



Creating a Graduate Student Sustainability Liaison: Successes and Lessons

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Introduction

In 2016, a new position was created at the University of California, Riverside to address a lack of communication between the Office of Sustainability, campus administration, UCOP and the graduate student population. This position was called the "Graduate Student Sustainability Liaison". The liaison was tasked with a series of goals including:

1. Create and manage an \$8000 dollar sustainability grant program to promote sustainable projects on campus specifically for graduate students to make the campus more sustainable.
2. Head a sustainability committee to advise the Graduate Student Association on sustainable practices.
3. Educate graduate students on sustainability concepts and how the UC system is trying to reach sustainability goals through programs like Green Labs.
4. Regularly meet with the Office of Sustainability to express graduate student concerns.

GSA Green Grant (G³) Program

Eleven projects were funded using money from Graduate Student Association funds. These projects were completely created by graduate students to address sustainability issues they felt were important on campus.

Sustainability 5K Run



Designing a Healthy Class Schedule Based on Air Quality



Water Conscious Camping Trips



Graduate Seed Bank and CEE Garden Plot



Forming a Graduate Sustainability Group

A series of talks were given to a graduate student audience on what UCR is initiating in terms of meeting sustainability goals and what UCOP is demanding. Also, students were educated on sustainability concepts and metrics. These individuals then became the basis for the new Graduate Sustainability Network (GSN) on campus.



Student Run Earth Week

With the help of the GSN, a committee was formed to create and run the entirety of UCR's Earth Week. UCR currently does not have a standing committee for these events so graduate students, including Elizabeth Deyett and Ryan Conway of UCR, took it upon themselves to run the entirety of Earth Week. Events that were created included a Sustainability 5K Run, Sustainable Faculty Speaker Series, Vermicomposting Workshop and Zero Waste Workshop.



UCR Sustainability Log

In an effort to bring faculty, students and different administrative committees together, a Word press blog was created to log all of the different meetings (graduate sustainability committee, dining services committee, faculty sustainability working group, Office of Sustainability etc.) attended by the liaison. This served as a basis for the new sustainability website that will be forthcoming to tie different groups at UCR together.

Lessons Learned

1. All of the different groups created to address sustainability at UCR do not communicate effectively. The connections between all groups is not clearly defined. Open communication is required to get things done and avoid redundancy. A liaison must be present between different entities in order to have clear cooperation. Every group feels that they are doing a lot toward making UCR sustainable but don't have a structure in place to work together.

Different Groups Contributing to a Carbon Neutral UCR Campus



2. There are many graduate students that want to get involved with sustainability at UCR but need better connections with administration in order to participate effectively given their busy class and research schedules. By providing these connections, graduate students have an avenue to express their concerns and get involved.

3. Some programs, like the Green Labs program require more than just administrative support and student advocacy. Ultimately, even with a stepped up advocacy campaign, these programs need individual faculty buy in and incentives to work.



Conclusions and Future Work

Due to the overwhelming involvement by students, faculty and staff in sustainability over the past year, UCR has decided to make a concrete structure for sustainability made up of three "pillars":

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| 1. Academics
Developing coursework, student involvement etc. | 2. Facilities
Green labs, water action plan, waste management, etc. | 3. Capital Planning
Long term planning and investment |
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The graduate sustainability liaison served as a nexus between many different groups at UCR and the graduate student body. It provided opportunities for graduate students to express their concerns to administration and take direct action toward making UCR a carbon neutral campus. Students who have gotten involved over the past year, including those in the GSN, will continue to push administration toward carbon neutrality.

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