



## STUDENT SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE Funding Application – Step II

### Funding Criteria

#### A. General Rules

1. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to submit requests for funding. Student-led projects require a faculty or staff sponsor in order to have funds awarded.
2. Funding can only go to university-affiliated projects from students, faculty, staff, and departments.
3. All SSC projects must make a substantial impact on students. This may be a direct impact or an impact through education and engagement. All SSC funding is 100% from student green fees, so the projects funded by the students must benefit them.
4. SSC encourages innovation and new technologies – creative projects are encouraged to apply.
5. Unless a type of expense is specifically listed below as having restrictions, SSC can generally fund it. The items referenced below should not be taken as comprehensive list.

#### B. Things SSC Can Fund, On A Case-By-Case Basis

1. SSC can fund feasibility studies and design work; however, it must work toward ultimately addressing a sustainability need on campus.
2. SSC can fund staff positions that are related to improving campus sustainability. Strong preference will be given to proposals receiving matching funding from departments and/or plans for maintaining continuity of the position after the end of the initial grant.
3. SSC can fund outreach events with a central theme of sustainability, provided their primary audience is the general campus community.
4. SSC discourages funding requests for food and prizes but will consider proposals on a case by case basis that prove significant reasoning.
5. SSC can fund repairs and improvements to existing building systems as long as it works toward the goal of improving campus sustainability; however, a preference is shown to projects utilizing new or innovative ideas.
6. SSC can provide departments with loans for projects with a distinct payback on a case by case base. Loans will require a separate memorandum of understanding between SSC and departmental leadership pledging to repay the award in full and detailing the payback plan.

#### C. Things SSC Will Not Fund:

1. SSC will not fund projects with a primary end goal of generating revenue for non-University entities.
2. SSC will not fund personal lodging, food, beverage, and other travel expenses.
3. SSC will not fund any travel expenses.
4. SSC will not fund tuition or other forms of personal financial assistance for students beyond standard student employee wages.

**Your Step 2 funding application should include this application, the supplemental budget form, and any letters of support.**

Please submit this completed application and any relevant supporting documentation to [Sustainability-Committee@illinois.edu](mailto: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 Student Sustainability Committee at [sustainability-committee@illinois.edu](mailto:sustainability-committee@illinois.edu).

## General & Contact Information

**Project Name:** CETACEAN (The Whale)

**Total Amount Requested from SSC:** \$68,950

**Project Topic Areas:** *EDUCATION*

Transportation Food & Waste Land & Water Energy

**Applicant Name:** David (Deke) Weaver

**Campus Affiliation (Unit/Department or RSO/Organization):** School of Art & Design

**Email Address:** [dekew@illinois.edu](mailto:dekew@illinois.edu)

### Check one:

This project is solely my own **OR**

This project is proposed on behalf of (name of student org., campus dept., etc.):

### Project Team Members

Name	Department	Email
David (Deke) Weaver	School of Art & Design	<a href="mailto:dekew@illinois.edu">dekew@illinois.edu</a>
Terri Ciafalo	Theatre Department	<a href="mailto:tciofalo@illinois.edu">tciofalo@illinois.edu</a>
John Boesche	Theatre Department	<a href="mailto:jboesche@illinois.edu">jboesche@illinois.edu</a>
Susan Becker	School of Art & Design	<a href="mailto:becker2@illinois.edu">becker2@illinois.edu</a>
others		

### Student-Led Projects (Mandatory):

Name of Faculty or Staff Project Advisor:

Advisor's Email Address:

### **Financial Contact (Must be a full-time University of Illinois staff member)**

Contact Name: Jenell Hardy

Unit/Department: School of Art & Design

Email Address: [jljackso@uillinois.edu](mailto:jljackso@uillinois.edu)

## Project Information

Please review the proposal materials and online content carefully. It is highly recommended you visit a working group meeting sometime during the proposal submission process.

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

You may copy and paste your Step 1 application answer if nothing has changed.

CETACEAN (The Whale), is a project culminating in a public performance built around a full-scale blue whale skeleton, an enormous marionette suspended and “swimming” through the air of the University of Illinois Stock Pavilion. Using recycled plastic, the 100-foot-long skeleton will be built by local students—a haunting, crowd-sourced ghost whale. In addition to providing a cathartic communal moment, CETACEAN will serve as an educational platform for ideas about ecological systems, climate change, and resilience, while embodying collaborative processes, sustainability, and interdisciplinary storytelling. Research, fundraising, and planning for CETACEAN have been going on for a year. The final performance is slated to take place in September-October 2023, two years from now.

### **Where will the project be located? Are special permissions required for this project site?**

If special permission is required for this location, please explain and submit any relevant letters of support with the application.

