

February 27, 2017

To whom it may concern,

This letter speaks on behalf the UWO Free School Event as a STAR innovation credit at UW Oshkosh. The UWO Free School was created by the Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC) to foster connections and civic engagement between the university and the greater Oshkosh community.

On April 23, 2016 the Free School was the first event of its kind at UW Oshkosh. This event offered a unique opportunity for individuals from varying ages, cultures, and educational levels to participate and discuss interesting topics within today's society. The Free School accommodates these differences by creating workshops, lectures, and discussions that address various areas of sustainability on an accessible yet educational level. For example, in its first year of operation, this event hosted classes that focused on environmental awareness by offering *Greening your Kitchen*, *Container Gardening*, and *Aquaponics*. The Free School also addressed social and economic issues through classes such as *Racial Literacy*, *Yoga and Meditation*, and *Career Etiquette and Resume Building*. I was invited to participate as a presenter. One area of my expertise is water purification, so I chose to present on home water purification systems in light of the recent issues in Flint, MI. The presentation I gave focused on knowing what is in your water (and what is not in your water) so you can choose the best system for your needs while not wasting money on systems that do far more than needed. My session was attended by about 10 individuals from both the university and the greater community. All had a strong interest in the topic and we had a very lively discussion. I think all the participants left with a better understanding of water systems and water contamination/purification issues. I strongly believe that engaging local citizens in these types of learning opportunities helps the university and the greater community in efforts toward a sustainable society.

By approaching sustainability through various economic, social, and environmental angles in a manageable manner, it makes the concept of sustainability applicable to each individual at a meaningful level. This approach was utilized by the student coordinators as an extension of the University Studies Program created by the university as a general education program.

The UWO Free School is also planned for April 1, 2017 because of its success the prior year. It plans to follow a similar emphasis on sustainability by focusing on personal care/health, sustainable living, social justice, and community building. I will be presenting again but on a different topic related to greenwashing. In its second year, the Free School plans to enhance its ability to build further connections between participants through its class offerings. By doing so, this will also increase sustainability education throughout the greater Wisconsin Area.

Respectfully,

Kevin Crawford, Chemistry Professor at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh