



CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

Office of Global Initiatives



STARS Innovation
Letter of Affirmation
Bessell Fellows International Internship Program

January 18, 2024

To Whom it May Concern:

In 2021 the Walter Commons for Global Study and Engagement launched a new international internship program called the Bessell/UNSDG Fellowship. The program was designed to engage students in immersive internship experiences with international organizations working to address issues related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Because of the global pandemic, the program was initially a virtual one, but since travel restrictions were lifted students have participated in in-person international internships.

All Bessell Fellows are required to take part in a pre-engagement orientation that introduces them to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, concepts of ethical community engagement, and professionalism in intercultural settings. Internship placements must be a minimum of 160 hours over 6-8 weeks. In addition to meeting with their internship site supervisors, fellows are also asked to respond to reflective prompts and to participate in a post-engagement reflective session and community share out. Selection for the fellowship is a competitive process and is open to all students in all majors. Fellows are selected based on their personal statements and connection between the experience and their academic and professional goals. Preference is given to internships located outside of Western Europe.

One of the goals of the program is to promote long-term relationship building between Connecticut College and local organizations in order to promote reciprocal sustainable relationships and a flow of interns that can support long-term projects. Currently we are working with an organization focused on education in Tanzania, and in summer 2024 will place two interns at an environmentally focused NGO in Bolivia.

Participants have enthusiastically reported that the opportunity to gain international perspective on global sustainability issues while building professional skills at local grassroots organizations has been deeply rewarding.

I can attest that the Bessell Fellowship program is currently active on our campus and will continue in the future. It is not covered by an existing STARS credit and Connecticut College has not claimed it for an innovation credit in the past.

With kind regards,

Melissa Ryan
Director, Walter Commons for Global Study and Engagement