The project’s process will take place in a number of sites - university classrooms and studios, local schools, park workshops, and, finally, in the University of Illinois Stock Pavilion. I’ve started meeting with Champaign high school art teachers and UIUC FAA professors to talk about how the project could intersect with their 2022-23 syllabi. Over the next couple of months, I will be reaching out to Urbana schools, University High School, and - through Allerton Park - rural schools in other parts of Champaign County. Work in Fall 2022 classrooms will range from presenting ideas of how East Central Illinois and the midwest connect with oceans, whales, and petrochemicals to crowd-sourcing rotoscoped animations of breaching whales to building elements of the whale marionette. Similar work will be built into workshops held at Allerton Park, Urbana Park District, and CU FabLab during the summer and fall of 2022.

The whale marionette will be installed in the University of Illinois Stock Pavilion during Summer 2023 (I’ve included an email of support from the Animal Sciences Unit which manages the Stock Pavilion). The final performances will take place in the Stock Pavilion in September/October 2023. We will work with Animal Sciences to find a time slot that works for all parties.

**Other than the project team, who will have a stake in the project? Please list other individuals, groups, or departments affiliated directly or indirectly by the project. This includes any entity providing funding (immediate, future, ongoing, matching, in-kind, etc.) and any entities that benefit from this project. Please attach letters of commitment or support at the end of the application.**

- Urbana Park District
- CU Community Fab Lab
- Center for Advanced Study
- Humanities Research Institute
- Allerton Park and Retreat Center
- Illinois Arts Council Artist Fellowship
- Urbana Neighborhood Connections Center
- Champaign Community Unit School District 4
- UIUC: American Society of Civil Engineers - Student Chapter
- UIUC: American Society of Mechanical Engineers - Student Chapter
- UIUC: College of Fine & Applied Art, Dance Dept., Theatre Dept., School of Art & Design, School of Architecture

## **How will this project involve and/or benefit students?**

*This includes both direct and indirect impact.*

CETACEAN (The Whale) will benefit students through ...

- emotional public engagement with this unusual immersive event
- community action: we'll build our recycled-plastic whale like rural collectives once built barns.
- education about oceans, whales, plastics, climate, and how this all connects with East Central Illinois
- receiving permission to think outside the box

Students will be involved on multiple levels ...

- creation and fabrication of costumes, set pieces, video-animation frames, and the whale itself
- assisting in the design of the whale
- being part of performing and presenting the work

The Unreliable Bestiary's stories of animals, climate, and people, create experiences that subtly connect wildly disparate local and global dots. By making environmental, psychological, social degradation tangible and present, by linking these stories to cultural origin myths and our fantasies of the future, remixing them, rewriting them, weaving them from whole cloth and telling them in unusual contexts—we hope to remove our audiences from the daily grind and wake them up. Like water and air, the human imagination is elemental to natural systems. It transforms things. We work with humor and the absurd. Music and silence. People and wonder. Our live performances quietly insist on re-enchantment and the dismantling of the status quo.

## **How will you bring awareness and publicize the project on campus? In addition to SSC, where will information about this project be reported?**

We will employ marketing strategies that have worked to publicize past Unreliable Bestiary events. In addition to working with the university's Illinois News Bureau to spread awareness about the work, the performance will be listed in the Krannert Center for Performing Arts' 2023-24 catalog, the Urbana Parks District catalog, and Allerton Parks' events listing and email announcements. CETACEAN (The Whale) will be the Unreliable Bestiary's fifth performance that is supported by the Center for Advanced Study. CAS has been enormously helpful in publicizing these events through their university-wide email blasts, distribution of posters and postcards, their list of events, and local radio advertising on WILL. The work will be advertised through personal, departmental, school, college, and university social media channels.

At this point, information about the project will also be reported to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research's Arts CO+RE (Community + Research) program.

## Financial Information

*In addition to the below questions, please submit the supplemental budget spreadsheet available on the Student Sustainability Committee [website](#). Submission of both documents by the submission deadline is required for consideration of your project.*

### **Have you applied for funding from SSC before? If so, for what project?**

I have not applied for SSC funding before.

### **If this project is implemented, will you require any ongoing funding required? What is the strategy for supporting the project in order to cover replacement, operation, or renewal costs?**

*Please note that SSC provides funding on a case by case basis annually and should not be considered as an ongoing source of funding.*

I will continue to raise funds throughout this coming year. Depending on how we do with foundations, crowd-sourced funding, and individual giving, we may apply for additional funding from the SSC if that is possible.

