

Green Teams Final Report for 2010-2011

Indiana University Office of Sustainability

Academic Year Internship Program



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I. Overview of Internship Position

- A. Importance of Green Teams Program: Each member of the Indiana University community is, arguably, a stakeholder in the environment in which they work, but too few have the time, resources, or opportunities to enact that role within this institution. The Green Teams Program seeks to change that. Through the Green Teams Program, the Indiana University Office of Sustainability (IUOS) is able to work with a variety of stakeholders who are invested in issues of campus sustainability. The relationships established between the IUOS and program participants are reciprocal in design—the IUOS becomes better informed about what needs to be done to ensure IUB remains a leader in campus sustainability and participants are presented with ideas on how they can make their respective campus units more environmentally-friendly. The accomplishing of the goals set by the Campus Sustainability Advisory Board is more likely to be realized in an expedient manner as a result of the collaborative efforts of the IUOS and green teams.

- B. Responsibilities of Green Teams Intern: The success of the Green Teams Program is dependent upon individuals who generously volunteer their time to help increase sustainable practices at Indiana University. To ensure that their time is reciprocated by tangible results and progression, teams need easy access to resources allowing them to fulfill specific sustainable actions within their respective units. It is the responsibility of the green teams intern (GTI), then, to provide teams with those resources.
 - i. Act as Liaison and Maintain Correspondence: Acting as liaison between the IUOS and green teams, the GTI is expected to maintain correspondence with participants through e-mail, the green teams blog, quarterly “Green Bag” program meetings, and in-person meetings. I have found that the latter are the most effective, and appreciated, means of staying in touch with teams. E-mails can be sent to every participant through the GREENTEAMS-L listserv. If a focus group or a quarterly meeting is being planned, a general announcement can be sent out on the listserv, but individualized e-mails could be sent to team contacts, an approach that has proven effective in encouraging team leaders to attend these events.
 - a. Green Teams Blog: The Green Teams blog was developed with the idea that it could act as a forum for green teams as well as others within the IUB community. Ideas can be shared, inquiries can be posed and responded to, and accomplishments can be publicized and celebrated. Since most of us have limited time to work on—and perhaps even think about—issues of campus sustainability, this blog provides some much needed convenience. Participants can act as “authors” on the blog—which means they are able to write their own posts. With the green teams blog, weekly posts should be written to make it clear the site is active.
 - ii. Implement, promote, maintain, and improve Green Team Office Certification Program: At the start of my internship it was clear that the online implementation of the certification process was of central importance. The Green Office Certification program has great potential to bring increased visibility and credibility to the Green Teams Program. While the system was designed, in part, to recognize the accomplishments of established teams and to provide them with guidance and resources, it was designed with new teams

especially in mind. The aim of the certification program, then, is to provide guidance and resources as needed.

- a. Background/Conception: Using Harvard University's "Green Office Program" as her model, my predecessor, Sarah Vessel, designed a linear series of four certificates—Seed; Sprout; Sapling; Tree. Her ideas guided the design of the online system, which was performed by IUOS web designer Tony Minich.
- b. Certification Process: To participate in the system, a team must first become registered on the Green Teams website. This can easily be done in a matter of minutes. Once registered, a team can begin to pursue certification. After a team fulfills the actions contained within a particular certificate's checklist, they fill out and submit a designated online form. The form is sent directly to the GTI for review. If everything is in order, the team is awarded a physical certificate and granted access to the application for the next level of certification.
- c. Implementation: After the beta version of the system had been completed, I sought feedback from participants by meeting with individual team leaders and by conducting a focus group to assess the overall efficiency and applicability of the system. As a result of those meetings, changes were made. A clearer, more defined trajectory was created: First, a team establishes itself within its immediate work environment. Second, the team assesses the sustainability of the office's current operations. Third, the team enacts tasks that make their office a more sustainable unit. Fourth, the team presents itself as an example for other campus units to follow. Changes were also made to the certification checklists—some actions were removed while others were added. An online "Office Toolkit" was created that contains necessary resources—e.g. informational prompts and contact information. Rather than searching for those resources, teams can spend their already limited time fulfilling sustainable actions.

Currently, there are four certificates, each of which includes a list of feasible sustainable actions distributed amongst seven categories: Education and Outreach; Resource Use; Recycling; Sustainable Computing; Energy and Built Environment; Transportation; Food. The categories correspond to both the Campus Sustainability Advisory Board working groups as well as categories included in [AASHE's Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System](#). By obtaining certification, then, green teams are helping ensure that Indiana University continues to be regarded as a leader in sustainability.

- d. Current Levels of Participation: Eleven of the twenty-eight teams have registered themselves online. Of those eleven teams, five are pursuing levels of certification. IU Libraries has been awarded "Seed" certification, and both the IU Foundation and Environmental, Health, and Safety have earned "Sapling" certification and are working towards "Tree" certification. Both SPEA and Kelley School of Business-Undergraduate are working towards "Seed" certification.
- e. Recommendations: Certification should continue to be used as a recruiting device. New teams have been responsive to the system and several have stated the checklists have made it easier for them to decide what to do. They have also stated that the "Office Toolkit" has saved them much time in

trying to locate the resources needed to complete certain actions. Therefore it is recommended that future interns add the resources needed for the other three levels of certification to the online “Office Toolkit.” While certification has proven beneficial for new teams, some established teams have stated they do not intend to participate. Participation is voluntary, but it is still recommended that every team be encouraged to, at least, register their team and apply for “Seed” certification. Being able to state every team has fulfilled specific, concrete actions would allow the IUOS to bring more attention to the Green Team’s Program and its usefulness to the sustainability goals of Indiana University. Meeting in-person with the contacts of the twenty-three teams not yet pursuing certification will likely be the most productive approach to increasing participation.

