

SIU Sustainability Council Project  
Final Report

Project title: Educational Kiosks at Touch of Nature  
Project I.D. #: 15SP108  
Award date: April 2015  
Completion date: June 2016  
Funds used: 9466.06 + 1996.50 = 11462.56 total  
(see description below for request for 1996.50)

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**Brief write up of project/project experience (not to exceed 250 words):**

*Overall, the project turned out quite well. The ARC242 students ended up building architectural interventions at six different stations along the Rocky Ledges Trail at Touch of Nature. The first station is located at the beach trailhead. It consists of a covered bench and signage that introduces visitors to the trail. The second station - a platform and two work tables - is located at the water's edge and will be used by the TON staff to educate visitors about the organisms living in Little Grassy Lake. The third station is a simple bench and two signage pieces located at a large fallen oak in the forest. This station will discuss the life of the forest and about forestry practices and initiative underway at TON. The fourth station is located at the top of the switchback climb and consists of a platform, bench, and two signs. Here, trail guides will discuss the geology of the area. It also serves as an excellent bird watching platform. Station five is a small bench and sign that discuss the unique vegetation found along the south facing slopes of Little Grassy Lake. The final station is at the point just before reaching the Rocky Ledges shoreline. This site is in two parts: a covered bench overlooking the water and four signs that discuss the history and original settlement of the area. Finally, the ARC502 graduate students are just now completing the seventh and final station - a campsite located at the Rocky Ledges end of the trail. This is a much larger construction than the rest of the sites. It is an enclosed seating area with a prep area, open via stairs to both the southwest and east.*

**Best things learned/produced from project:**

*I would say that the best thing produced by this project is the infrastructure that the Touch of Nature staff will use to education the public (especially campers, visiting school groups, and the rest of the youngest generation) about the natural environment of southern Illinois and our responsibility to protect it. Even before it was completely finished, the environmental education staff was out on the trail breaking the stations with visitors. We had a number of groups of trailgoers stop and just watch the students build. As always, building with a large group of students is an intense learning experience. Many of the students praised the opportunity to make a difference in the community and to support the educational missions of Touch of Nature in*

*their reflective writings on the project at the end of the semester. Understanding what it means to actually put a project together is a powerful lesson for these budding architects and interior designers. To have what is build have a positive impact on the community, however, significantly broadens the impact of the experience, which will literally affect hundreds of people, if not far more. Additionally, the coordination between the undergraduate and graduate students (afforded by the extension to the original funding you all approved) was a monumental success. The graduate students served as wonderful mentors to the groups of second year students and made the most out of the leadership opportunity presented to them. I could not be more impressed with their performance in this respect.*

**How do you define sustainability?**

*To sustain is to perpetuate; sustainability is the ability for a system or entity to maintain a healthy balance and drive in perpetuity. Sustainability in architecture is the practice of being conscious to our impact on the world, especially the natural environment and the healthy living space of the human population.*

**Has this changed over the course of your project? If so, how?**

*Having done these types of projects for years, my definition of sustainability has been consistent throughout the life of this project.*

**What do you see as the next step for the project?**

*First, we would like to request a specific extension on a portion of our award. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Touch of Nature was unable to complete the design work for the trail signage before the end date of the award. I have been told by the School of Architecture (fiscal lead on the project) that we need to close out the grant in order to receive the second payment on the funding prior to the end of the fiscal year. I would like to request that the Green Fund council allow an extension on the award for the 1996.56 required to have the signage printed (see attached estimate from Beautiful Displays). I would also like to request that this payment be handled directly by Touch of Nature, who will now serve as fiscal officer for the remaining portion of the award.*

*What needs to happen next is to develop strategies for tracking the number of visitors that have experienced the interventions we have built down at Touch of Nature to start to quantify the impact of these projects.*