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INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Action Fund Grant Program is Western Washington University’s student grant program. It enables the campus community to apply for funding to implement sustainable initiatives on campus. The Sustainable Action Fund (SAF) is managed by the Office of Sustainability. All Western students, faculty, and staff are eligible to apply for grants, which are then reviewed for approval by the Sustainable Action Fund Committee, which composed of students, staff, and faculty representatives. The program is funded by a mandatory student fee, currently set at $0.70/per credit and capped at seven dollars per student per quarter. Annually, the fee collects approximately $300,000.

Mission Statement:

The Sustainable Action Fund (SAF) Grant Program exists to promote experiential learning opportunities and sustainable practices at Western Washington University. This is accomplished through the purchase of Renewable Energy Certificates to offset 100% of the electrical consumption of the university as well as the funding of innovative student-driven projects. Projects funded through the Sustainable Action Fund Program are evaluated based on their ability to:

- Increase Student Involvement and Education
- Reduce the University’s Environmental Impact
- Create and Aware and Engaged Campus Community

Program Overview

The SAF Grant Program offers small and large grant opportunities. The campus community can apply for either a small grant, between $500 and $5,000, or a large grant, between $5,000 and $300,000. Applicant teams must prioritize student involvement and may have up to four people per team. Once funded, the length of time to implement a project depends on the complexity of the project and the number of people and campus divisions that need to be involved in the implementation process. Other means of participating in the Sustainable Action Fund Grant Program include applying to serve on the Sustainable Action Fund Committee, submitting ideas for future applicants, volunteering to help promote the program, and taking the Huxley College course, Campus Sustainability Planning Studio. This course revolves around researching sustainable solutions for campus, and the research often functions as a template for a Sustainable Action Fund grant application.

SUSTAINABLE ACTION FUND HISTORY

Western Washington University’s Sustainable Action Fund was created in 2005 after the Students for Renewable Energy (SRE) student group worked with the support and assistance of key members in Western’s staff, faculty and administration to include the ballot measure in the 2005 elections. The student body approved the initiation of the fee with an 85% approval rate. As a result, Western Washington purchases Renewable Energy Credits to offset all of its carbon emissions from electrical consumption. Student investments through the Sustainable Action Fund put over 40 million kilowatt hours of domestically-produced, wind-derived energy into the US electrical grid annually. WWU is one of the nation's top-30 buyers of renewable energy among academic institutions as recognized by the US EPA, and was the first institution in the nation to purchase Renewable Energy Credits to offset 100% of its electrical consumption.

In 2010, the Sustainable Action Fund was renewed and changed to include a grant program. By 2010 the cost of Renewable Energy Credits had decreased. The decision was made to keep the current fee level and incorporate a grant program. The student body once again overwhelmingly supported the continuance of the fee with an 80% approval rate. In the 2010-2011 academic year, the Sustainable Action Fund (SAF) Grant Program Task Committee created a
Program Charge & Charter, the SAF Rules of Operation, a Memorandum of Understanding between Business & Financial Affairs, Student Affairs/Academic Support Services, and the Associated Students (AS), and approved funding for a staff position to begin working on the application process. This staff was placed in the Office of Sustainability. This position created the SAF application packet and process, the proposal selection process, and selection criteria. In May 2011 the first round of funding was allocated for SAF projects.

In 2015, students reauthorized the program again with an 86% approval rate, and changed the name to the Sustainable Action Fund (SAF) to reflect a more holistic support of sustainability. The SAF was also restructured to 1) purchase REC’s to offset 100% of WWU’s carbon emissions; 2) fund three student leadership positions within the Associated Students Environmental and Sustainability Programs (ESP) Office; 3) continue the grant program; 4) continue to fund operational employee positions that are responsible for overseeing and coordinating SAF programs.

GUIDING DOCUMENTS

The Sustainable Action Fund Grant Program’s guiding documents include the Charger and Charter, Rules of Operation, and Memorandum of Understanding. These guiding documents are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. They are posted on the Sustainable Action Fund Grant Program’s website www.wwu.edu/SAF under the About page.

GRANT APPLICATION & REPORTING DOCUMENTS

Program staff update and maintain multiple documents to assist applicants in applying for grants, and to report project success to the campus community. Grant application and reporting documents are posted on the Sustainable Action Fund Grant Program’s website www.wwu.edu/saf under the Apply page.

