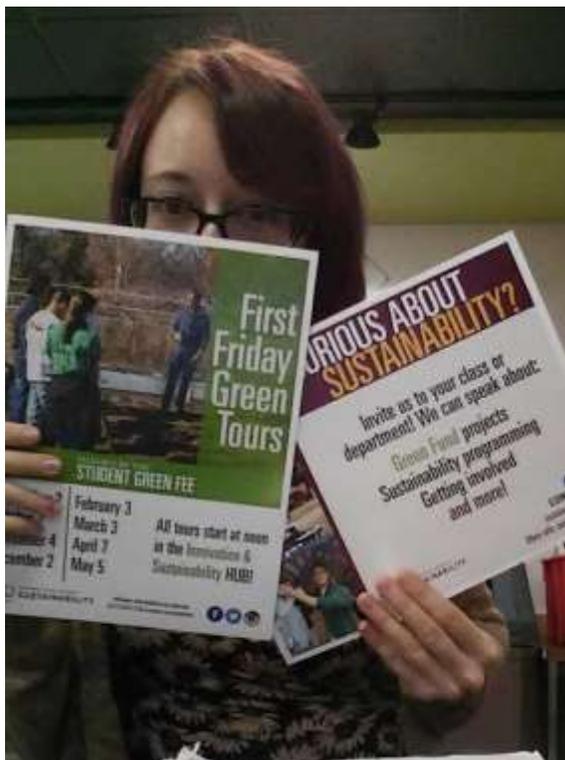
As the outreach and education fellow, there are some general outreach tasks that I enjoy doing such as tabling at different events on behalf of Siu Sustainability (such as new student orientations), maintaining our email sign up list, responding to any questions that come into our offices or through our office email, etc. This semester we also started a 'schedule a classroom visit' campaign for the office, but unfortunately, the word hasn't quite spread around yet that this resource exists now. What a classroom visit entails, is that I have made multiple presentations about general office programs, sustainability in the job market, and the green fund, that can be catered to a specific classroom's needs. I am ready and prepared for presentations lasting 10-15 minutes, 30 minutes, and 45 minutes. Flyers were made to help us advertise this new resource, and I sent emails out to many classrooms as well. While no one has scheduled a classroom visit yet, I have done a short presentation for the class I TA for (GEOG 100), and have made a 45 minute presentation about SIU Sustainability and sustainability in the job market at the August Saluki Success Day. My hope is that as we continue to get the word out, more professors or departments will reach out to schedule a classroom visit.



This is a typical set up for tabling on behalf of SIU Sustainability!

Green Tours

Green Tours are one of my favorite jobs at SIU Sustainability. Seeing as I took Dr. Duram's class on a Green Tour earlier this semester, I won't go into too much detail on this one. Essentially, A Green Tour features 20-25 of our more prominent Green Funded projects, including the green roof on top of the agriculture building, a solar charging picnic table, campus prairie garden, vertical green wall, and rain garden on the outskirts of Thompson Woods. The tours take about an hour and include information on how to apply/submit your proposals, and practical business applications. Walking Green Tours are offered on the first Friday of each month, as well as by appointment. Some months have more attendees than others, but so far every month we've had people showing up for these. In addition to the Friday at noon monthly tours, a class signed up for a Green Tour a few weeks ago. There were about 25 people in the class who attended that Green Tour, and it was a lot of fun. Geory and I received this incredibly sweet thank you note from the class, which speaks of my performance in the tour. I have attached it below.



November 21, 2016

Dear Ms. Kurtzhals, Ms. Sanabria and other Sustainability staff,

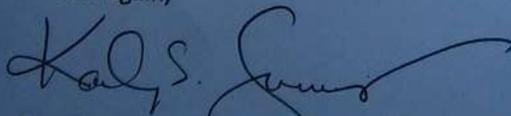
Thank you so much for taking the time to organize a very interesting presentation and walking tour about sustainability projects and information at SIU to our English for Academic Purposes 2 (EAP2) students. The students noted that they very much enjoyed Ms. Sanabria's presentation and felt that the experience was very worthwhile.

