University of Maryland sustainability council

Meeting Summary
May 10, 2023

Council Members Present (via Zoom):

Carlo Colella — Vice President & Chief Administrative Officer (Chair)
Scott Lupin — Assoc. Director, Environmental Safety, Sustainability & Risk; Director, Office of Sustainability
Maureen Kotlas — Executive Director, Environmental Safety, Sustainability & Risk
Bryan Quinn — Director of Technical Operation, Department of Electrical & Computer Engineering
Jennifer Hadden — Associate Professor, Government & Politics
Giovanni Baiocchi— Associate Professor, Geographical Sciences
Mark Addy — Executive Director, Systems and Networking
Sabrina LaBold — Undergraduate Student Representative

Meeting start time: 11:00am

Meeting Highlights

reACT House – *S. LaBold, S. Lupin*
Sabrina LaBold reintroduced the reACT House Sustainability Fund grant, including the intended purpose of the fund proposal, the history of the grant, and extension requests (Appendix A). Sabrina highlighted the initial fund grant was contingent on approval of a site, and that with new developments the Sustainability Fund Review Council unanimously recommended rescinding the remaining grant. After discussion among the Council members, the Council unanimously approves rescinding the grant with one member abstaining due to involvement with the project. All Council members expressed regret that the proposal was not successful.

Sustainability Fund – *S. LaBold*
Sabrina Labold presented to the Sustainability Council on the last remaining Sustainability Fund proposal, continuing the conversation from an earlier meeting.

- *Assessment of Floral Additions to Offset Negative Impacts of Land Management: $32,826*
    - This project was tabled as it was determined to be part of a research dissertation, however funds focus on hiring undergraduate research assistants. The project aims to provide field experiment experience involving pollinator pest presence based on flora diversity.
    - The Council **unanimously approved** this project. The Council also noted that this project should not be considered a precedent setting event.

The Council had an extensive conversation about research related Sustainability Fund proposals as the Fund has seen an increase in research grants over time. Members recommended providing additional guidance for when research or graduate experiences should be considered. The Council also discussed the possible benefit of establishing multi-year funding for some types of projects to avoid repetitive proposals each year. The Office of Sustainability was charged with drafting revisions to the University Sustainability Fund Bylaws to address these issues and present the draft to the Council to review. (Appendix A)

Student Commuting Offset Program Cap – *S. LaBold, S. DeLeon*
The University Sustainability Fund includes a dedicated maximum amount of $65,000 per year for the purchase of verified carbon credits to offset greenhouse gas emissions associated with undergraduate student commuting. Due to increasing costs for carbon credits, Sally DeLeon and Sabrina LaBold recommended raising the annual cap to recognize these increasing costs, allow students more flexibility in choosing carbon credit projects, and provide an opportunity to forward purchase. As the students are interested in selecting offsets from a diversity of projects, the new proposed cap is $150,000 with $100,000 reserved annually to maintain the program.

The Council **approved** the cap increase. (Appendix B)

Open Forum
The Council thanked Stephanie Lansing, Marie Panday and Sabrina LaBold for their time and interest as their terms expire.

Adjourn 11:45AM

Appendices:

Appendix A: react House & Sustainability Fund

Appendix B: Proposed Carbon Neutral Undergraduate Commuting Program Cap Adjustment

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

sustainability fund

GRANT RECOMMENDATIONS MAY 2023

Review of reACT House

- Awarded $60k in 2020, but Council rescinded funds due to COVID, campus closure and refund of student fees
- Reapplied in 2021 with same intention of reconstructing reACT House at Architecture building
  - Approved $120k funds
  - Funds contingent on receiving all necessary university approvals and full funding from all other sources
- While seeking Sustainability Fund extension, Student Facility Fund rescinded grant and building site was not supported by campus
- Requested remaining funds ($100k) be used to repair damage so it can be gifted by May 31
- SFRC unanimous recommendation: Rescind remaining grant

Sustainability Fund Budget for FY23

Revenue		Expenses	
FY23 Revenue	$504,028	Sustainability Mini-Grants	$0
Available Fund Balance	$204,410	Carbon Offsets for Carbon Neutral Undergrad Commuting**	$65,000
FY23 Working Budget	$708,438	Grants Issued to-date	$117,585.32
FY23 Total requested so far	$767,511.26	Today's Grant Recommendations	$172,186.04
FY23 Requests still pending	$6,000+	Remaining Balance if recommendations are approved*	$416,446

*Estimated **Maximum allowed

Sustainability Fund Budget for FY23

FY23 General Info		Expenses	
FY23 Working Budget*	$542,042.60	Transfer to Mini-Grants Account	$0
		Carbon Offsets for Carbon Neutral Undergrad Commuting**	$65,000
Proposals Received	19	Grants Issued to-date	$226,991.36
FY23 Total requested	$767,511.26	Today's Grant Recommendations	$32,826
FY23 Requests still pending	$0	Remaining Balance if recommendations are approved*	$315,051.24

*Estimated **Maximum allowed

Projects Recommended for Funding

1. Assessment of how floral additions can offset negative impacts of land management practices to support pollinators and other beneficial organisms

Assessment of how floral additions can offset negative impacts of land management practices to support pollinators and other beneficial organisms

Requested: $62,780

SFRC recommendation: $32,826

Summary: Department of Entomology research project aiming to offset negative impacts of land management and increase floral diversity amongst crops. Project is on its third and final year and is requesting funds for undergraduate research assistants.

