

# **SWATeam Recommendation**

Name of SWATeam: Education

SWATeam Chair: Gillen Wood

Date Submitted to iWG: 4/2/2020

## **Specific Actions/Policy Recommended (a few sentences):**

The Education SWATeam recommends developing a **sustainable communities paid internship program** in partnership with local businesses, non-profits, local government agencies, community-based agencies and cultural institutions in Central Illinois.

The internship program will be designed to build organizational capacity in the Champaign-Urbana / Central Illinois with regard to sustainability and resilience efforts to advance sustainable development and/or climate action goals. This program aims to allow students the flexibility to devise an internship experience that aligns with their specific interests within sustainability. Collaborations between the University and Champaign-Urbana community can be taken advantage of as projects where internships can be generated.

The student interns will be involved in sustainability and community resilience efforts with directed emphasis toward sustainable development goals. Interns will gain real-world, project-based, and pre-professional experience in a workplace setting anywhere from 3 months (summer intern) to 1 year.

The intern program will also be tasked to provide leadership training as a foundation for real-world, project-based, and pre-professional experiences. Existing campus resources such as leadership development training modules available through Student Union programming should be utilized.

## **Rationale for Recommendation (a few sentences):**

The Education Working Group (EWG) is committed to working on curricular and extracurricular educational opportunities at U of I that help campus accomplish ICAP goals. The EWG complements the disciplinary educational experience of undergraduate and graduate students with opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, research and independent study about sustainability, energy and environment.

The internship program will enable the furthering of student opportunities to apply knowledge gained through interdisciplinary sustainability education to unique community and campus challenges. The program will exist as a natural extension of interdisciplinary learning, research and independent study – bridging a gap between study and community-based practice providing a channel for students to engage with the campus community and community at large to advance sustainability goals.

**Connection to iCAP Goals (a few sentences):**

The sustainability internship program closely aligns with the Illinois Climate Action Plan (iCAP) goals to educate future leaders of society to effectively engage in sustainability challenges. The program will have direct impact in the communities the interns will serve on issues of sustainability.

The sustainability internship program will collaborate with partner organizations on projects that will span many areas outlined in the iCAP: energy, transportation, water, procurement and waste/recycling, land use & environment, and outreach. The internship program will have the opportunity to build capacity throughout the campus community and wider Champaign-Urbana / Central Illinois Community to meet sustainability, resiliency, and climate change challenges.

The sustainability intern program will support student interns in taking on sustainability related projects and challenges in professional settings, enabling interns to learn soft-skills and job preparedness skills that will lead to their success in the future as Illinois graduated sustainability professionals with the ability and knowledge to “confront future climate issues with confidence”. (<https://icap.sustainability.illinois.edu/project/educate-future-leaders>)

**Perceived Challenges (a few sentences):**

In the first year the program will build relationships with local organizations, recruiting students, and implementing leadership training to shepherd those students through the internship experience.

The internship program may support itself from grants and contracts, but interns will be supported financially through the partnerships. Additional administrative support will be needed to set up a streamlined process for paying the interns if they are to be supported/paid through the university.

**Suggested unit/department to address implementation:**

It is recommended that the department best suited to implement a sustainability internship program would be the Institute for Sustainability Energy and Environment at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Anticipated level of budget and/or policy impact (low, medium, high):

No initial budget. Initial development of the program will be integrated into the SEE FP adviser’s responsibilities and utilize support of the Associate Director of F&S for Sustainability and the Campus Sustainability Coordinator. As the program expands, necessary resources will be identified and supported from iSEE.

**Individual comments are required from each SWATeam member (can be brief, if member fully agrees):**

Team Member Name	Team Member's Comments
Gillen Wood (Chair)	I support this recommendation.
Ann-Perry Witmer (Faculty)	I support this recommendation.
Stacy Gloss (Staff)	I support this recommendation.
Julie Cidell (Faculty)	(Unavailable for comment)
Sharlene Denos (Staff)	(Unavailable for comment)
Dave Guth (Faculty)	(Unavailable for comment)
Anna Riedl (Student)	Internships provide hands-on opportunities creating an avenue for students to grow within a desired field. A sustainability internship program would only benefit the student as well as ISEE.
Carolyn Cai (Student)	(Unavailable for comment)
Alexa Smith (Student)	As most students consult their college career services for these sorts of opportunities, I think that we would just need to ensure that career service office are well-informed on this opportunity.

**Comments from Consultation Group (if any; these can be anonymous):**

**Explanation and Background (can be supplied in an attachment):**

**Attachment A.**

**Program Implementation Plan**

Currently, students interested in local sustainability projects either create partnerships on their own, through an RSO, or utilizing resources at iSEE. The Associate Director of F&S for Sustainability, iSEE's Campus Sustainability Coordinator, and Sustainability, Energy, and Environment Fellows Program (SEE FP) adviser collaborate to connect students with resources to achieve their goals. This process is not formalized, but can be used the basis for establishing the sustainable communities paid internship program. This program needs to generate an

unique experience for students that does not cause conflict or confusion with existing programming.

Goal: Provide students with paid opportunity to work on local, sustainability projects such that students have educational outcomes and partnerships with the community are strengthened.

Objectives/Strategies:

- Identify specific student outcomes and assess overlap between sustainable communities internship program and SEE FP. Determine how programs will be separate and work in conjunction with one another.
- Identify community organizations that are willing to create a paid partnership.
- Identify students that want the experience of integrating into an organization to create sustainable solutions. Connect students to organizations.
- Evaluate resource use of iSEE's administration of the program. Determine additional needs.
- Collaborate with partner institutions on fundraising to support interns.
- Evaluate student and partner outcomes and assess changes to the program to improve both.
- Develop additional trainings on leadership and professionalism.
- Assess unpaid and for-credit internship opportunities.