Innovation

Please fill in the following information and return to the SIU Sustainability Council. For any questions about this credit, please view the information at the end of this document.

1. **An indication of whether the institution meets the criteria for this credit**: Yes, we meet the criteria.
2. **A brief description of the innovative policy, practice, program, or outcome**

Supported by student approval and funding of SIU green fund, an 8’ x 9’ vertical garden (green wall) was installed inside the Agriculture Building and a vertical garden (twelve growing towers) was installed in the Agriculture greenhouse.

The value of green walls include numerous benefits which include insulation of the wall, reducing acoustic imperfections and noise pollution, improving air quality, horticultural therapy, aesthetically improving a site and, if desired, used to grow produce. These walls also provide educational opportunities to study plants where it is otherwise difficult to grow and observe plants, particularly in urban spaces and institutions. Additionally, the presence of plants in an environment has a positive effect on a person’s well-being. Approximately 100 students were involved in the installation of the vertical garden and they were fortunate to have the guidance of Laurent Corradi and Marie Kristine Steffanetti, the owners of Plant Wall Design from NYC, visit and assist in the installation. Additionally, Laurent gave a talk open to the public on the benefits and construction of vertical gardens using the system that SIU choose to purchase. The vertical garden is now maintained by students in numerous disciplines and one faculty in Horticulture. It is frequently visited by public and student tours and classes related to sustainable landscape practices. The SIU green wall was and continues to be used as an educational and demonstration tool for students and visitors.

The growing towers/vertical garden in the greenhouse supports and demonstrates the concept of eating fresh, healthy and local produce and urban agriculture. We are also conducting a small study evaluating different nutrient management systems which include organic, aquaponic (using local catfish) and standard fertilizers to grow lettuce. This project is maintained by students and included in our sustainable tours.

Both projects have generated a great interest in students who were previously unaware of either the practices or the purposes of green walls and vertical gardens. Having the living green walls strengthens a visitor or students’ understanding of the purpose, construction and maintenance of each system. Along with other sustainable projects on our campus, the vertical gardens help prepare students as future decision-makers to think sustainably.

I, Karen Midden, affirm that the above information is accurate to the best of my knowledge, and I may be contacted in the future if further investigation is required. My contact information is as follows:

**Name**: Karen Midden

**Phone**: (618) 453-1786

**Email**: kmidden@siu.edu

## Criteria

The innovation describes a new, extraordinary, unique, ground-breaking, or uncommon outcome, policies or practice. The innovative practice, policy, program, or outcome has occurred within the past three years. My institution has not previously received a STARS innovation credit for this practice, policy, program, or outcome

## B. Scoring

Institutions earn 1 point if the criteria are met for this credit.