OUTREACH

The Sustainable Action Fund staff members actively engaged in outreach events throughout the year. Through social media, emails, class presentations, and tabling around campus, the SAF engaged a significant portion of the student populace. Some highlights of the outreach for 2016-2017 include:

- 129 tweets from the SAF Twitter account
- Twenty-one photos posted to SAF’s Instagram page
- Over 200 Facebook posts
- Twenty SAF Idea Labs workshops
- Twelve class raps, reaching over 500 students
- Sixty hours tabled across campus.

SAF showcase

The annual SAF Showcase was held on May 22, and featured ten project team expositions to an audience of Western students, staff, and faculty. The student teams shared their visions, successes, and campus impact in visual presentations, and then enjoyed the opportunity to exchange stories and ideas over hors d’oeuvre.
SAF PROJECT UPDATES

In FY17, the SAF staff oversaw the funding and completion of seven new student grant projects. Five student projects were stewarded from a concept to completed application, and now await the consideration of the SAF Committee. There are also eight student teams developing new projects with SAF staff input for submission in the fall quarter. Three previously-approved SAF projects continue to be administered by the SAF office going into the new academic year. These twenty-three student projects represent the full spectrum of sustainability as envisioned by the University’s Sustainable Action Plan: to protect local and global ecology, uphold social equity, create economic vitality, and maintain human health.

COMPLETED: $35,900 was awarded in FY17 to grants that are now complete:

A Change in Course: $9,200 awarded

On April 6, the Office of Sustainability, AS Environmental and Sustainability Programs, and the AS Social Issues Resource Center held “A Change of Course - How We Inhabit the Earth”, which featured five local activists. The event included workshops and a moderated panel discussion, and explored various types of activism around the themes of environmental justice and social sustainability—the different ways people inhabit their world and advocate for what they believe in—a healthier planet and people. Each of our panelists work for environmental justice, and in their individual ways, these five change-makers have showcases grit and perseverance in the face of enormous social and environmental challenges.

Another Food System is Possible: $3,200 awarded

Held on April 15, this event featured four speakers discussing the theme of the future of our food system as it is envisioned by local farmworkers. Members of Familias Unidas por la Justicia and Community-to-Community Development joined with Immigration and Customs Enforcement activists and keynote speaker Dr. Michael Dorsey to give an alternative voice to the discussion on our current food system. This discussion allowed students to hear from people who produce the community’s agriculture and those most disenfranchised by our current food system about a vision of how to change these unsustainable structures for the better.

Food Awareness Evening: $1,200 awarded

This spring, the Lead Eco Reps from the Office of Sustainability held a Food Awareness Evening that will focus on a few key questions regarding food and food production. During the evening of May 10, four workshops were held to address different aspects of the food system: farmworker justice, food production, food access, and food waste, followed by a 30-minute hands-on activity that reflects upon the speaker’s topic.

Earth Day Speaker John Francis: $11,400 awarded

On April 22, the Environmental and Sustainability Programs brought Dr. John Francis, the Planetwalker, to Western Washington University for Earth Day 2017. Dr. Francis teaches that the way we treat each other is the way we treat the planet, so we should treat each other well. The Earth Day schedule consisted of a series of speakers and interactive engagement amongst the audience around the theme
of turning empathy into action. The highlight of the event a silent walk to downtown Bellingham in the evening to bridge the campus to the larger community.

**Microadventures: $5,000 awarded**

The Microadventures project was developed to create an avenue to combat the environmental and social injustices of traditional adventure travel. Microadventures are described as adventures that are close to home, cheap, simple, and short. They exclude plane travel—a significant factor of environmental impact and global climate change—and can be designed using low carbon alternatives and leave-no-trace practices. This pilot program provided free opportunities for underserved and marginalized students at the university to learn and experience adventure travel in a safe and judgement-free zone. The program also taught students practical ways to decrease their environmental impact.

**Real Food Challenge West Retreat: $2,600 awarded**

The Real Food Challenge WWU Campus Intensive was held on March 31 to introduce student leaders at WWU to the food justice movement and the implementation tactics of the Real Food Challenge. It also connected Real Food Challenge organizers from various universities in the Pacific Northwest in order to discuss and share valuable knowledge about implementation strategies on their respective campuses. This training was a major step in the process of developing a multi-year action plan and identifying product shifts and areas in need of improvement as Western begins implementation of the Real Food Challenge.

**Take Back the Night: $3,300 awarded**

The University’s Women’s Council was held a march on May 24 to raise awareness about the crucial issues of sexual assault/violence and safety within our community. This formerly annual event provided an opportunity for students to vocalize and act on the importance of inclusion and support. This program offered a forum for groups that provide resources and support to victims of violence in order to promote a greater sense of safety, care, and community on campus.

