

On behalf of the Sustainable College Committee

Thomas Wassmer, Ph.D. & Jun Tsuji, Ph.D

Sustainability at Siena Heights University

COVER LETTER & INTRODUCTION

The Siena Heights' Sustainable College Committee was established in the fall of 2013 to promote the concept and practice of sustainability into all college processes. The inclusion of sustainability into the instructional curricula of all departments is needed to stimulate and challenge students to get involved in creative solution-building in their personal lives. As sustainability is not living in ideas alone, strategies are also needed to move towards greater sustainability in the maintenance and development of our Adrian campus. Some of these projects include a comprehensive recycling program, enhanced energy conservation and utilization of renewable energy sources, a poison-free campus environment (e.g. no use of pesticides, fertilizer, petroleum tar, etc.), enriched foods in our cafeteria (organically, locally, and humanely produced), and the integration of SHU into the global community of environmentally- and socially-responsible universities. Since these projects are campus-wide, the Sustainable College Committee includes faculty and staff members from every major department, representatives of the administration, a number of students of various majors, and several Adrian Dominican Sisters.

The Sustainable College Committee requests funds to support sustainability initiatives at Siena Heights University. This need is not only a response to the most important global issue of our time, but will also help SHU to attract an additional student clientele and open the opportunity for donations and grants restricted to environmentally-conscious institutions. Part of the funds requested in this proposal will be used for SHU to become a full institutional member in the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). According to our initial research, AASHE membership was the most crucial step to successful sustainability

programs in other liberal arts institutions, such as Dickinson College (Carlisle, PA) and Aquinas College (Grand Rapids, MI). Membership includes access to internal research and comparability tools developed by AASHE (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) – more details below), faculty development training workshops to facilitate inclusion of sustainability into the curricula and syllabi of most courses offered (details below), and eligibility for grants.

How the proposal supports SHU’s Mission and Vision

Our proposal supports SHU’s mission “...*to assist people to become more competent, purposeful, and ethical through a teaching and learning environment which respects the dignity of all.*” Striving for more sustainability is definitely the most **ethical** decision to be taken today, because it serves the **purpose** to safeguard this planet, which feeds and houses us. Environmental justice is one of the most important factors in respecting the dignity of every human being as environmental problems disproportionately affect the poor and underprivileged. In addition, our striving for the *dignity of all* should in all reality also include the dignity of every non-human being – thus making sustainability even more important.

How does this proposal address the Strategic Planning Goals?

The Dominican traditions of justice, stewardship, and scholarship are directly connected to the need for sustainability, as love connects us to each other and to the environment and guides us to do the right things.

Sustainability guides our efforts to become good citizens of this planet and leads us to the destination of the human species as stewards of the world overcoming our childish and adolescent savaging of resources and other living beings.

Sustainability is a key element of modern ecological theory and applied science and contributes to the excellence of almost every other academic discipline or even offers a new founding basis for academics in general. This relates to a day-to-day professional sustainability that maintains and propels every professional activity on our campus.

Sustainability shows the interconnectedness of the world and is the responsible reaction to our increasing understanding of the causes of human activities. Teaching sustainability provides endless “*opportunities for students to become more rounded, morally grounded, service oriented, and [most of all] globally aware citizens....*

Our committee work, which will be enhanced through the requested funds, is already building relationships in our local and global communities and strives to increase the awareness that active engagement of citizens, students, professionals is needed to tackle the challenges of the 21st century.

The proposed membership in AASHE and the use of the STARS instruments will open SHU up for donations and grant opportunities restricted to sustainable institutions. Both our efforts to become more sustainable and these arising fiscal opportunities will provide SHU new ways to grow.

PROPOSAL NARRATIVE & PROJECT DESCRIPTION

SIGNIFICANCE

The total world population is estimated to have exceeded 7 billion people. To meet the demands for food, clothing, and shelter, humanity has significantly altered our planet. Over the course of human history, vast areas of vegetation have been cleared, wastes and other pollutants have been released into our waters and atmosphere, and hundreds of thousands of species have been destroyed. For life to continue on this planet, human practices must change in order to restore ecological health for the betterment of all, especially the poor. Many institutions of higher education have taken the lead in helping society to move towards a more sustainable future; one in which we are able to meet our current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Over the past twenty-five years, universities have served as models of sustainable practices and communities through their daily operations, curricula, and outreach. The desire to adopt more sustainable practices at SHU, such as instituting a comprehensive recycling program, increasing energy efficiency, and incorporating sustainability into education, led to the creation of the Sustainable College Committee in the fall of 2013. Through meetings with representatives from Dickinson College and Aquinas College, we learned that a key to the successful development and implementation of sustainability at their campuses was membership in the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE).