- iii. Write articles for IUOS Newsletter: Catalyst: The *Catalyst* is a useful vehicle through which information regarding the accomplishments of green teams can be sent to the broader sustainability community at Indiana University. Past articles concerning the Green Teams Program have focused on a variety of topics: individual teams; the launch of the Green Office Certification program; focus groups; Green Bag presentations.
- iv. Recruit New Teams: Individuals housed in campus units not yet represented by a green team are advised by information on the Green Teams website to contact the GTI when they are interested in developing a new team. When I was contacted by such an individual, I scheduled a time to meet with them in person to discuss the possibility of a “kick-off” meeting to solicit support from their co-workers. When possible, I attended new teams’ “kick-off” meetings so that any questions concerning the Green Teams program could receive immediate responses.

A more proactive approach (proposed below) is needed. The majority of my internship hours were dedicated to establishing a strong foundation for the Green Teams Program and to sustaining current membership. Now that a foundation exists and worthwhile resources, such as the certification system and the Green Teams blog, are available to show prospective participants, more time and energy can be put into recruiting new teams.

II. Next Steps: Ideas and Suggestions

- A. Expand Green Teams Across Campus: Recruiting: There are still hundreds of campus units without any green team representation. Creative ideas are needed to encourage the development of teams within those units.
 - i. Meet With Student Groups Specific to Majors and Schools: One possible approach would be to look at student organizations specific to majors and schools. Those organizations are often looking for service projects, and helping make the academic buildings in which they spend most of their time more sustainable might appeal to them. Also, a faculty member most often serves as a sponsor for these groups and could act as the long-term contact for the team. That faculty member could then recruit their colleagues—both faculty and staff—to assist with the teams’ efforts. Thus, while the team’s maintenance would require staff and faculty involvement, they would have much needed

assistance in achieving sustainable actions during the academic year. This approach has the potential to not only recruit new teams, but to also increase student involvement—an original, but thus far unrealized, goal of the Green Teams Program.

- ii. Dorms: In regards to increasing student involvement in the Green Teams Program, there is much potential in meeting with RPS to discuss the possibility of forming green teams in each of the IUB dorms. Partnerships between IUOS and the dorms have already proven productive during the Energy Challenge and Hoosier-to-Hoosier events. Steve Akers, the contact for the RPS green team, has stated he is interested in this possibility.
- B. Building by Building Approach: There has been some discussion about the possibility of green teams collaborating with the physical plant as a team-building and educational opportunity focused on energy conservation projects. Through the Qualified Energy Savings Project the physical plant has been able to conduct upgrades and retrofitting in selected campus buildings. Discussing the possibility of extending this initiative or creating similar initiatives that bring in the assistance of green teams was a point of interest at a March 2nd, 2011 focus group comprised of representatives from thirteen green teams.
- C. Collaborate with Student Sustainability Council: Again, an initial goal of the Green Teams Program was to bring together students, faculty, and staff who are interested in issues of sustainability. Organizing an event that brings together student groups and green teams could lead to the realization of that goal.
- D. Update and Improve Online Resources: In addition to updating and improving the Green Team Office Certification system, the Green Teams website and blog also need attention
 - i. Website: The overall layout and design of the Green Teams page, accessible from the IUOS website, needs to be changed. A lot of great information and resources are accessible through this page, but, aesthetically, the page is a mess.
 - a. “Bright Spots”: A page featuring pictures of teams and their accomplishments could be added to show that the Green Teams Program is active.
 - b. Blog: The Green Teams blog is not yet accessible from the Green Teams page.
 - ii. Blog: The blog was created at the end of February 2011 and has featured at least one post for every week since its creation. At the before-mentioned March 2nd focus group, participants said regular postings would ensure their continued use of the blog. So, it seems continuing to post at least once per week is a good idea. Also, more green team participants should be encouraged to become authors for the blog so that it can be utilized as a space for communication and collaboration between teams.

III. Conclusion: Ideal vs. Reality:

- A. Ideally, each IUB campus unit would be represented by a green team that had administrative support, access to funding, time to engage in long-term energy conservation projects, the building manager as a member, partnerships with other green teams as well as student organizations, support from every building occupant, and no red tape to contend with. Or, better yet, there would be no need for green

teams at IUB because every member of the community—whether they be staff, faculty, student, or administrative in title—would recognize their role and responsibilities as a stakeholder in the health of their environment and would, thus, be consciously invested in issues of campus sustainability. The reality, though, is that those who do recognize themselves as stakeholders are in the minority at this institution. That is why the actions taken by green team participants are so significant—a variety of actions need to be taken, for there is no single, perfect approach to be taken. These are actions that warrant recognition as well as emulation. Indeed; by exercising their human agency with an awareness of how this institution operates, these individuals are capable of encouraging a critical mass. But, such an event will come through actions seemingly less impressive, such as placing recycling bins in high-traffic areas, posting information about how to make double-sided prints, and replacing disposable dishware and cups with reusable dishware and cups. Such actions may be regarded by some as “low-hanging fruit,” but until that fruit has been collected within the majority of IUB campus units, it will be difficult to pursue larger scale projects. Indeed; by consistently and regularly fulfilling the actions included in the Green Team Office Certification program as well as actions deemed necessary to specific campus units, green team participants will provide the momentum needed to carry the Green Teams program forward.