

# Sustainable Campus Fund Recommendations | Spring 2022

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

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## Executive Summary

The SRI Advisory Council (SRIAC) received seven proposals to the Sustainable Campus Fund this spring. Six proposals were selected to move forward to the full forum. The forum occurred in person and over Microsoft Teams on March 28, 2022. During funding deliberation meetings on April 4 and 11, 2022 SRIAC members used an established rubric based on published criteria to vote on proposals, taking into consideration alignment with SCF goals, potential for impact, feasibility, timeline, budget and student engagement.

SRIAC voted to fund \$67,635.36 of \$106,322.40 requested during the forum. The group recommends funding four proposal requests fully (Campus Salt Reduction Environmental Impact Monitoring and Mitigation Prototyping, UVM Grounds Electric Lawn Equipment Purchase, Transition to a Greener UVM Fleet, A Zero Waste Hygiene Equity Program), partially funding one proposal (Time for Net Zero Energy Buildings on UVM's Campus) and not funding one proposal (Refilling Hope for the Future with Sustainability).

All votes were unanimous by the quorum of SRIAC members present. They make the recommendations below and explicitly trust Vice President Richard Cate to make the best decisions for the University.

## Proposal Recommendations

### Transition to a Greener UVM Fleet

Primary contact: Clare Nelson, Transportation and Parking Services/Office of Sustainability Intern Staff/Faculty sponsor: Abby Bleything, Sustainable Transportation Manager, Office of Sustainability  
Funding request: \$10,900.00

The Green Fleet Procurement Procedure created by UVM Transportation & Parking Services (TPS) and the Office of Sustainability (OoS) supports departments in selecting the most efficient vehicle available for the job. However, the increased efficiency of alternatively fueled or hybrid vehicles comes at a price. In conversations with twenty UVM fleet managers, the expense of electric vehicles and access to charging stations were listed as primary reasons for not already owning an electric model. These concerns were particularly relevant for smaller departments with fewer resources. Without financial assistance, fleet managers struggle to cover the cost differential between a traditional combustion vehicle and an electric or hybrid vehicles, often resulting in a missed opportunity to contribute a meaningful step towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions on campus. EV incentives are available to Vermonters through the Burlington Electric Department (BED) Rebate (Up to \$1,800) and the State or Federal Electric Vehicle (EV) programs. However, due to our status as a State University, we cannot take advantage of the state and federal incentives. If this proposal is accepted, we can establish an SCF-sponsored EV Incentive Bank to compensate for the lack of state incentives, effectively doubling the financial assistance currently available to UVM departments through BED.

*A motion to fully fund the proposal was unanimously supported by a quorum of members present at the April 11, 2022 deliberation meeting.*

## UVM Grounds Electric Lawn Equipment Purchase

Primary contact: Matt Walker, Grounds Manager, Physical Plant Department

Funding request: \$15,600.00

PPD staff are committed to the UVM Facilities Sustainability Plan and are interested in shifting three work crews to electric lawn equipment. Transitioning three crews at once better integrates the electric equipment into the daily use of staff and more immediately reduces noise and air pollution around campus buildings. While PPD has recently purchased some gas-powered lawn equipment to replace aging tools, the funds requested would enable PPD to replace two thirds of the remaining aging gas-powered lawn tools with electric equivalents. The upfront cost of electric lawn care equipment is higher (up to 50% more) than gas-powered tools, and budget constraints limit PPD's ability to purchase electric tools to cover three crews. The funding requested would allow for flexibility and security to have functioning tools – gas-powered and electric – for campus lawn maintenance while helping UVM accelerate its decarbonization goals. Given this increased upfront cost of electric tools over fossil-fuel equivalents, PPD is seeking financial support from the Sustainable Campus Fund for the purchase of 15 pieces of electric lawn equipment to serve the campus, including three 20" – 21" electric push mowers, six commercial electric leaf blowers, and six commercial electric trimmers.

