

THE STUDENT SUSTAINABILITY
SURVEY
&
NATIONAL “GREEN FEE” CAMPUS
INTERACTION ASSESSMENT

A CULTURAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING
SPRING 2013

TAYLOR DAUGHERTY
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 4100 APPROPRIATE
TECHNOLOGY
& SUSTAINABILITY-WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
CAMPUS AS A LIVING, LEARNING, LABORATORY
4/17/2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	5
Methodology	7
Best Practices	8
Discussion and Further Analysis	10
Limits & Future Work	11
Conclusion	12
References	13
Appendixes	14

Executive Summary

This report was commissioned to (1) examine the methods of increasing participation in the Student Sustainability Survey administered annually by Western Michigan University's Office for Sustainability relative to the dynamics of the university and (2) to compare the aims of the Survey Implementation and Ongoing Projects Fund alongside the aims of other four-year university "Green Fees" and associated programs' marketing techniques. Enhancing the aforementioned is an essential part of carrying out the Office for Sustainability's mission to build a diverse and flourishing learning community around sustainability thus improving the quality the life for all.

The first goal of this project, was executed in the form of applying a portion of Clifford Geertz & Michael Pacanowsky's Cultural Approach to Organizations as a means of actively observing the culture of Western Michigan University's student body via a "cultural audit" . The efforts done on campus to promote the Student Sustainability Survey show an increased likelihood in student perceived willingness to take the survey when 1) they have a personal stake in Environmental Studies, Sustainability, or have taken advantage of services rendered by the Office for Sustainability, 2) they were sought out on a personal level , or 3) desirable rewards are offered in the form of incentives or extra credit; when compared with students simply handed a flyer, or asked "will you take this survey?". By conducting a "5 W's & an H" (Who, What, Where, When, Why and How) audit of the culture of Western Michigan University, great insight was drawn as to why students presently do or do not opt to take the survey.

Research was also done on similar universities with "Green Fees" and established sustainability programs. Of the 52 (excluding Western Michigan University) Association for the Advancement of Sustainable in Higher Education (AASHE) recognized universities with "Green Fees" 26 schools (50%) use the funds acquired solely for the purchasing of renewable energy supplies and/or research. Of the remaining half offering grants for student projects, very few take an active approach in gauging the opinion of the entire student body in regards to fund allocation or initiative importance. Most of the universities have a diverse review committee, said to represent the needs of the student body as a whole. For this project, initiatives will be covered from:

- The University of Missouri
- Western Washington University
- Vanderbilt University
- University of California – Los Angeles
- The University of Vermont
- University of Memphis
- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- Grand Valley State University

The report evaluates the abovementioned and makes the following recommendations:

1. Future survey groups incorporate a hybrid group to execute all tasks cooperatively.
2. More research be done in the incorporation of i-clicker adapted surveys for in-class use.
3. Marketing strategies for 2013-2014 be more personal and direct with specific attention given to:
 - a. Widespread in- class presentations.

- b. Individual outreach to all registered student organizations.
 - c. Reminder mass emails to the entire server of students who took either the 2012 or 2013 survey.
4. More research is done for the incorporation of a major-specified tab on the Office for Sustainability homepage for each college.

By increasing the intimacy of student outreach, making a clear connection for students between sustainability and their specific majors or life plans and potentially taking the survey into classrooms, greater strides will be made not only build a learning community around sustainability, but to ensure that foundation is meaningful and lasting.

Introduction

Since 2010, Western Michigan University's Office for Sustainability has implemented an \$8 per semester and \$4 per summer session, Sustainability Fee. The funds are allocated into three separate accounts (see appendix 3.5) all directed towards the furthering of sustainable projects and practices at Western Michigan University. The annually distributed Student Sustainability Survey, serves as a gauge of student's opinion regarding, in part, the allocation of said funds. The results have a strong impact for future funding decisions. Meaningful and widespread participation in the survey is a necessity for Western Michigan University Students, for only through their contributions and cooperation will effective change take place.

This year, our group served as a promotion team for the Student Sustainability Survey, each with our own personal endeavors. Aside from promoting the survey, much of my attention was given to performing a "cultural audit" of Western Michigan University's Student Body, in specific regard to their response to being asked to take the survey. I sought to answer the "5W's and an H" of the Student Sustainability Survey: WHO normally takes the survey, WHAT motivates those taking it to do so, WHERE is the most effective location to get more people involved, WHEN is the most effective time to do so, WHY do people take (or chose not to take) the survey and HOW do we get more people to do so.