### **Please include any other obtained sources of funding. Have you applied for funding elsewhere?**

*Please attach any relevant letters of support as needed in a separate document.*

Arts CO+RE (\$15,000 confirmed, on track for another \$80,000 spread out over two stages)  
Center for Advanced Study (\$10,000)  
Humanities Research Institute (\$2,000)  
College of Fine and Applied Arts (\$2,000)  
Illinois Arts Council Fellowship (\$10,000)  
HASS Research Funds (\$4,500)

## Environmental, Economic, and Awareness Impacts

**How will the project improve environmental sustainability at the Urbana-Champaign campus? If applicable, how does this project fit within any of the [Illinois Climate Action Plan \(iCAP\)](#) goals?**

CETACEAN (The Whale) will be another voice that helps our community imagine reuse, ecology, environmental justice, and biodiversity.

CETACEAN (The Whale) relates to these items from iCAP's Comprehensive List of Objectives ...

- 5.3: Establish a Culture of Reuse
- 6.1: Broaden Sustainability Education
- 7.4: Local Collaborations
- 8.1: Urban Biodiversity Master Plan

**How will you monitor and evaluate the project's progress and environmental outcomes? What short-term and long-term environmental impacts do you expect?**

*Some examples include carbon emissions, water conservation, green behavior, and reduced landfill waste.*

The project's progress will be carefully monitored over the next two years, aiming for CETACEAN performances in September/October of 2023. Monitoring environmental outcomes for this project won't be measured like carbon or waste. We hope to inspire audiences with this project. We hope the project will contribute to the shifting narratives around climate change, habitat protection, green behavior, petrochemicals, and ecological interconnectivity.

**What are your specific outreach goals? How will this project inspire change at UIUC?**

I was reading a science fiction novel - *Annihilation* by Jeff VanderMeer. An uplifting title, no? In writing about a species that evolves out of a particular habitat, VanderMeer brings up a French wine-making term. *Terroir* is defined as the total environment in which a particular wine is produced, including factors such as soil, topography, and climate. All the details of how the grapes are grown, harvested, handled, crushed - all of it contributes to the wine's final taste. Temperature, humidity, salinity, exposure ... maybe even love and respect ... it all matters.

So, if we consider our habitat, the subtle details of our overlapping cultural, biological, economic ecologies - the pond in which we swim here in Urbana-Champaign - and then push some of these elements *with intention* ... what is possible? What delicious, surprising thing could we make together?

The cross-disciplinary performance events the Unreliable Bestiary has produced over the past twelve years have grown out of collaborations with individuals and institutions, within both the university and the wider community. The project has a track record. The team gathering around CETACEAN includes long time Bestiary collaborators Allerton Park, Urbana Parks District, the Center for Advanced Study, and core team members - award-winning artist/designers, some with who I have worked for nearly 30 years. These relationships work because they are rooted in trust. Trust gives us confidence to create unusual, memorable, communal events.

Working with the CU FabLab, the Grainger School of Engineering, and Champaign Community Unit School District 4 opens new opportunities. With Art Education Professor Jorge Lucero and representatives from Unit Four, we are locating art and science teachers interested in CETACEAN's approach to ideas around biodiversity, climate change, and social justice. How could the project dovetail with their syllabi? We'll find ways to get classes what they need while involving students in a project much larger than any single one of us. Biodesign engineer Professor Aimy Wissa will be advising faculty and students from Engineering, Theatre, Art + Design and the CU Fab Lab as we work through our whale marionette design process. Award-winning performing artists and designers such as Jennifer Allen, Susan Becker, John Boesche, Terri Ciofalo, James Lo, and Andy Warfel will stitch together the patches with students, performers, and community members to produce the final performances.

CETACEAN outreach has already begun. The UIUC student chapter of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers has developed 2 strong proposals for how the whale could be constructed. I've met with Champaign high school art teachers to talk about incorporating CETACEAN into their Spring 2022 and 2022-23 syllabi. In early December I'm scheduled to talk with instructor Central High School instructor Roberta Bennett's art class - the first of many to come. I've spoken with the Urbana Parks District's Executive Director Timothy Bartlett and Allerton Park's Director Derek Peterson about doing presentations about the project and implementing workshops in Summer and Fall 2022. The project will work with the the CU FabLab camps and workshops through the summer and fall of 2022.

But, perhaps, down at the root of all of this lies the notion of doing something audacious and awe-inspiring. We need to talk about new ways of living. CETACEAN can help with this conversation.

### **If applicable, how does this project impact environmental injustice or social injustice?**

If you're writing a short story, a play or a screenplay, you might have heard about Chekhov's gun: "If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following act it should be fired." If you don't use the gun, as a dramatist, you've lost an opportunity.

Samuel Epstein MD (Professor Emeritus of Environmental Medicine, University of Illinois, Chicago) talked about public health in a way that feels related to Chekhov: "As the petrochemical era grew and grew, warning signs emerged that some of these chemicals, could pose hazards. The data initially were trivial, anecdotal, but gradually, a body of data started accumulating to the extent that we now know that the synthetic chemicals which have permeated our workplace, our consumer products, our air, our water, produced cancer, and also birth defects and some other toxic effects. Furthermore, industry has known about this ... and have attempted to trivialize these risks ... If I take a gun and shoot you, that's criminal. If I expose you to some chemicals, which knowingly are going to kill you, what difference is there? The difference is it takes longer to kill you."

