

Clean Energy Fund Recommendations | Fall 2019

Submitted by the Socially Responsible Investment Advisory Council to Richard Cate, VP for Finance

Executive Summary

The SRI Advisory Council was pleased to receive thirteen proposals for the CEF Forum on October 31st, 2019 in the Davis Center. This is the largest number of proposals since the reorganization of the CEF in 2016. Contributing factors are assumed to be stronger outreach and engagement efforts with the university community and scheduling the forum later in the semester, allowing more time for proposal development. Seven proposals were selected to move forward to the full forum. Of these, two proposals were vetted by the Infrastructure Committee and the other five came directly from community members under the ‘Academics and Co-curricular Education’ focus area. The group used the same metrics to vote on proposals as in the past, again centered on the potential for *impact* on the university community and the alignment with CEF goals.

The SRI Advisory Council voted to fund \$76,108 out of the \$146,559 requested by proposers at the fall forum. The group recommends funding five proposal requests fully (Allen House Charging Station, Zero Emissions On-Campus Composting, Howe Stack Lighting, Shower Timers, Curating the Conversation with Podcasts) and not funding two proposals, requesting that the proposer return with a stronger concept in the spring (Off-Campus Composting, Student Parking Pass Buyout). The Graduate College also released a call for proposals this fall and is in the process of funding a research project under the “Innovative Research” focus area.

Proposal Recommendations

Allen House Electric Vehicle Charging Station

Proposed by: Gioia Thompson, Office of Sustainability

Funding request: \$22,563

The proposal is to install a single dual-port ChargePoint electric vehicle charging station at Allen House, a location identified as a high priority for charging by the Department of Transportation and Parking Services. This location serves a variety of students and employees on the southwestern side of campus. Deliberations by council members included a discussion of *who* would most benefit from the charging station. Members acknowledged that staff members would likely benefit the most from the charging station, but that some students also have electric vehicles and hybrid vehicles. Overall, the group felt this was a strong proposal. **A motion to fully fund the charging station was unanimously supported by the members.**

Zero Emissions On-Campus Composting

Proposed by: Corey Berman, Program Manager, UVM Recycling & Zero Waste

Funding request: \$5,575

This proposal covers a one-time, up-front cost of purchasing an e-assist bicycle and trailer for compost collection at 23 residence halls across campus and would replace (or supplement) the Ford F-150 and Chevy Silverado trucks currently used to collect compost. This would save an estimated 1,814 lbs. of CO2 annually. This plan aligns with the goals of the Active Transportation Plan and the Climate Action Plan. During the meeting, SRI Advisory Council members discussed several parameters they would like included in the plan to move forward. These parameters largely focus on safety and include a mandatory training for bike users, a plan for regular bike maintenance, an insurance policy, clear CEF labeling on the bike and a way to track usage and CO2 avoided (or as a proxy, miles traveled on the bike). **The group voted unanimously to recommend funding the proposal at \$6,000 – adding close to \$500 to cover bike maintenance and training.**

Howe Lighting Project – Phase 2

Proposed by: Rich Wolbach, Energy Manager

Funding request: \$40,000

This project proposal continues CEF funded work on the 3rd floor of the Howe Library. This project extends the installation of motion-sensors and high efficiency lighting to the 2nd floor. This proposal highlights multiple benefits, including energy savings, better quality lighting, and raising the visibility of the CEF.

The group voted easily and swiftly to fully fund this project. Some questions arose about the Revolving Fund and whether this was a fit for that funding mechanism. **The SRI Advisory Council recommends fully funding this lighting project.**

Shower Timers

Proposed by: Zach Merson, Undergraduate student

Funding request: \$3,595

Offering shower timers to students living in dorms was presented to reduce hot water consumption during showers, thus reducing energy used to heat water. The funding request covers 500 timers, spread across dorms, available for check-out through Residential Life in each dorm.

During deliberations, the members requested a clear plan for managing distribution, storage and maintenance of the timers as part of the funding approval. They also discussed the possibility that the Eco-Reps might help support this program. **The group unanimously voted to recommend fully funding this project.**

Curating the Conversation

Proposed by: Josie Friedman, Undergraduate student

Funding request: \$3,950

Curating the Conversation will support the development of podcasts focused on the climate crisis, released during Earth Week in April 2020 and coalescing with the 50-year anniversary of Earth Day. The format will be 30-minute productions, built by interviewing students and other community members at UVM and across Vermont. This work will be conducted by undergraduate interns and supported by Professor Amy Seidl.

The SRI Advisory Council members acknowledged that this is a low-cost project with the potential to lift the visibility of the CEF across campus and reach across the state to engage others on climate issues. The hope is to then leverage these conversations for use in classrooms and other projects, potentially engaging VPR in this work. **The members voted to recommend full funding for this proposal. Two members recused themselves from the vote due to conflicts of interest.**

Off-Campus Composting

Proposed by: Jake Gess and Hannah King, Undergraduate students

Funding request: \$63,756

This proposal requested funding to develop a composting pick-up system for students living in off-campus housing. New laws in Vermont require food waste composting and this proposal offered a way to support this requirement for one year.

The group deliberated over this proposal at length, considering ways that UVM's compost system might provide this service and highlighting the fact that this would be a contracted service with the university. This funding would only cover one year of service. **The group recommends *not funding* this proposal and would prefer to encourage the proposers to return in the spring with a plan for leveraging UVM's existing composting services to support off-campus students.**

Student Parking Pass Buyout

Proposed by: Jacob Weinstein, Center for Research on Vermont, UVM Transportation and Parking Services

Funding request: \$7,120

This proposal aims to buy back parking passes from students through a promotion campaign and incentives, including a gift card to City Market. The goal is to foster an awareness of energy alternatives for transportation. The proposers highlighted the alignment with the Climate Action Plan and Active Transportation Plan.

Members of the SRIAC expressed concern about the favoritism shown to one vendor. Of greater concern is funding for Transportation and Parking that would take the place of lost revenues for passes that are turned in as part of the program. In addition, the gift cards are taxable as gross income. The similar staff program has only generated three participants. Overall, the members expressed doubt that this is the right mechanism for promoting transportation alternatives. **The group recommends *not funding* this proposal at this time.** They encourage the proposers to return with research on alternative models that incentivize behavior change around transportation choices, including information on programs at other universities and the effectiveness of those programs.