Who: The strong majority of students who took the survey this year (and last) were from the College of Arts & Sciences (see appendix 3.3). When approached in public or sought out on personal level, the majority of students with either a major or minor in Environmental Studies, had either already taken or planned to take the survey.

Sent message: "hey.! have you taken the sustainability survey yet?
<https://survey.wmich.edu/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=I4MJnp6>"

Sample response: "didn't know it was up yet! ill get on it;)." "

Partially because they know about the survey, either via classroom buzz or teacher conversation, but also because sustainability has a clear and present connection to their interests in school, students in the department faithfully participate.

What: Contributing from the later, those with a connection to sustainability had a higher positive response rate of taking the survey than those who did not. Those sought out on a personal level via text message , email or word of mouth were more likely than those just handed a flyer to give seemingly positive response in regards to taking the survey.

Where: Lingering students anywhere around campus seemed to be successful targets. Whether sitting in the library, waiting for a classroom to open, cooling down in the student recreation center, or lounging in the Bernhard Center, when approached, lingering students were twice as likely as a walking student, to take a flyer and listen to a brief explanation of why they should take it; as opposed to students on their way some place, who either pocketed the flyer, or continued walking and didn't have time to talk. Classrooms were also effective places of reaching out to students because they are stationary and more inclined to listen when information is given in a presentation styled manner. Getting the okay from teachers, either to offer extra credit to take the exam or giving someone from the promotional team the chance to get in front of the classroom both seemed to be effective means of making connections.

When: According to Nick Gauthier, an advisor for Western Michigan University, the busiest times (as related to the most classes being offered at that time) to take classes at Western are between 10am-2pm per the most classes being offered during that time. He perceives Tuesdays and Thursdays to be overall busier than Mondays and Wednesdays as well. By concentrating on let out times: 10:45 am to 3:15 pm host the highest foot traffic on Western Michigan University's campus.

Why: The reason given in the greatest frequency as to why students did not want to take the survey was not knowing about, not feeling like doing it or not having the time.

How: This section called for the analysis of abovementioned data in compilation with the results of the survey.

The initial purpose of the group was increasing the amount of participants but the greater purpose behind such is establishing a relationship. A person should not take the survey and forget about sustainability forever. The current state of student affairs at Western Michigan University, especially compared with other universities around the nation is one in which contribution is encouraged. Students have meaningful input but have strong desire to be sought out, in order to contribute said input, when it is not seemingly related to them on the surface level.

Methodology

As aforementioned the main scope of my personal research was performing a “cultural audit” of the overall mood of Western Michigan University students in regards to the sustainability survey. It is impossible to solve a problem without knowing what the actual problem is. By taking the time to observe student dynamics, meaningful information was drawn as to how to best approach the student body next year.

The initial part of my documentation included taking note of student responses during Feed The Green (see the other Student Sustainability Project Submission by Gillian Asque and Patrick Myer). A common question asked during the distribution of donuts to campus students was: “Do you want a free donut?” Despite freezing temperatures and tremendous amounts of snow (see Appendix 3.1) students still visited the table? When we asked them whether they would take the survey, nearly all students responded with “yes” and took the flyer, in all cases if a donut was distributed, the student took a flyer card. The Student Recreation Center distribution went a similar way with the distribution of candy (since tablets/laptop were available, many student who took the candy stuck around to take the exam). (see Appendix 3.2) In both instances, students who recognized one of the members of our team came to take a flyer 100 percent of the time. Students who did not personally know a student but were associated with them either via class, athletic team, or job also took a flyer 100 % of the time. Students who did not have any relation to anyone on the team 4 out every 10 times continued walking and 6 out of every 10 times took the flyer.

There was significant difference to be drawn when asking students closed ended questions like, “have you taken the student sustainability fee?” and “what all do you know about the student sustainability fee?” There was also a difference in response between, “will you take this survey for the office for sustainability” and “will you take this survey for us, we need it to pass our class.” With the later, almost every student approached or passing was willing to either take a flyer, or in the case of the Student Recreation Center, stay and take the survey right there.

