The end of the Fall 2014 semester has defined the closing of Phase I of the Outdoor Education Space Design Challenge. Phase I is defined as the initial programming and design phase that created valuable collaborations across students, community members, and design professionals in southwest Michigan. This semester included three main highlights: a design panel conversation, the submittal of a design plan, and the review of that design plan.

The design panel included James Larke from ChemLink, Corri Sandwick from the Alliance for Environmental Sustainability, and Mike Linsea from Solar Winds Power Systems. The design panel resulted in an informal and educational conversation about material selection, solar panel design, and desired outcomes for the space. Positive highlights from the meeting include many offerings for donations of materials and solar panel equipment, and advising for the construction of the space. Many of the attendees are still very interested in continued collaboration. They are included in project updates via email.

The team SimpLine submitted a design plan. It included CAD drawings for internal and external renderings, two composting toilets, a rainwater feature, a full solar array, and an upper deck for site viewing. While the design included many innovative design features, the key components of the plan included inventive solutions for materials allocation. SimpLine excelled in working with local businesses to potentially donate future materials for the construction of the space. The submitted design plan will require additional detailed drawings and future approval by Construction Services in order to be considered for construction. Many of the design features such as the composting toilets, rainwater collection system, and insulation and flooring materials will be considered in the next phase of design.

The review of the submitted design plan included email correspondence between committed jury panelists and the design challenge coordinator. Panelists completed the Design Rubric and provided notes and insights. Review highlights included a desire for more detailed drawings and engineering calculations based on energy consumption and production. Considering the extensive time commitment of SimpLine and their effort in
creating many feature solutions for the outdoor educations space, they are awarded the significant cash prize allocated by the OfS. Means of this processing is currently taking place through WMU Foundation Gift Processing.

Phase II is currently being discussed by Leadership. It is hoped to include the future finalization of design to later be approved by WMU Facilities Management and Construction. The implementation of an outdoor education space at the Gibbs House is included in the Office for Sustainability five-year plan.

The OfS Competition Template and the Outdoor Education Space Design Challenge Final Report are included in the final package of deliverables for this semester. Both of these documents may be found in the OfS Shared Drive. The OfS Competition Template is a document design to act as a guide for any future design competitions hosted by the OfS. The Template is designed to target strategy, planning, and action to be applicable to any discipline and competition type.