Institutional membership in AASHE confers many direct benefits and services. Members have exclusive access to an extensive collection of policy databases, best practices, case studies, planning and assessment tools, surveys, reports, how-to-guides, job descriptions, campus

profiles, and many other valuable resources. For instance, guidelines are available to assist universities to use sustainable practices in their dining services, landscaping, energy usage, waste management, transportation, and purchasing decisions. Resources, such course descriptions, syllabi, and degree programs, are also available to help colleges to develop sustainability curriculum. Furthermore, AASHE materials can help universities to incorporate sustainability into campus master plans, improve the coordination of sustainability programs, and support their communities through engagement activities and partnerships. Membership also include a discount for the Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Rating System (STARS), which is an internationally-recognized self-assessment tool for universities to create a baseline and to measure their progress. Other benefits include national recognition in AASHE publications, eligibility for sustainability awards, conference and workshop discounts, and professional development and networking opportunities.

There are also many potential indirect benefits to having an AASHE institutional membership. With the help of AASHE resources, Dickinson College and Aquinas College were able to implement programs that reduced waste and expenses. Both colleges also incorporated sustainability into their curricula and increased student enrollment in those areas. Dickinson College and Aquinas College also received million dollar gifts and grants from environmentally- and socially-conscious donors and organizations. As a result of their sustainability activities, these colleges also received national recognition from Princeton Review and the Sierra Club. With access to the same AASHE resources, SHU could gain similarly.

PERSONNEL

The SHU Sustainable College Committee is a relatively large assemblage of environmentally-passionate individuals with a breadth of expertise. The committee includes faculty and staff members from every major department and building on the Adrian campus, ranging from Athletics to the Graduate College. The administration is represented by the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and the voices of students and Adrian Dominican Sisters are also heard. Among the committee members are Al Peters and Brian Bertram, who have direct experience with sustainable facilities operations from their former positions. Carol Coston, Linda Easley, and Tom Wassmer, who are experts in permaculture, sustainable movements, and ecology curricula, respectively, are also members of the committee. Many committee members, such as Joni Warner and Peter Barr, are also actively engaged with the local Adrian community. The entire membership follows in alphabetical order:

Don Bargo (Chartwells), Peter Barr (Art), Jessica Behnke (Student), Brian Bertram (Campus Facilities), Claudia Blanchard (Management), Betsy Brooks (Graduate College), Willow Cohn (Student), Carol Coston (Adrian Dominican), Jennifer Dean (Library), Megan Dubois (Student), Gabe Dunbar (Student Engagement), Linda Easley (Sociology), Cathy Emery (Nursing), Brandon Erlacher (Computer Services), Nick Goyette (Student), Jennifer Hamlin-Church (Advancement), Elaine Johnson (Student), Tyler Karcher (Student), Natalie Lanese (Art), Lydia Marks-Wilt (Athletics), Joni LeMay (Athletics), Mike Miron (Math), Oleksandr Movchan (Business), Michael Orlando (Dean for Students), Al Peters (Custodial), Joe Raab (Religious Studies), Angie Raymond (Advancement), Rachel Rickinger (Residence Life), Lynne Townsend (Social Work), Jun Tsuji (Biology), Joni Warner (Theater), Tom Wassmer (Biology), and Sharon Weber (Vice President of Academic Affairs),

APPROACH

Description of proposed work, methods to be carried out:

With the help of the requested funds, we will pay for 2 years of AASHE institutional membership and for access to the STARS instruments, databases, and guidelines for best sustainable practices (AASHE 2013a). To facilitate our committee work, we plan to send a small group of representatives from the four areas of college sustainability, which are academics, engagement, operations, and planning & administration (AASHE 2014), to the AASHE Annual Conference in 2015. In the 2nd year of this proposal, we plan to send 5 faculty members to an AASHE workshop on curriculum and syllabus development aiming at including sustainability as a key concept into the majority of our SHU courses on the Adrian campus.

As soon as we gain access to the STARS resources, the Sustainable College Committee will identify faculty, staff, and administrative members to enter data into the system, which will allow us to create a baseline of our standing in multiple aspects of college sustainability. This baseline will then be used to track our improvements. In addition, full access to the STARS system will allow us to compare SHU to other AASHE member institutions and follow our development in the future. Due to the wide use of the STARS tool in North American institutions of higher education (almost 900 institutional members), STARS also allows colleges to be categorized with a bronze, silver, gold or platinum rating (AASHE 2013b). Entering data will be time consuming but we are willing to do the footwork, eventually with the help of our work-study students. In addition, we will utilize the appropriate faculty, staff, and administrative members to either help with data entry or with gathering the data.