When members of organizations were personally approached by familiar faces, all chapter presidents were willing to allow our team to come in and set up laptops. Because there was discrepancy with utilizing Office for Sustainability resources, we were unable to rent out the laptops. For future endeavors , if logistics can be worked out, going into registered student organization meeting and administering the survey would be a great means of ensuring high numbers.

In regards to attempts with professors to take the survey in class, or offer extra credit for it. One professor of mass lecture was unwilling to distribute the survey or offer extra credit but offered to email the class and post it online. One professor of mass lecture was willing to administer paper surveys but unwilling to allow students to bring in their technologies and take the survey. One professor of medium size lecture was willing to offer extra credit to the students who took the survey.

When distributing text messages, there was a positive response from more than half of 100 messages distributed, and two parties agreed to redistribute the message via text to their contact list as well.

Best Practices across the Nation

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, or AASHE, formally recognizes 52 schools excluding Western Michigan University that have “Green Fees”. After looking into the 52 schools, only 26 of them were found to have fees that allow for the allocation, either in part or entirely, for student projects. Of those universities, significantly less make any attempt at all to gauge the opinion of the entire student body in regards to their ranking of important issues or opinion regarding allocation. Many have a small, diverse student group, that serves as a representative for the student body as a whole. Other universities such as Maryland University, The University of Missouri and Ohio State University do conduct formal surveys every year but they are distributed in the form of literacy assessments and do not affect the allocation of funds for projects at all, those surveys will not be included in the scope of this review.

Vanderbilt University

The Vanderbilt Green Fund is a \$3 fee collected each semester. It generates \$75,000 and has a multi-scaled competition each year for the award money. The fund is exhausted every year. After being voted on by the Student Association, the top programs are given to the advisory committee made up of students government representatives and faculty from the Environmental Studies department. They make the final decisions, either to fund one project wholly or multiple smaller projects. The funds are exhausted each year. There is no means of assessing the entire student body, as the student association serves as general representation.

The University of Memphis

The University has a \$10 green fee for all projects. The Department of Student Affairs sends an email out annually to every student and faculty member, inviting them to submit their ideas. Student Affairs then hears the proposals and makes their selection. Aside from the personally administered emails asking for specific projects, there is no means assessing the opinion of the student body as a whole.

The University of California – Los Angeles

Much like the University of Memphis, UCLA’s \$4 Green Fee is accessed purely via application. With no other means of gauging overall student opinion, as it is assumed that the overseeing committee of students and faculty represent the campus well enough. It is interesting to note however that ¼ of the \$200,000 annually generated, goes to supporting low income students without the ability to pay via an opt-out request.

The University of Illinois – Urbana Champagne

The Student Sustainability Committee is responsible for overseeing the AASHE recognized largest Green Fee on campus. They have a \$14 per semester Campus Environment Fee and a \$2 per semester Clean Energy Technologies Fee. This is a joint faculty, student and staff committee, but students only have voting power. Of the ten voting student members, every campus department is represented and two members must be graduate students.

Western Washington University

Western Washington has a 70 cents per credit hour per term Sustainability fee. Chaired by the board of directors there is a committee that overviews all submissions for grant proposals to the Office of Sustainability. The committee is comprised of students at large, said to be the voice for the rest of the university. There is no other means of gauging how the university as a whole wants their money spent.

The University of Missouri

As for mentioned the university sends out an annual 100 question survey to approximately 25% of its student population (8,000 students) and receives on average 1,000 responses. Because this is a literacy quiz, it is not in the scope of our assessment; the university also however, distributes a variety of smaller scaled student surveys throughout the year. After every major event the Environmental Leadership Office puts on, they distribute a survey either via email or paper asking students to rank and rate the event. This helps serve as gauge of student overall opinion of the events put on as their \$1 a semester fee is now used (starting Fall 2012) as an event fee, with projects funded on an at-will basis.

The University of Vermont

The University of Vermont has a \$10 per semester Clean Energy Fee for students. Every fall it collects ideas from campus, in the form of tabling, classroom presentations, poster and an online platform called IdeaScale used to submit projects, suggest ideas and “thumbs up or thumbs down” proposed projects. (see appendix 3.11) Graduate-Fellow Katie Goodall recounted classroom presentations as having the most impact. UVM typically has around 200-300 students participate within IdeaScale. On average 12-14 ideas of varying quality are submitted, along with various comments and recommendations.

