



July 20, 2011

To whom it may concern,

It is my pleasure to support the Global and Ecosystem Health Interest Group (GEHIG) of The University of Western Ontario in its efforts to obtain an innovation credit in the STARS assessment. GEHIG, along with another student-led project, Operation Green, work to promote UWO's image as an institution that prioritizes eco-sustainability and global health involvement.

GEHIG is a group initiative established by medical students at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry. Its main tasks include outreach, student health group coordination, and support for international projects. In doing so, GEHIG is able to promote a broad understanding of health that includes the vitality and sustainability of socio-economic, political, and biological ecosystems.

The group has two initiatives that make them school leaders in EcoHealth advocacy and waste reduction:

The Mug program was started in 2008 after reports that 10% of waste mass on campus is composed of disposable coffee cups. It encourages students to reduce the usage of disposable coffee cups through the collection of reusable mugs. The ecological footprint of production and transportation is also reduced through the promotion of Canada-made mugs. This not only reduces waste generated on campus, but also perpetuates a culture of reduce-and-reuse in the classroom.

The second composting, which also became a norm at Schulich due to GEHIG's commitment to waste reduction. Compost bins are located in various locations at the school and more are being added. An important aspect in ensuring the success of this program is promoting awareness, which GEHIG engages in actively through posters and mass emails to reach the student body.

A similar medical student initiative is Operation Green, www.operationgreen.ca which won the UWO Green award in April 2011 for its contributions to environmental initiatives. Operation Green aims to reduce the environmental burden of unused surgical items (also known as overage waste) by donating these products to resource-limited countries, such as Tanzania,

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China, and India. This project not only reduces waste, but also cuts down on costs and other resources and contributes to health care in disadvantaged regions.

The goals of GEHIG and Operation Green positively reflect the university's vision for a more environmentally sustainable learning environment. The groups play an important role in promoting ecological and global health awareness, as well as encouragement for community engagement.

As Director of the Office of Global Health and a physician with research interests in environmental health, I strongly believe that Schulich's student efforts are not only innovative, but crucial in ensuring a sustainable future.

Sincerely,

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