Is the project design appropriate to meet the project's objectives?

The AASHE (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education) membership is essential to put SHU on the map of sustainable North American colleges. The AASHE is the first and by far largest international professional association for those interested in advancing campus sustainability. There are currently almost 900 institutional member colleges, 591 of which are 4-year institutions, and 12 of them are located in Michigan, e.g. Aquinas College, Albion College, Hope College, Eastern Michigan University, University of Michigan, and Michigan State University. For Ohio, 19 4-year colleges are members, including Lourdes College, Antioch College, Oberlin College, Miami University, Kenyon College, University of Toledo, and Ohio State University.

The AASHE membership will provide SHU with access to sustainability databases and the STARS tools at a discounted rate that will enable us to track our improvements and compare SHU to other institutions. Another benefit of an institutional membership are reduced registration fees for the annual AASHE conference. The conference attendance of a small group of committee members representing the 4 areas of college sustainability is important because it will provide us with training and first-hand knowledge gained from real-world experience with sustainability education, facilities operations, and outreach programs that may be unavailable elsewhere. With this added training, knowledge, and networking connections, we will be more able to develop sustainability curriculum and implement future sustainability initiatives after the baseline year. These initiatives will help SHU to use sustainable practices in our dining services, landscaping, energy usage, waste management, transportation, purchasing decisions, master

planning, and community engagements, among others. We are not requesting funds to support all of these future projects, but rather to promote sustainability curriculum development.

Attendance of the AASHE faculty development workshop planned for the second year will prepare a few faculty members from all departments to include sustainability into their curricula and syllabi. These colleagues will then act as seeds to spread their knowledge within their departments. Within a few years, with the approval of course changes by the curriculum committee, we hope to increase the percentage of curricula and syllabi that include sustainability as one of their key concepts. In our current 2014-2016 undergraduate catalog, the word “sustainability” occurs only in two out of several hundred course descriptions. In comparison, Dickinson College, one of the leading sustainable liberal arts institutions, offers nearly 100 courses each academic year that teach sustainability concepts, problems, and solutions. These courses develop student competencies and dispositions for creating a sustainable world (Dickinson College 2014a). 33 of roughly 60 departments integrated sustainability throughout their curricula and it all started with a small group of faculty members attending the AASHE “Sustainability Across the Curriculum Leadership Workshop” (AASHE 2014b) and subsequently “spreading the word” in internal faculty development workshops. In addition to the workshop training, our AASHE membership will allow us to locate mentors and mentor-groups in membership institutions that know our situation very well and can guide us through our “baby steps” (AASHE 2013c). We believe that teaching sustainability in most college courses is one of the most important aspects of college sustainability. This is reflected in the AASHE scoring system that awards more credits to academics than to any of the other three key areas of college sustainability (AASHE 2014).

Ongoing costs upon completion

The current proposal focuses on the first two years of our AASHE membership and the use of the STARS instruments. Our AASHE membership and curriculum development will serve as evidence of our commitment towards sustainability to potential donors and grant-awarding organizations. These future grants and donations, and possibly operational funds or a nominal student sustainability fee, will be used to continue our institutional membership and subscription to the STARS tools. As the time-consuming data entry into STARS will constitute a substantial investment in terms of working hours, we highly suggest that these expenses should be continuously covered by other means after this time. This could be achieved by factoring these hours into our other operational expenses, or can come out of dedicated grants that the Committee intends to tap into. Currently no personnel costs are necessary and our two reference institutions (Dickinson College and Aquinas College) show two possible ways of future development. Dickinson College has no dedicated personnel on their outstanding sustainability program (Dickinson College 2014b), which placed Dickinson College on the Sierra Club's top 10 sustainable colleges list in 2010, 2013, and 2014 (Sierra Club 2014). Aquinas College has a dedicated sustainability officer through the business department carrying their sustainability program (Aquinas College 2014).

EVALUATION

The progress of our campus sustainability efforts will be evaluated using STARS. Data entry into STARS will be monitored at the end of every semester. Initial entry of basic information about current operations, planning and administration, academics, and engagement are planned to conclude after year one, followed by regular monthly or biannual data updates. Details on the STAR categories to be entered can be found in AASHE (2013d). At the end of the first year, the Sustainable College Committee will compile a report on the progress of data entry and the emerging comparative standing of SHU according to the STARS credit system. At the end of the second year, a report will be furnished that compares SHU's progress at the end of year 2 to our initial baseline standing in year 1. In addition, the STARS system will be used to compare us to other institutions, such as Lourdes College. Similar yearly progress reports will be prepared afterwards.