Grand Valley State University*

This university does not have a Green Fee. Their Sustainable Community Development Initiative however, hosts Sustain Ambassadors in various departments on campus. (see appendix 3.12) Students can 1) find out how sustainability relates to their specific major 2) get any questions they have answered and 3) give ideas for sustainability related ideas.

Note: all data was retrieved by person to person telephone communication, in all cases except Urbana – Champaign where a representative outside the Sustainability Dept. helped navigate the website and explain some things.

Discussion & Further Analysis

A point of pride could be the 913 new participants we had this year, but assuming the first through third year students that participated last year are all still here, along with ½ the fourth year students, we should have had 618 guaranteed students take the survey, as a connection was already made. Per last year's results our retention rate was only 20%. What could be done to increase retention rate?

Suggestions: Using the emails listed for prizes in order to re-email students next year, thanking them for last year's participation and asking them to take the survey again this year.

When examining the heightened participation by freshman, which can in part be contributed using the EcoMug list in order to target first year students, if the same steps are repeated next year, alongside retention efforts for the now second-year-students and assuming the 5th plus section will factor out, the third and fourth year students are now the lowest participating are most necessary to target areas. What can be done to increase participation by junior and senior students? (see appendix 3.3)

The college of Aviation was the lowest participating major in 2012. In 2013 the college quadrupled its numbers, thanks in large part to aviation associate professor Kevin High offering extra credit to his large aviation lecture. As one of the professors trying to integrate more sustainability efforts into his curriculum, he was more than willing to help. What other faculty members at Western Michigan University might be interested in helping the Student Sustainability Survey out next year in very similar ways?

Suggestions: reaching out to professors in things like the Presidents Universitywide Sustainability Committee.

The college of Engineering and Applied Sciences also nearly tripled their participation from 2012 to 2013. This probably has a lot to do with the fact that engineering students took great advantage of the Fall 2012 Sustainability Grant monies, being awarded \$13,269 for three different projects. One student from the Urban Transportation Tricycle Prototype helped circulate the survey link via text message to fellow engineering students within the college. What more could be done to leverage students taking advantage of the Sustainability Grant to help reach their respective colleges and help spread the word?

The lowest participating colleges/departments for 2013, when taking 2012's numbers into consideration as well, were Health and Human Services, Education and Human Development and Business, the three colleges that did not at least double their numbers. What targeted initiatives for next year can be implemented in order to increase their participation?

Grand Valley State University's Interactive Major Website (see appendix 3.19)

Because the survey is online, and totally at will, there is no way of guaranteeing the effectiveness of one means of outreach as opposed to another. Though it can be assumed that a spike in numbers in a certain amount of time following a certain events can be related, it is impossible to be 100% sure. A question on the survey asking "Where did you hear about the Student Sustainability Survey" would be beneficial, but even then, there could be a variety of contributing sources. Because there is no way of truly knowing, hitting all targets seems to be the most powerful approach. Though it is impossible to carry out every plan, distributing tasks amongst a

Had every person working on the survey at the Office for Sustainability, sat down with the members of our group and gone down a master list of task allocation much more could have been done. This way, every hour is being spent in the most effective way.

Limitations of Analysis & Future Work

There was limited time and much needed ground work to do before implementing new ideas. Below are recommendations for “what not to do’s” and brief ideas for future work. Future work will continue to be discussed in the recommendations section of this project.

- Have a collected meeting in the first week the project assigned. Meet with Dr. Glasser, Matt Hollander and everyone that will be participating to make sure everyone has the same goal.
- Create a contract between group members after said roles are assigned, making everyone promise to carry out , to the best of their ability, the assigned tasks within a given time.

Sally	Josh	Sue	Margaret	Adam	Steve	Tyler
Social Media & electronic advertising	Posting, Chalking, Mass emails	RSO & Dept. Outreach	secretarial, scheduling & volunteer recruitment	Major Events & Town Hall	Minor meetings, classroom visits	Analytics/ Data implementation

- Contact WSA and other student organizations sooner than later, to set up meeting times.
- CHECK THE WEATHER and have a rain day set aside in case weather is bad.

