



April 24, 2013

Applicant: John Marlin

Project: Florida and Orchard Prairie and Natural Resources Building Prairie

Re: Change in project scope

Dear John Marlin:

On behalf of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Student Sustainability Committee (SSC), we would like to thank you for responding to our call for proposals to use funds raised by the Sustainable Campus Environment Fee to implement a project that improves the sustainability of our campus.

SSC is pleased to inform you that the change in scope to your project has been approved. The deadlines for the Florida Orchard and Natural Resources Building Prairies have been extended to December 31, 2014. Your request to change the allocation of funds for the two projects as described in the attached request have been approved with the exception of snacks and refreshments. SSC is in support of purchasing a large water container for work days. Additionally, you are approved to allow graduating students to continue to work as employees in the summer following their graduation. No additional funds are necessary.

In addition, the project must meet the following requirements:

1. All funds must be spent by December 31, 2014.
2. A final report of all work completed should be provided by January 30, 2015.
3. Project status updates and detailed account statements must be provided at the end of each semester until the project is completed.
4. Any substantial modifications to project scope, budget, or timeline must first be approved by SSC.
5. All projects will be expected to follow campus policies and procedures as well as any applicable State and Federal laws.
6. SSC reserves the right to revoke funding if the project does not comply with the terms and conditions outlined in this letter.

Again, thank you for your interest in improving the sustainability of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Marika Nell  
Chair, Student Sustainability Committee



To: Student Sustainability Committee  
Re: Request for additional information  
Project: Florida Ave and Orchard Street Prairie Restoration and NRB Native Plantings  
From: John C. Marlin, project coordinator  
Date: February 18, 2013

Regarding specific budget and related questions for the two season budget.

Please note that the request covers two growing seasons and is not asking for additional funds.

Supplies include items needed for the work days and plant and site preparation. These include such items as trays and pots, plant labels, mulch, extra soil, weeding shovels and digging implements, lawn waste bags, work gloves, marking flags and related items that student volunteers normally do not have on campus. It will also cover herbicide such as that applied by Facilities and Services. It may also involve repair or rental of some equipment.

The travel request is mainly for travel to the Allerton Park prairie site, although there may be a relatively short trip to pick up plants at a nursery. Some plants will be installed at the Allerton prairie and the Allerton greenhouse will again be used for plants that overflow the campus greenhouse. The campus turtle vehicle which holds 14 students costs \$75 per day. It was used twice last spring to bring volunteers to the work site. The other funds will reimburse mileage at the normal University rate when personal vehicles are used to move plants. Mileage will not be paid for in town trips.

Prairie Research Institute student hourly rates are paid from minimum wage to \$12 per hour depending upon the type of work. This project will pay \$10 per hour which seems reasonable given that the work is largely manual outdoor labor. Last summer much of the volunteer work was done in temperatures exceeding 90 degrees.

Last summer most work at the various sites was done by volunteers. The volunteers could not keep up with the needs of the site. It is not feasible to handle the projects especially the Florida – Orchard (FLOR) project solely with volunteers. The planting and weeding requirements simply do not match student schedules. The suggested budget includes funds for a total of 2,800 hours of labor spread over two years at the two projects with the bulk being allocated to FLOR. They will likely work part time while attending classes. There will likely be 2-3 workers averaging ten hours per week during the school year and 2 to 4 averaging 20 – 30 hours per week during the summer. Individual schedules are expected to have considerable flexibility. Please note that the funding letter of July 29, 2009 requests that “the project make every effort to employ student workers and volunteers wherever suitable.” We will continue to recruit and utilize volunteers as much as possible over the next two years.

Regarding Grand Prairie Friends the request should have characterized that expense as hiring an outside contractor as envisioned on page 4 of the original proposal, rather than as a reimbursement. GPF paid student interns about \$2000 for 190 hours last summer for work at



FLOR. We are prepared to use our interns instead of using GPF for supplemental help envisioned in our request if that is the wish of the SSC.

This request does not include additional funds, just a more realistic allocation. The original scope and budget for FLOR was primarily to establish a prairie with a few paths and small interpretive area. On page 4 virtually all of the work, except mowing, after the initial planting was left to volunteers. In the budget paragraph on page 9 it states, “Additional maintenance costs will be supported by volunteer labor and additional project funding from the sustainable landscape endowment or Student Sustainability Committee.”

The original proposal seriously underestimated the difficulty presented by potential weeds in the seed bank and invasive plants. The simple fact is that paid workers with a schedule must supplement the volunteer effort if the project is to succeed. The current project coordinator volunteered 10 – 15 hours a week last growing season and community volunteers and GPF put in hundreds of hours as did students. That level of volunteer activity is unsustainable, especially since most community volunteers are involved with other local projects and made a special effort for FLOR last year.

The FLOR project has been a learning experience that in conjunction with smaller prairie plantings will provide valuable insights for the establishment of other large projects under consideration such as the Military Axis plantings. Plantings are quite different from typical renovation and construction projects with easily determined schedules and costs. It is necessary to revise budgets, plans and schedules to accommodate the influence of weather and other factors such as biological processes.

The University intends to evaluate the FLOR prairie in 2015 and determine as to whether the prairie will remain or be returned to grass at SSC expense (page 9).

The requested revisions are possible largely because student volunteers on the NRB project decided to gain experience by growing additional plants for the FLOR and other areas. Thus the extra \$10,000 for first year seeds in the FLOR budget was not needed for seeds. Additionally most funds allocated for herbicide and cover crop have not been needed as of this point. The \$15,000 for plant plugs for the interpretive area has not been spent either. If the main prairie is successfully established, an interpretive area can be installed and will probably utilize student grown plants following the model of the NRB installation. The originally envisioned mowed paths can also be installed after the prairie is established.

If it turns out that the funds allocated for interns exceed what is needed, we will submit a request to reallocate those funds next year.

The reallocations requested in the NRB budget will similarly help assure the success of the planting proposed under that project. The NRB planting is going more smoothly than the FLOR because of lessons learned at the earlier project.