Your discussion connected very well with our class material on sustainability and urban development. The students commented that they were very interested in the construction of the plant wall in the Agricultural Building and the other small projects that were completed around campus for the benefit of all. Both of us plan on expanding on your information in the future in our classes and attempt to incorporate the collaborative possibilities that your office has to offer into the curriculum objectives.

Everyone at the Center for English as a Second Language appreciates you taking time from your busy schedule to accommodate our students and share your expertise in order to make sustainability more applicable to all of our daily lives. Ms. Sanabria's presentation was very professional, but relaxed and it provided the students with a good reference for their own presentations and visuals later on. The students felt at ease to ask questions and they really liked how she always repeated the questions in order to make sure that all students had heard the question. Plus, all of the information was given in English!

Thank you for providing them with wonderful sustainability information about our local and university community!

Thanks again,

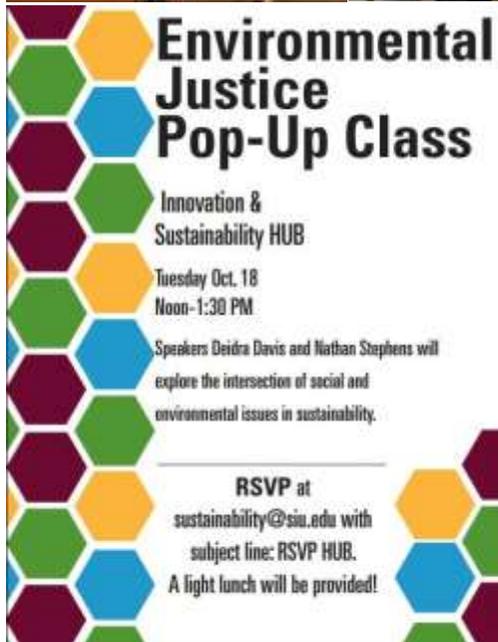


Kamden Summers, MA, ABD
Aya Tsuchie, MA
CESL Lecturers

These are the kinds of connections that we aim to make through outreach and education work! Notes like this make my work very rewarding.

Pop-Up Classes

Throughout the semester I planned, coordinated, and facilitated a couple of different Pop-Up Classes in the Innovation and Sustainability HUB. These included a 'Get to Know Your Green Fee' pop-up class, and an Environmental Justice pop-up class. I have included some pictures from the Environmental Justice pop-up in which I, Deidra Davis, and Nathan Stephens all took turns speaking about the social pillar of sustainability. All Pop-Up classes were about 90 minutes long, and had to be planned out a few weeks ahead of time. I coordinated these events which included reaching out to presenters to ask for their participation, facilitating to the presenters needs, marketing for the events, and then I myself spoke for 15 minutes at the beginning of each class to introduce the topics, speakers, and speak a little bit about SIU Sustainability.



Environmental Justice Pop-Up Class

Innovation & Sustainability HUB

Tuesday Oct. 18
Noon-1:30 PM

Speakers Deidra Davis and Nathan Stephens will explore the intersection of social and environmental issues in sustainability.

RSVP at sustainability@siu.edu with subject line: RSVP HUB.
A light lunch will be provided!

Newsletters

I produce a monthly newsletter that reaches hundreds of SIU students, faculty, and staff! Again, because I know that Dr. Duram receives our monthly newsletters, I will not go into detail on this one. We provide links to all of our newsletters on our website, which can be found [here](#).

Data Tracking

As part of the outreach and education fellow for the office, it is a good idea to keep track of attendance of office drop-ins and other events such as green tours and pop-up classes. That way, we can track how successful we are in our marketing and see if our influence on campus is increasing. While there are still some areas that I would like to see gain a larger following, the office has definitely seen improvement in a general interest in sustainability on campus in the last many months.