More research could be done on the universities whose Green Fee money is all used towards the purchasing of renewables because their campus may still have means of interacting with the students in regards to which renewables to invest in.

Once the new ideas are implemented, an in depth comparative study as to whether the new recommendations increased student participation and if so, by how much, could be done.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Based on the findings, Western Michigan University is doing a really great job of trying to get student input, and per the scope of this project research, they are spearheading that movement. Taking on some of the other things universities such as Grand Valley & their ambassador program, Vermont University and their shorter term interactive webpage and classroom visits, UCLA's opt out for low income students, and the University Of Illinois' highly representative student team, could all be useful.

On campus , the Office for Sustainability can open up volunteer opportunities for students from the Lee Honors College and other social fraternities with volunteer requirement. This would allow for meaningful participation by students maybe not under the immediate scope of sustainability. More time could also be spent tabling , visiting organizations, and establishing as many personal relationships with students as possible.

For next year's survey, a question about how they heard about the survey, with multiple select options and a questions about whether they would like to learn more about sustainability efforts in their area of study could also be added.

Long term goals could include more research being drawn on i-clicker compatible surveys and Office for Sustainability allied professors offering students extra credit for taking the survey.

References

Dedicated Student Fees for Sustainability. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.aashe.org/resources/mandatory-student-fees-renewable-energy-and-energy-efficiency>>.

University of Vermont Clean Energy Fee - Other Campus Green Funds. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.uvm.edu/sustain/campus-green-funds>>.

Student Sustainability Committee – University of Illinois Urbana – Champaign. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Apr. 2013. <<http://icap.sustainability.illinois.edu/goals>>.

Appendix 1 - Contacts

Taylor Daugherty	Western Michigan University	Taylor.n.daugherty@wmich.edu
Gillian	Western Michigan University	Gillian.a.asque@wmich.edu
Patrick	Western Michigan University	Patrick.meyers@wmich.edu
Marley McVey	Western Michigan University	Marley.mcvey@wmich.edu

Dr. Harold Glasser	Western Michigan University	Executive Director; OfS
Dr. Mark Orbe	Western Michigan University	School of Communications
Nick Gauthier	Western Michigan University	Advising

Appendix 2 - External Contacts

Tiffany Wintro	Vanderbilt University	615 322 7311
Katie Goodall	University of Vermont	802 656 0895
Kristen Blair-White	University of N. Carolina –CH	919 962 2211
Ben Datema	University of Missouri	573 882 2188
Julie Rose	University of Memphis	901 678 2188
Kristy (for Pattie Zimmerman)	University of California – LA	310 206 0700
Mel Bezerag	University of Illinois –UC	mbezerag@illinois.edu

