

## The Student Sustainability Fund: Objective, Impact, and Lessons Learned

### The Student Sustainability Fund's Objective

The Student Sustainability Fund (SSF) provides Washington University in St Louis's undergraduates and graduates with the financial and interpersonal resources they need to implement sustainability projects that benefit the student body. Our aim is to increase awareness of environmental impact and promote environmental stewardship across campus through active learning. Coordination with faculty, administration, and the University's student community is an integral part of projects supported by the Student Sustainability Fund. This coordination ensures that initiatives are carried out in a responsible manner and maximizes their effectiveness.

### The Student Sustainability Fund's Impact

The SSF experienced its first session of allocating funds during the 2010-2011 academic year. As a collaboration between students, faculty, staff and Student Union, the SSF successfully distributed \$18,678.49 out of its \$23,800 budget. Its funding is provided jointly by the Washington University Student Union and the Office of Sustainability. There were two rounds in which the SSF solicited project applications—one each semester—and together they produced over 15 submissions for review. From these, five received funding: a project to involve students in teaching youth about and how to cook sustainable, healthy food; a lab material recycling program for under-provided African and South American hospitals; a project for students to build a permanent rain collection structure in an East St. Louis garden; a series of sustainability workshops organized by the WashU Co-op; an energy competition to reduce electricity use between dorm buildings and a separate competition between fraternity houses.

### Lessons Learned by the Student Sustainability Fund

Students from all over the University have the ideas and the passion for improving the campus's sustainability climate, and the Student Sustainability Fund has been able to fill a vacant niche in the University sustainability efforts by enabling students to enable other sustainability-minded students and reach the rest of the University community. We have adapted our application process and committee structure to best suit our purpose by providing mentoring support and involving a diverse group of people in the decision making process. As the SSF enters its second semester of funding, we will have to advertise our program and its successes more widely to attract an even greater variety of participants and projects.

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