

SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES INITIATIVE IN THE HUMANITIES

Vision Statement

Overview

It is clear that stresses upon natural resources and the environment will increasingly dominate global affairs—and the everyday lives of billions of people—in this century and beyond. In the United States, the expectation of environmental literacy now touches all levels of public policy, industry, and the professions, while the responsibility for rich and diverse programs in environmental sustainability has rapidly evolved into a core mission of research universities. Programs in sustainability nationwide, including the *School for Earth, Society, and Environment (SESE)* at Illinois, boast well-developed interdisciplinary structures that connect the physical and technical sciences with economics, policy, and social science. The *Sustainability Studies Initiative in the Humanities (SSIH)*, to be housed within *SESE*, is designed to complement and enhance these interdisciplinary synergies with humanistic perspectives from a broad range of fields. With unique disciplinary expertise in the study of history, culture, ethics, fine arts, politics, and law, humanists are indispensable to the collective research and educational task of addressing global environmental change in its multiple human dimensions. The purpose of *SSIH* is to promote the development of sustainability education and curricula in the humanities at the U of I, in addition to assisting in raising the general profile of sustainability issues on campus, among both students and faculty. Benefits thus accrue both to faculty in curriculum development opportunities and to students with the enrichment of undergraduate sustainability course offerings.

Goals

1. To define a new discipline of sustainability studies in the humanities, involving close engagement with the physical and social sciences.
2. To develop a sustainability studies faculty cohort in the humanities, with a focus on curriculum development.
3. To materially enhance the Society and Environment stream within the *SESE* major with a greater range of course offerings in the humanities.

Activities

Proposed *SSIH* activities include:

1. **Affiliate faculty:** build 0% time humanities faculty cohort within *SESE*.
2. **Curriculum development:** fellowships for humanities faculty for course development in sustainability tailored to their respective disciplines.
3. **Spring Sustainability Symposium:** Symposium for *SSIH* fellows to present their draft sustainability curricula in collective forum, highlighted by keynote presentation by invited guest with expertise in sustainability education.
4. **Partnerships:** Co-sponsor events and activities with other interested groups on campus (*I have already had several approaches in this regard).

Funding

SSIH has been promised one-year of funding by LAS in the amount of \$10k, and an additional \$3k for 3 years by SESE. With the expectation that LAS will renew its funding if the Initiative is able to show results after its first year, my request to SSC is for matching funds to the amount of \$12k, to bring the total funds for the initiative in its first year to \$25k.

Proposed Activities Budget

1. Five faculty fellowships for sustainability curriculum development: \$12,500
2. Spring symposium, with invited keynote speaker and workshop leader: \$4k
3. Funds to build partnerships with other sustainability groups on campus through co-sponsorship of events, lectures, etc.: \$3k
4. Research Assistant (part-time) for researching grant opportunities, building contact networks, organizing public events, and web site development: \$5500

Total: \$25k

Budget Rationale

The *faculty fellowships* serve the core of the SSIH mission: to produce course offerings in sustainability in a broad range of disciplines in the humanities. The *spring symposium* serves the important role of making the SSIH Fellows accountable. The Fellows will be required to present their draft curricula, and to participate in a workshop to further refine and enhance it. One condition of the fellowship will be that the course be offered within 2 years of the Fellowship award. *Partnerships* are key to building synergy across a range of disparate groups in the sustainability field. Because SSIH is not lavishly resourced, the best it can do is to participate in events as a co-sponsor. But it must do this at least. Finally, because the SSIH director does not enjoy teaching release or any other remission of his full research, teaching, and service load in leading the initiative, a *Research Assistant* (part-time) will be indispensable to actually making the work of the initiative happen. Time will be split between responsibility for general administration, grant writing for internal and external funding, building the profile of the initiative through networking and web site development, and organizing public activities.

Faculty Affiliates:

Gillen Wood (English, Director), Robert McKim (Religion), James Treat (Religion), Robert Pahre (Political Science), Gale Fulton (Landscape Architecture), Lisa Lucero (Anthropology), Stephanie Foote (English), Jennifer Monson (Dance), Robert Markley (English), Stanley Ambrose (Anthropology), Spencer Schaffner (English), Dianne Harris (Landscape Architecture), Bill Stewart (Applied Health Sciences), Bill Sullivan (Landscape Architecture)

Gillen Wood, Director—2/13/11