Appendix 3 - Image archives

EVENTS

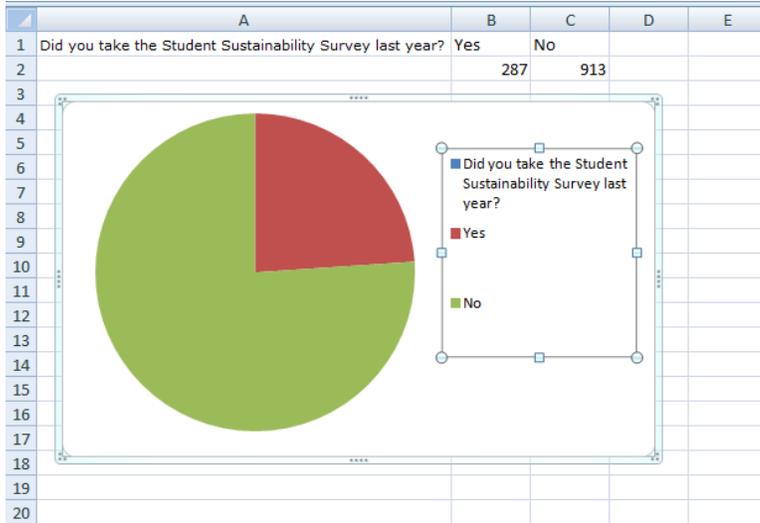
3.1 Feed the Green Event



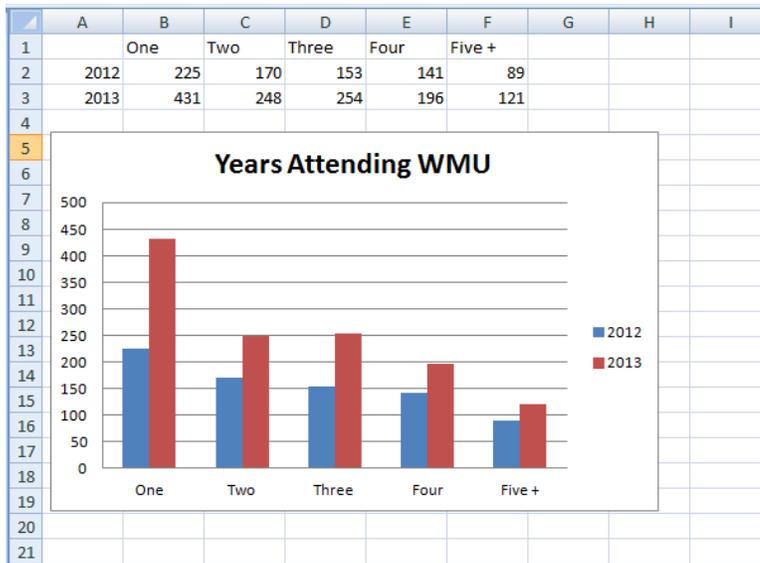
3.2 Student Recreation Center Table



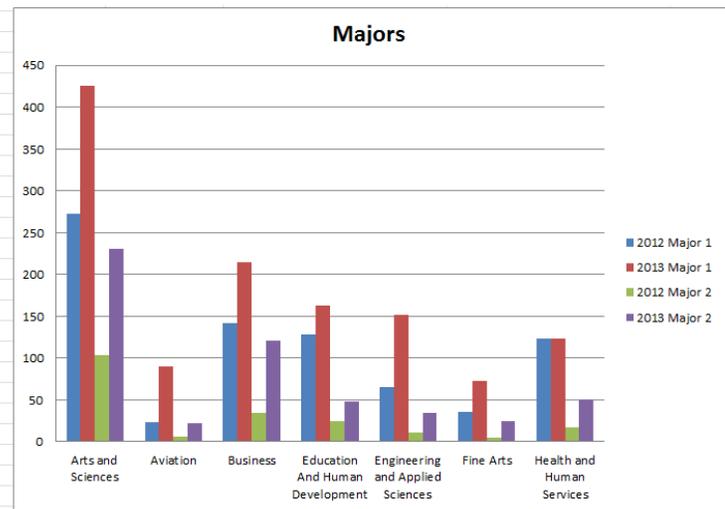
GRAPHS



3.1 HAVE YOU TAKEN THE SURVEY



3.2 YEARS IN SCHOOL



3.3 MAJORS IN SCHOOL

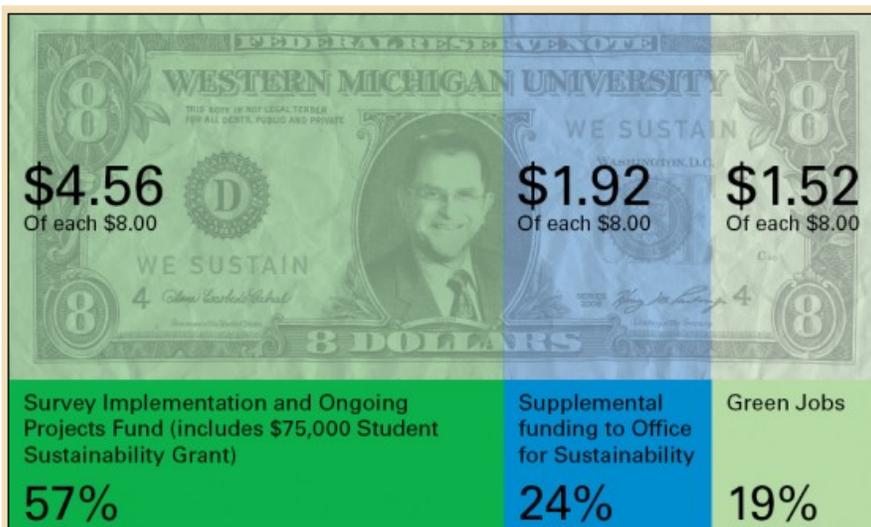
MARKETING



3.4 “PRESIDENT DUNN WANT YOU T- SHIRTS”



3.5 “FEED THE GREEN EVENT FLYERS ”



3.6 “TRANSPARENCY PICTURE – OFFICE FOR SUSTAINABILITY”



3.7 “WESUSTAIN”

3.8 “T-SHIRT QR CODE”

From:  "Taylor Nicole Daugherty" <taylor.n.daugherty@wmich.edu>

To: "Hailey Mangrum" <hailey.m.mangrum@wmich.edu>

. Hailey!