**PROPOSED:** Proposed grants totaling $319,800 are currently under SAF Committee consideration:

**Bicycles Count: $110,000 requested**

This proposal is the installation of two totem bicycle counters in high profile locations on campus that receive significant amounts of bicycle traffic, and one unseen bicycle counter in a lower profile location which also receives significant amounts of bicycle traffic in order to collect valuable data on bicycling on Western’s campus to aid future bicycle facilities planning, as well as involve the student community in that collection and encourage bicycle use as a means to get to and from campus. The bicycle counters will allow the University to measure how well it is doing in increasing the alternative transportation method of bicycling, as well as promote bicycling as a method of transport to campus.
**EV Charging Stations: $80,000 requested**

This proposal to install the first EV charging stations on a campus that prides itself on being sustainable. These six charging stations will encourage the use of plug-in EVs to, from, and nearby Western Washington University’s campus in Bellingham. It will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars by building the infrastructure necessary for a transition from gas-powered vehicles to EVs. These stations will be open to the entire Western community, including students, faculty, guests, and the public.

**Outback Farm Coordinator: $122,000 requested**

This grant application proposes the creation of a three-year pilot position to manage the Outback Farm on Western’s campus. The proposed position will facilitate the mid- and long-term development of the Outback Experiential Learning Program into an invaluable resource for Western Washington University. Based on the observed success of other university farms, this position would have the capacity to develop the site and associated programming while allowing student leadership to focus on farm work and the student-to-student relationships that are so valuable to the program. This proposal would better position the Outback as a resource for broader campus sustainability goals and initiatives by emulating the management structures of other successful campus farm programs across the country.

**Terra cycle—From Trash to Cash: $3,000 requested**

“From Trash to Cash: Diverting Infrequently Recyclable Materials from the Western Waste Stream,” aims to divert waste produced by Western Washington University students by offering an opportunity through Terracycle to upcycle binders, oral care products, and foil-lined snack bag/energy bar packaging, as well as a variety of home and health care products. Terracycle is an upcycling program that takes materials that cannot usually be recycled in conventional recycling systems, breaks them down, and turns them into completely new products, such as a backpacks, wallets, or pencil pouches.

**York Community Farm Internship: $4,800 requested**

This project will create summer work positions for students in the local sustainable food network, with the broader aim of building sustainable campus-community connections. In particular, this pilot initiative seeks support to fund two paid internships for students to work at York Community Farm over the summer season and then share their experiences at campus events in the fall this year. This invaluable experiential learning opportunity will equip students to continue to build campus-community collaborations toward sustainable practice at the local level.
ONGOING: Three previously awarded grants totaling $278,000 remain active:

**E-bike Pilot: $49,000 awarded**

Western’s E-bike Pilot is now in its second year. The Sustainable Transportation Office continues to promote and loan modern electric-assist bicycles that allow Western’s community to experience an entirely new way to commute over a challenging geography that previously limits such activity, and may be otherwise prohibited by a commuter’s fitness levels or cargo needs. The Sustainable Transportation team is collecting data on this use in order to better provide E-bike access and viable alternative commuting methods to the campus community.

**Energy Dashboard: $185,000 awarded**

The Energy Dashboards Pilot displays energy and other utility resource consumption data. The Energy Dashboard is available to the entire Western community over the internet on any web enabled device, whether it be desktop computer or smart phone. The dashboard provides building and campus energy consumption information and historical consumption data in clear and easy to understand displays, enabling building users and energy managers to take action to reduce future energy consumption.

**Lyn Okse electric utility vehicle: $45,000 awarded**

Lyn Okse, the electric utility vehicle project, will provide Facilities Management with a sustainable and emission free method to perform on-campus tasks. Currently in design phase, the Lyn Okse vehicle will be capable of 100 miles per gallon equivalent with zero tailpipe emissions and low equivalent well-to-wheels carbon dioxide emissions. The project provides students with the challenge of constructing a final product from their design and evaluating how the final product fits the needs of WWU Grounds keeping. The end goal of the project is to replace fossil fuel driven utility vehicles with sustainably powered electric vehicles, while meeting or exceeding the usability of current vehicles.

**SUMMARY**

Western students display an ongoing awareness of and interest in the Sustainable Action Fund, as evidenced by the increase in the number of students that developed projects to utilize the Fund in 2016-2017. The number of current projects and ongoing outreach plan indicate that the SAF will see increased access by a broad spectrum of groups engaged in sustainability activity. The SAF student fee will be up for renewal in 2018.

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