LONGEVITY

The Sustainable College Committee explored other means to secure the funds requested in this proposal and considered it unlikely to be successful as SHU has little record of sustainability education and the AASHE membership, STARS tools, and AASHE workshops constitute expenses usually carried through the operational budget of institutions. We therefore decided to request these funds internally through the Strategic Planning Committee and approach external grant opportunities for all future projects once we have evidence of SHU's commitment to sustainability education. We will make extensive use of SHU's grant writer Nicole Underwood,

who is a committee member and also serves as a liaison between us and the advancement department.

This proposal will lay the foundation of our ongoing self-monitoring, identify key areas of improvement, and open SHU up for an intensive exchange of ideas with other AASHE member institutions. The resulting steps towards more sustainability will increase our eligibility for grants and allow us to move forward on all areas of college sustainability.

BUDGET (\$ 18191 total)

Year 1 (\$10,633):

- AASHE Institutional Membership: \$1108 (based on our current published enrollment of 1608 full-time students, email quote by Chris Pelton, AASHE Program Coordinator, in appendix)
- AASHE STARS Tools: 1st year \$900 (including \$500 member discount, email quote by Chris Pelton, AASHE Program Coordinator, in appendix)
- AASHE Conference attendance for 5 committee members
 - Conference fees (\$550 per person x 5 = \$2750)
 - Travel expenses (\$750 per person x 5 = \$3750)
 - Lodging (\$125 per room per night x 3 nights x 3 rooms = \$1125)
 - Meals (\$50 per day x 4 days x 5 members = \$1000)

Year 2 (\$10,558 or \$7588, depending on the availability of Faculty Development travel grants):

- AASHE Institutional Membership: \$1108 (depending on enrollment)
- AASHE STARS Tools: 2nd year \$450 (including \$500 member discount and 50% renewal discount)
- Attendance of an external AASHE “Sustainability Across the Curriculum Leadership Workshop” (AASHE 2014b) for 5 faculty committee members: Approx. \$9000 calculated using the same criteria as for the AASHE conference attendance in year 1. Since each faculty member can receive \$600 from the Faculty Development Committee for attending a conference, this amount can be reduced by \$3000 (\$600 x 5).

BIO'S

Dr. Tom Wassmer is an assistant professor of biology and has been a member of the SHU community for four years. Tom teaches human anatomy and physiology, ecology, evolution and vertebrate physiology. He conducts two active research projects on dung beetle ecology and fox squirrel physiology and has published first results in peer reviewed journals. Tom has founded and chairs the Sustainable College Committee and SHU's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) and is an active member in both the IRB and Social Responsibility committees.

Dr. Jun Tsuji is a professor of biology and has been a member of the SHU community for twenty years. In addition to teaching courses in cell biology, plant biology, genetics, and microbiology, Jun has authored numerous research papers on various aspects of plants and their environment. Jun has chaired the Science Program since 2005 and has direct experience with curriculum development and program assessment.

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Thomas Wassmer

From: stars=aashe.org@uservice.com on behalf of Chris Pelton <stars@aashe.org>
Sent: Tuesday, October 07, 2014 2:47 PM
To: Thomas Wassmer
Cc: chris.pelton@aashe.org; nikia.johnson@aashe.org; membership@aashe.org; Jun Tsuji
Subject: Re: [stars] Info about AASHE

Hello Tom,

Thank you for reaching out to us.

AASHE membership fees are [based on FTE enrollment](#). According to our records, Siena Heights University's enrollment is 1608, so your annual AASHE membership fee would be \$1105. There is no multi-year discount for AASHE membership.

Once you are a member, you can take advantage of the \$500 discount for STARS and pay only [\\$900 for the first year \(\\$1,400 for non-AASHE members\)](#). There is a 50% renewal discount, so each additional year would be \$450 thereafter if you were to renew within 90 days of expiration.

Fees for curriculum workshops vary considerably and we have not, to my knowledge, finalized any events for 2015 yet. I have asked our professional development staff for more information, and will forward that to you as soon as possible.

I hope this is helpful.

Thanks again,
Chris

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 helpful? [Click to give Chris Pelton thanks!](#)

On October 06, 2014 at 12:02 PM Thomas Wassmer <twassmer@sienaheights.edu> wrote:

To whom it may concern,

I am trying to write a grant application for an internal school grant to allow SHU to become a AASHE member, use the STAR tools, and apply for one of your curriculum development workshops at our school.

To increase my chances to receive an award, please recalculate how much our membership and STAR usage fees as well as give me a ball park figure how much a on campus workshop on curriculum development here on our Adrian, Michigan campus would cost. If you have any discounts for multi-year memberships, please also give me that information. Please do not hesitate to ask me any questions you would need to calculate prices. As always, this application needs to be done by 10/10, which is this Friday – so please help me ASAP.