

Expanding CWU Sustainability Education Through the Student Sustainability Ambassadors Program

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Introduction

Sustainable education, especially on university campuses, is crucial in the 21st century as sustainable issues worsen with climate change, war, and consumer consumption. Higher education builds the foundation for younger generations to passionately carry on sustainable practices into the future, thus highlighting the importance of wider spread information revolving around sustainable concepts involving the environment, society, and the economy. A solution to address these contentious sustainable issues includes the creation of a peer-to-peer education program at Central Washington University called the Student Sustainability Ambassadors Program (SSAP).

The Student Sustainability Ambassadors Program

The Student Sustainability Ambassadors Program will be launched in Fall 2024 and will employ three passionate Student Sustainability Ambassadors who educate students and advance sustainability topics on campus. These ambassadors will execute outreach activities and work to:

- Disseminate sustainability concepts
- Build a sustainability ethic throughout the campus community
- Support the development of sustainable competencies and values
- Work on individual, self-proposed sustainability projects

The Sustainability Ambassadors will collaborate with other groups on campus, such as in Residence Halls, to educate students on sustainability topics including:

- Alternative Transportation
- Energy Conservation
- Waste Reduction and Recycling
- Environmental Justice
- Natural Resource Conservation

Efforts to Support Launching the Student Sustainability Ambassadors Program

Preparatory research was crucial in the implementation process of this project. To efficiently research the necessary components of a successful educational outreach program, I:

- Examined Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Sustainability Tracking and Reporting System (STARS) top-rated university sustainability peer-to-peer education programs
- Conducted an informational interview with the sustainability staff at Oregon State University

The information I learned from inquiring about OSU's sustainability program has provided valuable details on how the SSAP program should operate, and what responsibilities the student educators will have. This information includes:

- Successfully hiring and training student educators
- Effective sustainability educator mentoring
- Average work schedules for the Ambassadors
- Methods of measuring Ambassador accomplishments, such as surveying group attendance to sustainable projects.



Figure 1. Students gather to conduct a recycling audit.



Figure 2. Students work together on a tree-planting project.

The Green Fund

The Green Fund, which is a \$5 quarterly fee that supports student empowerment and engagement by encouraging sustainable and environmental stewardship projects, would help to support SSAP projects. The Green Fund is on the 2024 ASCWU ballot. To increase outreach on Green Fund voting, I created advertisements and shared them on 88.1 The Burg and CWU's Central Today announcements.

Timeline

This timeline represents the general steps needed to launch the SSAP.

Spring 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASCWU voting for the Green Fund, which will aid in supporting Sustainability Ambassador projects and other student led sustainability initiatives on campus. •Finalize the job positions for the ambassadors •Gather foundational student support and campus interest in the program
Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ambassadors are hired •Ambassadors receive orientation and training to begin outreach and select their topics of interest
Fall 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Through the SSAP program, the Ambassadors will educate students on sustainability concepts and emphasize peer-to-peer interaction in the campus community through the execution of projects, building a sustainability ethic, and increasing sustainability values and competencies •Ambassadors conduct outreach to promote the SSAP program
2024-2025 Academic Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Assess levels of student engagement via quantitative surveying •Modify the program as needed

Outcomes

By the end of this Spring Quarter, we will create effective training for the Ambassadors to begin creating change on campus. With the launch of this program in Fall of 2024, we expect:

- Increased sustainability projects and advancements on campus
- Increased sustainability programming
- Increased sustainability staff at CWU
- Enhanced student sustainability knowledge, literacy, and values

Conclusion

This project established the preparatory groundwork for the implementation of the Student Sustainability Ambassadors Program in Fall 2024. With the execution of this program on campus, sustainability education will become more expansive and inclusive to all students who want to get involved with making change, while also enhancing student cooperation. These student-led advancements will bring a new wave of enhanced sustainability to CWU's campus, and students will gain valuable knowledge on creative problem-solving and develop an understanding of their social responsibility as future change-makers.



Figure 3. Students collaborate on a sustainability project.

This project supports the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:



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