Submitted by: Kathleen Evans, Graduate RA, Department of Entomology

Assessment of how floral additions can offset negative impacts of land management practices to support pollinators and other beneficial organisms

- Field experiments involving pollinator/pest presence based on floral diversity will be conducted in 2023 at the UMD Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.
- Results of the research will be shared in outreach activities to other scientists, food producers, undergraduate sustainability courses, 4H youth, and gardeners.
- Students will gain experience in biological science and research, including exposure to scientific protocols and methods, and data collection, data processing, and data analyses, all while being integrated in a dynamic and inclusive working group
- Already have 3 undergraduate students helping out with research
    - Confident of their ability to identify interested undergraduates for whose careers this project will make an impactful effect.

Assessment of how floral additions can offset negative impacts of land management practices to support pollinators and other beneficial organisms

Original Budget

Type	Notes	Cost
Undergraduate RAs (3 per Fall & Spring semester)	20 hours a week for 15 weeks at $15/hour with fringe benefits	$29,052
Undergraduate RAs (5 for Summer)	30 hours a week for 13 weeks at $15/hour with fringe benefits	$31,473
Summer vehicle rental	May-October rental meant to be used to reach research stations	$2,255
Total		$62,780

Assessment of how floral additions can offset negative impacts of land management practices to support pollinators and other beneficial organisms

SFRC Recommended Funds

Type	Notes	Cost
Undergraduate RAs (5 for Summer)	30 hours a week for 13 weeks at $15/hour with fringe benefits	$31,473
Summer vehicle rental	3 month rental meant to be used to reach research stations	$1,353
Total		$32,826

March 28, 2023

To: University Sustainability Council
From: Sustainability Fund Review Committee
Re: Carbon Neutral Undergraduate Commuting Program

BACKGROUND
In December 2018, the University Sustainability Council approved a recommendation from the Sustainability Fund Review Committee to reserve approximately $50,000 each year from the University Sustainability Fund to maintain the carbon neutral undergraduate commuting program annually. This recommendation was proposed by SGA. The Sustainability Fund Review Committee should review the program and projected costs annually to determine the need for more or less funding and to form any recommendation to modify the established annual program cap of $65,000. In calendar years 2019-2021, the program was reviewed with no need for modifications. In calendar years 2022 and 2023, the Sustainability Fund Review committee discussed updating the annual cap to align with cost increases in the voluntary carbon markets (as demonstrated in quoted price ranges shown below).

Prices shown in this table are for verified carbon credits from high-quality projects that have been vetted by UMD's vendors.

	2018 Price (per MT-CO2e)	**2022 Price (per MT-CO2e)**	**2023 Price (per MT-CO2e)**
India Wind	$2.00	$7.00 - $10.00	$5.00
Methane Capture at Maryland Landfill	$6.65	$16.69	N/A
Methane Capture Domestic	$4.25	$11.95 - $12.35	$15.00
Global Poverty Alleviation Projects	N/A	$10.00	$7.00 - $18.00
Nature Based Projects	$5.00 - $13.00	$13.50 - $18.75	$11.50 - $15.00

The existing reserve and the annual program cap assumed average prices of approximately $3.50 - $4.30 per MT-CO2e. The lowest cost vetted verified carbon credits offered in 2022 were $7.00 per MT-CO2e. In order to maintain the program, updates are needed.

CURRENT STATUS
Estimated emissions for undergraduate commuting in Calendar Year 2022 are approximately 14,698 MT-CO2e. Pricing for high-quality verified carbon offset credits has increased

significantly in recent years and become more volatile. Pricing obtained in March 2023 indicates a range of $5 to $18 per MT-CO2e. Pricing obtained in May-June 2022 indicated a range of $8.65 to $24 per MT-CO2e.

Without an increase to the reserved amount of $50,000, the Office of Sustainability will have to exceed the reserved amount each year due to these recent prices. Fluctuating prices may make it impossible to offset 100% of undergraduate commuting. High prices in spring-summer of 2022 made it difficult to avoid exceeding the program cap of $65,000 when purchasing verified carbon credits to offset emissions from calendar year 2021. Emissions were suppressed by remote learning in 2021 which made it possible to offset 100% of undergraduate commuting emissions despite high prices. Emissions in 2022 were not suppressed and the ability to continue to maintain carbon neutral undergraduate commuting is now in jeopardy annually without additional funding.

RECOMMENDATION

In order to allow students some flexibility to help select credits from more than one project each year, the Sustainability Fund Review Committee proposes:

1) Reserve approximately $100,000 annually from the University Sustainability Fund to maintain the program;
2) Modify the established annual program cap to $150,000

These proposed updates will allow for a minimum average price of $6 per MT-CO2e to offset undergraduate commuting emissions, and accommodate for an average price of up to $10 per MT-CO2e.

SGA and SUSTAINABILITY FUND REVIEW COMMITTEE ENDORSEMENT

This proposal is supported by the SGA Sustainability Committee and all members of the Sustainability Fund Review Committee.

Sabrina LaBold _____ _03/28/2023_____

Sabrina LaBold, Chair SFRC Date

Alana Ginsburg _____ ___3/30/2023_____

Alana Ginsburg, Director SGA Sustainability Committee Date