# *Thank you for your commitment to green initiatives at the University of Illinois. One of the ongoing requirements listed in the terms of the funding agreement for your project is the submission of semesterly reports with key information about your project. In addition to this form, please provide additional financial documentation and/or progress photos if available.*

# *Please be as accurate as possible in describing the project (including possible setbacks or challenges in meeting the initial goals of the project). Not fully meeting your project's goals will not disqualify you from making future funding requests as long as your reports are as complete and accurate as possible. If you have any questions, please contact the Student Sustainability Committee, at* *sustainability-committee@illinois.edu**.*

**Project Name:** Joint Pollinator Garden and Composting Systems to Offset Environmental Impact and Reinforce Responsible Stewardship in Research

**Date of Report Submission:** 12/16/2021

**Project Purpose:**

This project aims to foster environmental stewardship among UIUC students, decrease wasteful practices through behavior changes and increase landscape resiliency through the installation of pollinator gardens that support small scale composting on campus. Students from three departments, and recent UIUC alumni installed and maintaindc these garden-composting systems, reducing food waste greenhouse gas emissions and supporting endangered pollinators/microfauna. The gardens also reinforce responsible stewardship increasing inclusivity of indigenous students with similar values. These garden plots, planted with native flowering plants and grasses, watered from rain barrels and trench composted with personal food scraps support local endangered pollinators and microfauna (salamanders), serve as a small scale composting initiative, reduce food waste greenhouse gas emissions and promote behavior change in participants/observers. This project is an expansion of the pollinator garden-composting system (“carbon garden”) funded by the SSC in 2019. Funds were awarded to add three additional student-managed gardens to the UIUC campus.

**Detailed Accounting of Expenditures to Date:**

Plants: $2879.69

Greenhouse space and soil: $875.06

Student labour: $935.97

Equipment and construction: 619.99

Total: $5310.71

**Project Progress to Date:**

In 2020, our project team put in place the two garden installations on time: Eastern Davenport Hall, and The Vivarium plot fall plantings. This amounted to approximately 500 plants.

In 2021, we completed early mid-Spring plantings in the Northern and Southern plots at the Vivarium, and repaired/removed failed plantings from the previous Fall.

The Davenport Hall plots have become overgrown as invasive plant species were able to grow extensively in the plot during the shut down. Considerable time was spent over May, June, and July trying to eliminate these species, cull the native plant species so that they were not overcrowded.

FY2021 semester progress: We have culled the Davenport plots of invasive plants, and prepared the plots for Spring.

Vivarium plots were surveyed and tidied (when necessary) for the winter. We have noted that number of plant species did not survive the year. As such, we will return in the Spring with more seedlings for the plants that proved to be most resilient.

An additional 5 students are involved in the design and maintenance of the plots.

COVID-19 is still creating delays. Vivarium rain barrel, composting, website/signage and outreach to 4H and the Language lab in particular, are delayed. We are anticipating that transmission events will drop in the late Spring, giving space for these aims to be met.

The timing of the planting of the IGB plot remains unclear as pandemic-induced delays have interfered with the water drainage project that was to precede the planting. We are in touch with the responsible people at F&S.

**Student Involvement and Outreach to Date:**

An additional 5 students have been involved in the design, installation of the gardens bringing the total number of students engaged in the development of the plots to 25.

FY2021: New students to the lab have been more directly involved in troubleshooting and supply management for the Davenport plots than in the previous year. This has required space management as well, as our immunogenomics lab is now housing dozens of gardening tools, pots, bags of soil etc. in a way that does not interfere with the sterile conditions required for the science work we do. In Spring 2022 the approach we will take to plot management will be different than in years past. Previously garden and composting care was tightly tied to the work conditions of the lab – lots of students coming in to complete experimental work on a schedule and completing composting and garden care as part of that. We now have to stagger our lab work due to the pandemic. We are, as a team, very rarely together in groups that exceed three people. With the original students that set up the gardens having moved on to greater and grander adventures, garden leadership needs to be redesigned. Spring 2022, a garden leadership team, with an undergraduate student as team leader, will manage the plots, develop COVID-safe composting protocols and assist in outreach and report to the lab.

**Marketing and Promotion Efforts to Date:**

As previously noted, traditional promotion and outreach efforts have been difficult. Gardens are something one works with their hands. In the context of a highly contagious pathogen that can maim even those that are vaccinated, it is difficult to scale promotion and outreach. However, in the Spring of 2021 I gave a public facing talk via Facebook Live a Champaign County Sustainability Network. The speakers and audience included UIUC students and Champaign County community members. The talk was well received and helped the “Carbon Garden” project connect with individuals engaging in other small scale composting efforts in the area, and generated email enquiries from the community.

We are currently in talks with Brent Lewis, Morgan White and the founder of the Red Oak rain garden to find ways to safely promote the project further and develop long term stewardship strategies.

FY2022 Progress: promotion has mainly occurred via lab recruitment. Our lab is over 20 in size at the moment, with students regularly rotating in and out of our research program. All students are engaged in the gardens and their maintenance.

**Additional Comments:**

Any additional comments/relevant information for the semesterly report