

Clean Energy Fund Recommendations | Spring 2020

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

Executive Summary

The SRI Advisory Council received nine proposals to the Clean Energy Fund this spring. This was the second largest number of proposals since the reorganization of the CEF in 2016. Seven proposals were selected to move forward to the full forum. The forum occurred over Microsoft Teams on March 31st, after students had left campus due to Covid-19 safety measures. This digital event seemed to create a more accessible forum than in the past and over 40 people participated. During discussions on funding the proposals, 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 members of the SRI Council make the recommendations below while acknowledging the new and challenging financial situation for the University, like all universities across the country. The SRI Advisory Council members explicitly trust Vice President Richard Cate to make the best decisions for the school while considering the immense financial uncertainty of this moment.

The SRI Advisory Council voted to fund \$32,935 of \$82,091 requested during the forum. The group recommends funding three proposal requests fully (UVM Electric Lawn Equipment, Phase II of Carbon Offset Resource and UVM Sustainability Information Internship), partially funding one proposal (Charging Stations near Converse Hall) and not funding one proposal (Student Parking Pass Buyout). The group also recommends modifications to one proposal (Energy Efficiency and Investment Education) and a request to return with a stronger proposal in the fall.

Proposal Recommendations

UVM Electric Lawn Equipment Pilot

Proposed by: Niels Arentzen, Graduate student

Funding request: \$24,374 (previously approved from a Memo sent in April 2020)

The proposal is for an electric lawn mower to be used by the grounds crew from Physical Plant. This is framed as a pilot, to test the efficacy of electric lawn equipment at UVM. The proposal includes funding for an internship (\$1,875) to collect data from the pilot and compile a report over 6 months for submission to the Director of Physical Plant. This proposal also benefits from a \$3,500 rebate from Burlington Electric Department's Commercial Electric Mower Incentive.

During the discussion on this proposal, SRI Advisory Council members highlighted the importance of defining success during the pilot and encourage the intern to develop criteria for success, identify challenges and support problem-solving with the Physical Plant team. Luce Hillman expressed strong support for this proposal and shared strong support from her grounds crew members in Physical Plant. In general, there is a lot of excitement and support for this proposal.

A motion to fully fund the Electric Lawn Care proposal was unanimously supported by the members.

Phase II of Internship to Create Carbon Offset Resource

Proposed by: Isabel Coppola, Environmental Studies and Political Science, Undergraduate student; Amy Seidl, Assistant Director of Environmental Studies and Faculty

Funding request: \$900

This is a proposal to extend work funded by the CEF in 2018 to create a Carbon Offset Resource for students. This work was originally proposed to conduct the first phase of an internal carbon offset resource, particularly for students studying abroad, informing them of options for offsetting the carbon-intensive airline flights. Between September and December of 2019, UVM undergraduate Grace Budd successfully conducted this phase I work. During this process Budd investigated the basic requirements of a carbon offset, what verifies the quality of a carbon offset and trends in campus carbon offset programs. Most importantly, she identified three offset providers to be included in this carbon offset resource. Terrapass, Native Energy and Wildlife Works are trusted and verifiable carbon offset companies used by other institutions. Middlebury College has worked with Native Energy to meet their carbon offset goals.

Phase 2 of this project, recommended for funding by the SRIAC this spring, would fund an internship to promote the use of this resource across campus. An intern would be tasked with communicating findings from the research from Phase 1 to UVM department chairs and program directors, working to build support for travel offsets across campus. To do so, the intern would create a succinct, informative, web-based presentation that would be delivered face-to-face. Five departments have been identified on campus as agreeable to running pilots and testing the usefulness of the Carbon Offset Resource, including the Gund Institute for the Environment, the Environmental Program and Study Abroad Office. This is not a plan to fund carbon offsets, rather it's a plan to share a Carbon Offset Resource across campus, intended to better inform students, faculty and staff about options related to carbon offsets for travel.

The SRIAC unanimously and easily voted to recommend full funding for this project.

UVM Sustainability Information Accumulation Internship

Proposed by: Cyrus Oswald (RSENR), Isabel Coppola (CAS), Olivia Lopez (RSENR); Undergraduate Student Government Association

Funding request: \$4,752

Students identified the need for a central repository of sustainability information and activities from across campus. This proposal funds an internship to gather relevant information and publish this on the Office of Sustainability website. The staff of the Office of Sustainability voiced support for this effort during the CEF Forum.

The SRIAC quickly and easily voted to recommend full funding.

Student Parking Pass Buyout

Proposed by: Evan Foster (CAS) Undergraduate student; Center for Research on Vermont; Parking and Transportation Services

Funding request: \$8,300

This proposal was modified after the initial proposal (brought forward to the SRIAC in fall 2019) was *not* recommended for funding and was subsequently not funded. This time, the students proposed "buying"

parking passes from students eligible for them, who live more than a mile from campus. Instead of giving students cash for their passes, students would receive gift cards to local businesses. The goal is to reduce driving to campus and parking. The SRIAC debated this proposal at some length. The final recommendation is to *deny funding*. It is not clear that this model will reduce the number of students driving to and parking on campus. Transportation and Parking Services will sell passes not sold to students who instead receive gift cards. The group discussed other ways to approach the concept, but ultimately found any solutions to be compromised by the revenue model that has Transportation and Parking Services collecting revenue from the sale of parking passes.

The group voted to recommend denying funding for this proposal. One member abstained from the vote.

Energy Efficiency and Education Investment Program - Phase I

Proposed by: Kieran Edraney (CEMS), Isabel Coppola (CAS), Undergraduate students; Gary Hawley (RSENR), Faculty

Funding request: \$37,981

This proposal aims to fund energy audits for four inefficient buildings across UVM's campus. This effort would extend work already happening in the Rubenstein School, led by Gary Hawley and partially funded by the CEF. The group was concerned about the lack of budget or time calculated for labor from Physical Plant personnel. In addition, the members of SRIAC felt that key details and context were missing from the proposal.

The group recommends encouraging the proposers to include more context, detail, time estimations for labor and reapplying to the CEF.

Charging Stations Near Converse Hall

Proposed by: Abby Bleything, and Eliana Fox, Transportation and Parking Services

Funding request: \$22,350

This is a request to fund the installation of two dual-port electric vehicle charging stations near Converse Hall. This project would leverage funding (approximately \$25,000) won through a competitive state application, which will otherwise be returned to the state. This will increase UVM's charging capacity by 40%. The SRI members debated this proposal at length and recommends funding *up to half* of the requested amount: \$11,175. To win this funding, the SRIAC members request that Transportation and Parking Services look for additional funding from Burlington Electric Department and other sources. In addition, the SRI members would like to see a strategic approach to installing charging stations across campus before funding additional charging stations in the future. Transportation and Parking services is encouraged to approach the CEF with proposals for funding a strategic plan.

The SRI Advisory Council members recommend that the proposers look for additional funding sources and return to the SRIAC later this summer or fall. The SRIAC will fund *up to half* of the requested amount.