*Please submit this completed application and any relevant supporting documentation by the deadline listed on the SSC website to* *Sustainability-Committee@Illinois.edu**.The Working Group Chairs will be in contact with you regarding any questions about the application. If you have any questions about the application process, please contact the SSC Program Advisor, Micah Kenfield, at* *kenfield@illinois.edu*

# General Information

**Project Name:** Friday Forum: Elevating Environmental Issues in Fall 2017

**Total Amount Requested from SSC:** $30,000

**Project Topic Area(s):** [ ] Energy [x] Education [ ] Food & Waste

 [ ] Land [ ] Water [ ] Transportation

# Contact Information

Applicant Name: Ross Wantland

Unit/Department: Diversity & Social Justice Education/Office of Inclusion & Intercultural Relations

Email Address: wantland@illinois.edu

Phone Number: (217) 244-1814

**Project Team**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Department** | **Email** |
| Ross Wantland | Diversity & Social Justice Education | wantland@illinois.edu |
| Kasey Umland | University of Illinois YMCA,Friday Forum Planning Committee | Kasey@universityymca.org |
| Catherine Yee | Intern at iSEE, President Students for Environmental Concerns | Cryee2@illinois.edu |
| Mary Jane Oviatt  | Student member of Friday Forum Committee, member of Students for Environmental Concerns | Moviatt2@illinois.edu |

# Project Information

Please provide a brief background of the project, the goals, and the desired outcomes:

The Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations’ Diversity and Social Justice Education unit (DiversityEd), along with the RSO Students for Environmental Concerns (SECS), is pleased to present this application for funding in the Topic Area of Education for an environmentally-themed lecture series in the Fall of 2017, partnering with the University YMCA’s Friday Forum Committee.

Friday Forum is a weekly lecture series held during the fall and spring semesters that strives to raise awareness about national and international trends and events. Friday Forum has been continuously running for 90 years at the University YMCA, adapting to the times while remaining committed to providing talks that address topics of relevance and urgency in our society.

DiversityEd will partner with the University YMCA to expand the scope and broaden the reach of the Fall 2017 Friday Forum series on environmental issues and solutions, ranging from climate change and policy to biomimicry and design. Our broad goal is to elevate environmental issues on campus and educate the campus community.

Our audience of the Series is the general campus community. Historically, Friday Forum reaches 800-1,200 campus community members during the course of the semester, and our primary desired outcome will be to reach 1,000 to 1,200 individuals in attendance. We will also leverage fellow campus entities to elevate the visibility of these programs, and funding to bring exciting speakers to campus is a critical component to a successful series.

We understand, however, that despite high visibility oftentimes lecture series fail to reach underrepresented student populations. The University YMCA regularly makes a concerted effort to reach out to our campus partners and colleagues in the other units within Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations. For example, if hosting a speaker on indigenous issues, we will coordinate with the Native American Cultural House to include it as part of their “Chat ‘n Chew” series. We will also ensure the Series topics include discussions about environmental justice, racism, and a critical analysis of the inclusivity of the environmental movement.

Specifically, we seek critical seed funding to support the honorariums of three high-visibility speakers. We will leverage this funding with other campus and community organizations to support this Series, so the Committee will not be responsible for funding the entirety of the project. Proposed speakers include Bill McKibben on climate change, Van Jones on environmental justice and human rights, Shanondora Billiot (United Houma Nation) on indigenous connections to the land, and more. Topics include critically analyzing the environmental movement, addressing how to discuss shared values to reach across ideological lines, biomimicry design to solve environmental problems, and the nexus between research, education, and policy.

Finally, an important desired outcome is to foster conversations and partnerships that create an ongoing impact on our campus. To do so, we will open the space for speakers to engage with stakeholders on campus to brainstorm projects, improvements, research and more. For example, should we receive funding for his honorarium, Bill McKibben has agreed to stay after his talk to work with students, faculty and staff, thereby maximizing the funding impact of bringing him to the campus.

Please provide a brief summary of how students will be involved in the project:

Diversity & Social Justice Education will partner with the University YMCA, whose primary focus is on student leadership development, to ensure students are engaged with the project and have meaningful input. In addition, the Department of Diversity & Social Justice Education will help elevate the visibility of the series to our highly-engaged students.

The Friday Forum Committee includes faculty, staff, and students, who regularly attend and will provide critical planning and leadership on topics, potential speakers, and outreach to the campus community. For example, at the first planning meeting for the Series, students in particular expressed strong interest in hosting Bill McKibben, the author of the first book on climate change to a general audience and the founder of 350.org.

Second, Friday Forum regularly partners with departments and faculty across campus to encourage their students to attend through highlighting the lectures and offering course credit. Typically, half of the attendance is comprised of students.

Finally, as mentioned before, we will ensure the long-term funding impact of this project by inviting students to special workshops or receptions with speakers we invite to campus. Our students find the opportunity to engage with speakers rewarding and a fantastic opportunity for education and growth.

Please provide a brief summary of the project timeline:

Friday Forum will occur weekly in the Fall semester and tentatively begin on September 8, 2017 and end on November 3, for a total of nine sessions. Lectures would take place every Friday at noon at the University YMCA, except when larger-visibility speakers need increased seating capacity.

The Friday Forum Committee is currently in the planning phase and will be inviting speakers this Spring. We would wait to confirm big-name speakers until May, given that we need additional funding from the Student Sustainability Committee to successfully leverage additional funds.

Additional comments

Thank you so much for the Committee’s consideration. Please note that we accept and appreciate any feedback on topics and speakers, and welcome any additions to our Friday Forum Planning Committee.