Drama is about compression. If the gun doesn't get used until it's off-stage or, maybe, 20 years after the time of the play - the audience probably won't care. It's hard to care about slowly melting glaciers. It's hard to worry about invisible suffering, the suffering that happens off-stage. It's hard to get worked up about the quiet cancer cluster or the spike in cases of auto-immune disease. It's hard to worry about the slow death of enormous creatures that hardly anybody ever sees or the invisible slow degradation of the earth's living systems. Why does the extinction of non-human creatures on the other side of the world matter to those of us here in East Central Illinois? This question comes up with all the Bestiary performances. It's a challenge to find and create stories and images that have the impact of the gun as opposed to the insidious creep of climate change and petrochemicals. We create stories that connect the dots, that make global, living systems personal, local, and present— stories that have the dramatic urgency of the pistol hanging on the wall.

CETACEAN started with this idea: a beached whale can be the equivalent of a Superfund site. Removing a whale carcass—35-50 tons of rotting flesh—can be an enormous problem for a small beach town. The task becomes harder, and even dangerous, when it's understood that the man-made toxins that pollute the ocean are concentrated in whale blubber. In *Fathoms: The World in the Whale* Rebecca Giggs writes, "Greenland's Inuit women, who seasonally consume whale meat, whale skin, and fat as traditional food, had been warned off eating beluga during pregnancy and advised to stop nursing their babies altogether ... The Inuit women may live in some of the most isolated and least industrialized regions on the planet, but sustaining themselves on whales had turned their bodies into habitats of contamination. According to BBC's 'Planet Earth: The Future': 'If her milk was in containers other than her breasts, she would not be allowed to take it over state lines.'"

A second indelible image from *Fathoms*: a dead sperm whale washed up on a Spanish beach, its belly filled with an entire greenhouse. The greenhouse fully equipped with tarps, pipes, flowerpots, plastic sacks, and garden hoses. In addition to the greenhouse the whale had ingested a mattress, a coat hanger, and an ice cream tub. '

Imagining toxic carcasses, contaminated mothers, and plastic whales is grim. But for many of us, these stories still feel far from home. Greenland? The ocean? Why? "Save the whales" and "Stop the plastic" have been long-standing jokes - oh to be a monied white liberal environmentalist who has the luxury and time to worry about whales and plastic. The contamination of food and water hits much closer to home with Flint's ongoing lead poisoning crises. Microplastic's ubiquitous invasion is slowly, invisibly choking the waters and food-chains of the Great Lakes. Central Illinois has a much higher incidence of cancer than the rest of the state. The most brutal effects of petrochemical capitalism have always fallen most heavily on people of color and the poor—folks who have been kept off stage and out of sight. Climate justice essayist Mary Annaïse Heglar writes, "Climate change itself is not racist, but it is the product of racism. The fossil fuel industry was literally built on the backs and over the graves of Indigenous people around the globe, as they were forced off their land and either slaughtered or subjugated—from the Arab world to Africa, from Asia to the Americas."

We need the CETACEAN project now because things are getting dramatic. Chekhov's guns seem to be everywhere and we're in the second act. A "black elephant" is a cross between "a black swan" (an unlikely, unexpected event with enormous ramifications) and the "elephant in the room" (a problem visible to everyone that no one wants to address). In 2014, environmentalist Adam Sweidan pointed out that there was a "herd of environmental black elephants" on the brink of stampede: global warming, deforestation, ocean acidification, massive freshwater pollution, and mass extinction. Sweidan said, "When they hit, we'll claim they were black swans no one could have predicted, but, in fact, they are black elephants, very visible right now." So, here we are, in 2021. It seems that this environmental herd is in full stampede. Climate activist and writer Naomi Klein has said, "We live in a time of multiple overlapping intersecting crises. We have to figure out how to multitask, which means we need to figure out how to lower emissions in line with what scientists are telling us. And we need to do it in a way that builds a fair economy in the process. Because if we don't figure out a way to deal with climate change that doesn't ask people to choose between the need to put food on the table... and the need to safeguard the living systems on which all of life depends, we're going to lose."

While CETACEAN may not provide answers to building a fair economy or lowering emissions, it will provide a compelling event that presses these urgent tangled questions. This moment requires varied tactics and voices from all quarters. CETACEAN can be one of these local, urgent voices. Using strategies from our past performances, the Unreliable Bestiary is finding ways to talk about the elephant in the room. Through our rich, emotional stories of animals, climate, and people, we're creating experiences that subtly draw out the connections between wildly disparate local and global dots, experiences that continue to illustrate how the personal is political.