Overview
The amount of single-occupancy vehicles that travel to WMU’s campus each day is an unpleasant feature of our campus culture. These vehicles are responsible for approximately 31% of WMU’s total greenhouse gas emissions each year and cause considerable maintenance costs and parking infrastructure demands on campus. By utilizing a university endorsed carpool program our campus could advance its commitment to sustainability. Endorsement of such a program would empower community members with the necessary tools to collaborate in the act of commuting to WMU’s campus.

Data
Survey data displays that 56% of students at WMU are interested in a campus carpool program, and an even higher number, 66%, reported that they have carpooled in the past. Combining this with the fact that 54% of the student body commutes via single occupancy vehicle, and that 59% of students live within 1-5 miles of campus, a clear opportunity for reduction exists that simply needs to be capitalized upon.

Goals
1. Establish Carpool Pilot Program
2. Continue to audit campus transportation
3. Increase sustainability initiatives and visibility
4. Decrease amount of Single Occupancy Vehicles on campus
5. Increase connectivity and collaboration on campus
Specifications
A pilot program will be established in collaboration with Parking Services to create a new parking pass option for carpoolers. An application for this permit will be created that will require participants to fulfill several requirements to ensure eligibility. A minimum of two persons will have to fill out an application together, all persons involved must be full time students or faculty, and they must travel to main campus as their primary destination. By requiring stringent criteria for qualification, the program would reduce its scope to a manageable and equitable level. Several reserved spots in campus owned parking lots would be established and signage produced (paid for by an SSG) to mark them as carpooling spots. Participants who qualify for the program would be able to purchase a parking pass at a reduced rate, and split the costs of this permit between the members of their carpool. This intrinsic incentive structure will cost the university little and the program will highlight WMU’s continued efforts to advance sustainability as a way of life.

Best Practices & Application at WMU
While seeking the best carpool program structure for Western Michigan University the authors of this study have identified three universities that have successfully implemented carpool programs on their campuses. Stanford University, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of Wisconsin - Madison all maintain carpool programs with similar approaches. Overarching themes of all three programs are a ride home program, flexibility for daily passes, and priority parking. Although some programs offer monetary incentive structures, it is clear from interviews with WMU administrators that this is not currently feasible for WMU. Moreover, ride home initiatives will need to be reviewed for economic implications reasons as well as potential efficacy in light of our free bus pass system. In short, a ride home program, flexibility for daily passes, and priority parking are essential for a successful carpooling program at WMU.