“Sustainability is for All Majors”

A few weeks ago I started a “Sustainability is for All Majors” projects that I came up at a group meeting. In my experience at tabling for different SIU events on behalf of SIU Sustainability, I came to learn that many students and their parents did not think that sustainability applied to them, and that therefore they did not feel the need to come over to our table. They would say things like, “well I am a psyche major so it doesn’t apply to me.”

We feel very strongly at our office that sustainability is far reaching and can be valuable for all students in all majors. So, I came up with the idea to make a folder that lists each major offered at SIU, and next to that would be a description of that major and how sustainability relates to it. This way, if we ever get comments like that, we have this handy dandy binder at the ready to address their concerns. This is still a work in progress, as there is an extensive list of majors offered at this school. Some of my fellow office team members are helping me complete this task. When it is finished, it will most likely go inside our “Inspiration Binder”, which is another side project I am working on. This will be a binder that students

can look at that includes different resources, news articles, and programs offered in the office that are related to sustainability.

Green Fund Markers

The Sustainability Office is working on a way to identify future green funded projects (perhaps with stickers, flyers, or something along those lines). The idea of the Green Fund markers is to help create awareness around campus of the green fee and funded projects. Implementing these markers will include incorporating them into current and future funding rounds and projects, and retrofitting past projects where it makes sense. Before we implement anything on a larger scale, we would like to have a few examples in place so that we can show them to green fund recipients. So the last many weeks I have been going through our master excel sheet of all Green Funded Projects (153 projects!) and reading through the proposals and final reports for each project so that I can decide if it makes sense to incorporate a Green Fund marker or not. For example, if a green fund recipient used the funding for a day event that has already come and gone, then a green fund marker probably does not make sense. But, if they created any materials, or speak about their event on their website, then maybe a green fund marker could be incorporated that way. This has been a large project, and I have just finished going through the master excel sheet in the last week or two. I have now moved on to the task of reaching out to all of the green fund recipients that we have decided would make sense to incorporate a green fund marker. This will be another long task, but I will be continuing it throughout the remainder of the semester as well as next semester.

Conclusion

This paper has detailed my more prominent projects and tasks as a Sustainability Fellow this semester. As I mentioned earlier, I feel that I have learned a lot throughout my internship and have improved on many skills such as my public speaking and presenting skills. I have also gained experience in planning,

coordinating, and facilitation events. Green Tours are a particular favorite of mine, and I think those have really helped me to come out of my shell and work on my likability during presentations. I had also never done a 'walking' presentation until I started these Green Tours. It definitely uses a different set of presenting skills than just speaking to a classroom indoors. Lastly, I feel like I have learned to anticipate an office's needs before having to be asked to meet them. There have been a few times throughout the semester where I have finished Geory's sentences or had already completed a task that was needed before I was even asked to do so. I think this will be a desirable trait for any future employers, and feel that the atmosphere that Geory has created at the Sustainability Office has allowed me to learn.

Interning at the Sustainability Office is a good mix between guided work, and independent work. While Geory and I do have our weekly one-on-one meetings, and she is always available if any questions arise, for the most part I do my work unsupervised. It is expected that I will complete tasks in a timely manner and uphold professionalism in my work and interactions with people regarding SIU Sustainability. I really enjoy my work and being trusted to carry out many of my tasks unsupervised. Being able to work independently is also another trait I think future employers will appreciate. Lastly, I have gained skills in a team setting as well. Many of my projects include the work of other fellows. For example, I work closely with Jessica Hoagland, our Visual Communications and Strategy Graduate Assistant, who advertises my outreach events through social media and other materials. I also work closely with Austin Nunn, our Undergraduate Communications Assistant, who creates many of the flyers for marketing of events. Overall, the sustainability office team gets along very well and has learned to work together efficiently. It has truly been a joy to get to know and to work with so many great students all interested in sustainability.