My name is Taylor and I'm part of the promotional team for the Student Sustainability Survey. This year we're trying to get 2,013 graduate and undergraduate students to take the survey, but more than just numbers, we really want to get a more diversified group of people. If possible, I'd love to come into one of your next few meetings and either talk briefly about the survey or set up a few laptops/tablets in the room for your members to actually take them.

Let me know if this is something you would be interested in, every bit counts.

Umela!

Taylor Daugherty
The Honors College
Western Michigan University
(268) 554-5584

3.9 PROPOSED EMAIL RSO

Survey !

March 21, 2013 7:09 AM

From: "Taylor Nicole Daugherty" <taylor.n.daugherty@wmich.edu>

To: "Kevin High" <kevin.high@wmich.edu>

Hello!

This is just an email follow up to the conversation we had yesterday about potentially offering the survey as extra credit for our AVS 2800 class. The class could either enter AVS2800 into the email box & I could pull those names for you or they could screen shot the final page & send it to you.

Keep me posted! I appreciate it,
Taylor Daugherty

3.10 PROPOSED EMAIL FACULTY

EXTERNAL UNIVERSITY SOURCES

CEF Project Ideas Board

View Edit Grant

View, Vote, or Comment on CEF Project Ideas

You can vote up  or down  on one or all of the projects listed below.

... And watch the best ideas rise to the top of the list!

Submit your own Clean Energy Fund Project idea if you don't see it in the list.

Energy ROI Tool

1
of votes

Develop a system for analyzing energy return on energy invested, to be applied to any clean energy, infrastructural, or capital investment project on campus. Make this tool available to faculty and students for performing research and analysis. The Biophysical Economics Conference will be hosted at UVM Oct 26-28, offering opportunities for experts in this field to weigh in on the type of research possibilities and needs.

<http://biophysical-economics.eventbrite.com/#>

[Read More](#) 0 Comment(s)

GREEN

-1
of votes

Submitted by *Vasu Sojitra* on October 1, 2012

The GREEN program is a renewable/sustainable energy program dedicated to spread awareness to student and adults about energy. It is based in Costa Rica for 2 week where you learn about various renewable energys and are able to visit power plant associated with those energy source. My idea is spread the word about this amazing program by helping more UVM students go on this program. The good part is that it does not matter what major you are, you just have to have an interest in renewable/sustainable living.

[Read More](#) 1 Comment(s)

3.11 VERMONT UNIVERSITY LIKE OR DISLIKE FROM WEBSITE

[Home](#)[What is Sustainability..?](#)[Community Engagement](#)[Education & Curriculum](#)[Campus Operations](#)[Student Involvement](#)[Faculty & Staff Involvement](#)[Scholarships & Funding](#)[Sustainability Events](#)[Sustainable Giving](#)[About Us](#)[Resources](#)[Sustainable Ag Project](#)sustainability@gvsu.edu

Phone: 616-331-7366

Fax: 616-331-8658

224 Lake Ontario Hall

1 Campus Drive



Sustainable Community Development Initiative

[print](#) [site index](#) [contact us](#)

Sustainable Department Ambassadors

Wondering who to contact in your department if you have a question in regards to sustainability? Do you have a sustainable idea you would like to have implemented in your department? The faculty and staff listed below are the perfect contacts! The Sustainable Community Development Initiative (SCDI) is currently in the process of meeting with every department on campus to establish sustainable department ambassadors, who will be the volunteer contact for their department.

Use this page as a resource for your department! By establishing sustainable department ambassadors, we are encouraging faculty and staff to talk with their sustainable department ambassador to generate new and exciting ideas that can be created. We will highlight each department throughout the year, relating success stories, ideas, and struggles that has been encountered in regards to sustainability in their department.



3.12 GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM