The poster describes a proposal for the addition of a sustainability-based community service requirement to the general education curriculum to encourage systemic involvement in on-campus sustainability projects. Current support for the University of Richmond’s (UR) goal to integrate sustainability across various University functions is limited and this poster outlines the Campus Sustainability Service (CSS) program as an option for addressing the issue to ensure the success of the UR Sustainability Strategic Plan. It presents a framework for the CSS program and a strategy for piloting the initiative that can support phasing in a complete version of the program over time. The poster also discusses the benefits of the program, including the increased involvement of students, staff, and faculty, and emphasizing impacts on the school’s performance as an AASHE member, campus engagement, and UR’s student leadership outside of campus.

Current Campus Sustainability Involvement: Limited

- Today, multiple University programs encourage campus involvement in UR’s goal to integrate sustainability across various departments and operational areas such as the River City Project, Green Room Program, and University of Richmond Office Supply Exchange provide opportunities for involvement from all sectors: students, staff, and faculty (University of Richmond Office for Sustainability, n.d.).
- Though UR’s sustainability goal has support across campus, only a small percentage of each sector is involved. For example, as of 2016, approximately 150 students out of 2,899 undergraduates were involved in a University sustainability program during the past year (Andreyevich, 2018; University of Richmond Office of Admissions, n.d.).
- Increasing sustainability involvement from students, staff, and faculty can help make UR’s sustainability initiative more cohesive and more successful.

CSS Program Overview

The CSS program encourages increased involvement from all sectors on campus to promote UR’s Sustainability Strategic Plan by requiring all undergraduates to participate in on-campus community service projects that work to integrate the school’s sustainability efforts. This proposal recommends the addition of the CSS program to UR’s required general education curriculum, and relies on staff and faculty to regularly function. The program creates not only an opportunity for all students to share, but one for students, and faculty to interact and form relationships outside of the classroom environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Focus</th>
<th>Social Group</th>
<th>Potential Staff to Run the Project</th>
<th>Tasks Students Perform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landscaping</td>
<td>15 UR Landscaping Staff</td>
<td>Daily landscape tasks, such as an incoming outdoor trash cans, spreading green space and hardwired power, planting native annual flowers, and watering (Mayer, 2018). Students also assist with serving efforts for the proposed biodiversity management plan (Paradis, 2018).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>5 - UR Landscaping Staff</td>
<td>Assisting with the maintenance of the proposed expansion of the on-campus garden (Hingst, 2018). Students are responsible for planting of crops, watering, pruning, staking, weeding, and harvesting.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Building &amp; Waste Audits</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>UR Custodial Staff</td>
<td>Help conduct waste audits of campus buildings by pre-weighting waste, sorting waste, then weighing the waste to determine the performance of waste disposal in each building on campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining Hall Food Service</td>
<td>3 Office for Sustainability Interns</td>
<td>Before dining hall customers place their plates on the dish rack, students help the individual sort their food waste into either the landfill, recycling, or compost bin while educating them about the impacts of food waste.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Program Numbers

Since the CSS program only requires a four-week commitment from students, the program can repeat with new cycles of student participants three times a semester, if 40 students participate in each four-week cycle of the program, and there are a total of six cycles throughout the course of two semesters, the initiative can support 840 students every year. When fully implemented, the program randomly chooses 210 students from each class year using a lottery system. A similar lottery system is used to randomly assign the participants to one of six cycles of the program.

For 140 students to volunteer during each cycle of the CSS program, approximately 18 staff members and 140 faculty members are needed to run each cycle. As staff and faculty participating in the program rotationally participate, the initiative requires a total of 96 different staff members and an additional 11 full-time faculty members rotating every two semesters, the initiative can support 840 students. When fully implemented, the program randomly chooses 210 students from each class year using a lottery system. A similar lottery system is used to randomly assign the participants to one of six cycles of the program.

Piloting the Initiative

The extensive infrastructure required to operate the CSS program makes immediately launching the program daunting. By phasing in the initiative over the course of a year, the University examines the long-term prospects of the initiative on a smaller scale to determine if the program is beneficial to the school and would be fully integrated into the general education curriculum. Under the one-year pilot CSS program, 35 randomly chosen first-year students participate in each four-week cycle of the program; each year, a total of 210 undergraduates participate on campus projects. Due to the smaller number of student participants and service projects, the pilot program requires a total of 24 eligible staff members and 244 full-time faculty members to operate the initiative over the course of six cycles. In the case of the pilot program, both staff and faculty members only participate in one cycle of the initiative.

Implementing the Complete Program

If completed, the CSS initiative can easily transition from the pilot program over the course of three years. During the year following the pilot program, 210 more undergraduate participants are added through randomly selecting 210 students from the incoming first-year class in addition to 210 participants from the new sophomore class for a total of 420 student participants throughout the year. The next year, 210 more participants are added in a similar manner to increase total participation to 630 undergraduates and include 210 participants from each of the next year’s classes: junior, senior, and junior classes. Finally, the initiative expands to the complete program during the third year after the pilot program through the addition of 210 randomly selected students from the senior classes. The CSS initiative creates a program from each class year to participate in the CSS initiative every year, resulting in a total of 540 undergraduate participants annually.

Benefits of the CSS Initiative

- The program creates a shared experience for students from diverse campus groups to meet and interact with each other, encouraging new student friendships.
- Increasing student, staff, and faculty communication outside of the classroom helps create a more cohesive campus community. Research shows a connection between social cohesiveness and happiness, suggesting that the community cohesion fostered by the CSS initiative can create a more enjoyable campus environment to balance the stressful conditions often promoted by academics and work (Clouter & Pfeiffer, 2015).
- Through experiential learning at service projects, students gain skills that are transferable to everyday life, such as knowledge about gardening or lawn care.
- Many of the service projects require physical activity, which is shown to decrease stress levels in college students (Baghurst & Kelley, 2014). Through building a required service commitment with physical activity into the curriculum, the CSS initiative creates a new academic break for students.
- There is expressed interest from staff members regarding increasing staff-student interaction and the CSS program is a great tool for improving the current relationship between these two campus groups (Mayer, 2018). The CSS program can augment the UR Office for Sustainability Engagement category from 27 points to 31 points out of 41 possible points (University of Richmond Office for Sustainability, 2017). Through service projects that form the foundation of the program, CSS can also earn additional STARS points in categories such as Greenhouse, Food, & Dining (AASHE, 2017).