Perennial Summer Internship Program - 2016

Internship Title: Next Frontiers in Universal Recycling

Internship Site: Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Conservation, Montpelier, VT. Montpelier is serviced by the CCTA Regional bus service. UVM students are able to use this service for free with a valid ID.

Description: This internship will focus on addressing the current and upcoming challenges of getting to Zero Waste in Vermont, and will include a balance of research on specific material types, as well as strategic thinking about communications and outreach to specific segments of the population. In addition to their primary project, the intern would have an opportunity to shadow Universal Recycling staff on site visits, meetings with town officials, haulers, composters, farmers, businesses, schools, etc. The intern would work on a subset of the following, according to their interests and abilities:

- **Beyond Waste materials**: Research summary of material streams that are not covered by Universal Recycling, but which are going to compose a large portion of post-UR waste, or are growing in popularity, such as: bulky rigid plastics, metal-plastic laminated pouches, carpet, mattresses, furniture, etc. Research to include basics of material production, use, potential end markets, options for management, critical stakeholders who would be involved in addressing the material here, etc. The objective is to lay the groundwork to inform future policy decisions about these materials.

- **Outreach at events**: Intern will set up informational tables/booths at farmers’ markets, fairs, and other public events, to provide information about Universal Recycling. A gregarious, outgoing personality, ability to think on your feet, composure, and strong communication skills necessary. Intern must demonstrate strong understanding of the details of recycling, composting, and trash, and be able to answer a lot of questions! Work may include weekends and evenings.

- **Compost use on agricultural fields**: Research, phone calls, possible farm site visits to identify opportunities for use of compost produced through food scraps diversion in agricultural operations. Will address practical logistics, financial, productivity, legal, water quality, climate change, and ecological aspects. Make connections with farm community, identify farm organizations and operations that would be interested in taking part in a pilot.

- **Outreach to the elderly**: This demographic is often eager to do the right thing but challenged with changes under Universal Recycling. Intern will develop a plan for assisting older residents and visitors in making the change to recycling and food waste diversion, as well as connect with civically-engaged organizations that are senior-focused or that tend to have older membership, such as the AARP, senior centers, and Rotary Club, in building support for zero waste. Requires attention to how best to address the physical and mental challenges that older people face. Will include phone calls and site visits.

- **Carbon market opportunities for UR**: Research end use applications for compost and anything else that might generate funding through California’s mandatory offsets market or voluntary markets through the sale
of offsets. Work out the mechanics on additionality, verifiability, potential aggregation of multiple landholdings under different ownerships and management regimes. Identify potential pilot partners.

- **Compost goes viral.** Broad social science thinking about creating a culture of compost among residents. This is a chance to think big. This project requires a student who has strong communication skills, is very self-motivated, and willing to struggle with a complicated topic.

- **Recycling gamification:** Intern will think creatively about how to incorporate game-design elements into educational/outreach efforts about recycling. How do we increase public engagement in recycling and composting, sorting properly, and minimizing contamination? For instance, development of an addictive, candy crush-like game app for recycling sorting. This project requires a student who already has a strong technical and computer science background, and who will not need technical assistance from ANR staff.

**Desired qualifications/skills/coursework:**

Different tasks require different skills, and every effort will be made to ensure an intern has the appropriate background to work on the tasks. Specific skills are listed with the task, but generally all should have:

- Ability to work independently
- Familiarity with state and federal environmental laws
- Familiarity with the Universal Recycling Law (Act 148 of 2012)
- Strong communication skills, including the ability to make cold-calls to residents, businesses, and others
- Strong research skills, including ability to frame a question and outline a research plan, an understanding of the quality and suitability of different information sources, critical thinking skills, ability to write clearly and precisely
- Familiarity with social sciences literature of behavior change
- Familiarity with economics
- Familiarity with farming
- Technical skills as detailed above

*Rubenstein students currently in their first year, sophomore and junior year are eligible to apply.*

**Supervision:** Celia Riechel, DEC Waste Management and Prevention Division

**Start and End Dates:** Mid-May – Mid-August, 2016 (exact start/end dates are negotiable)

**Total Hours:** 20 hours/week, 12 weeks

**Compensation:** $12.50/hour. Earning internship credit through the Rubenstein School Internship Program is required.

**How to apply:** Step by step application instructions are available on the Rubenstein Perennial Internship Program website. Applications are due by 4pm, Friday, January 29th, 2016 through Blackboard.