*A motion to fully fund the proposal was unanimously supported by a quorum of members present at the April 4, 2022 deliberation meeting.*

## Campus Salt Reduction – Environmental Impact Monitoring and Mitigation Prototyping

Primary contact: John Lens, Professor, Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering

Funding request: \$33,520

The UVM Salt Mitigation Task Force (SMTF) is a cross-campus group established in January 2021 to address problems with salt/deicing practices on campus that are costly in environmental and economic terms. SMTF embarked on reducing the impacts of salt/deicing practices in winter 2020-2021 through a multi-faceted approach involving students, staff and faculty. This application is to continue and expand on that work. The new element is to investigate prototype heated walkway test-sections and associated durability testing of new surface treatments of walkways exposed to deicing. Continuation of existing work will extend real-world learning opportunities for students to understand the impacts of deicing agents on the environment, including the analysis of water quality and soil conditions in UVM watersheds and impacts to infrastructure while gathering information on the composition of de-icing agents to inform purchasing decisions. With evidence gathered in these first- and second-year preliminary studies, the SMTF aims to develop a sustainable campus-wide salt management plan to mitigate damage to infrastructure and the environment.

*A motion to fully fund the proposal was unanimously supported by a quorum of members present at the April 4, 2022 deliberation meeting.*

## A Zero Waste Hygiene Equity Program

Primary contact: Montana Bailey, Community and International Development major and Eco-Rep

Staff/Faculty sponsor: Caylin McCamp, Sustainable Projects Manager, Office of Sustainability

Funding request: \$4,000

Generation Conscious (GenCo) has developed a refillable laundry detergent sheet dispensing machine specifically for college campuses to make sustainability more accessible and affordable. Financial barriers to entry into the sustainability movement often make it more difficult for first-generation and low-income (FGLI) college students to have access to more environmentally conscious lifestyle choices. Installation of this machine in the Davis Center, will give students access to affordable, non-toxic low-carbon hygiene products that are waste-free. GenCo will also provide valuable paid internships for FGLI students who will perform all maintenance and marketing for the program. The annual membership includes 5 refills of 10 sheets, which will be free for 300 qualified FGLI students. Non-qualifying students can pay for an annual membership or per use at a rate lower than leading detergent brands. This proposal is for first year costs and ongoing annual expenses will be sourced from other departments.

*A motion to fully fund the proposal was unanimously supported by a quorum of members present at the April 4, 2022 deliberation meeting contingent on review of the service agreement with Generation Conscious.*

### Time for Net Zero Energy Buildings on UVM's Campus

Student co-authors of proposal: Jack Locker (ENVS '24), Sky Gale (ENSC '23), Cat Mawn (ENVS '24) and Jack Goodman (ENVS '23).

Staff/Faculty sponsor: Gary Hawley, Professor, Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources  
Funding request: Plan A = \$31,021.00 / Plan B = \$3,615.36

In the group's preferred plan (Plan A) to quickly create Net Zero Energy (NZE) buildings for RSENr, they propose an immediate short-term solution to achieve NZE in both Aiken and Bittersweet followed by a long-term phase to determine a more sustainable approach. The short-term solution is to purchase locally sourced renewable natural gas (RNG) through Vermont Gas Systems (VGS) to cover the heating and cooling of Aiken and the heating of Bittersweet instead of conventional natural gas currently being used. The long-term phase is the creation of an internship for a student will work during the summer of 2022 to assist with the creation of NZE buildings.

Plan B is an internship during the 2022 summer as the first step. The intern would gather information on what RSENr has done to make Aiken and Bittersweet as energy efficient as possible, how past funding has contributed to this work, student opinions on the creation of Net Zero buildings, and the institutional/environmental necessity of creating NZE buildings on campus. This information will help the UVM community better understand NZE and RNG and inform future SCF proposals.

*A motion to fully fund Plan B was unanimously supported by a quorum of members present at the April 11, 2022 deliberation meeting with the stipulations that 1) Office of Sustainability will provide some guidance for the intern to ensure the orientation of their work is relevant to the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan and 2) that the intern will consider the full lifecycle of the RNG offered by VGS when assessing suitability of this solution for achieving NZE buildings.*

### Refilling Hope for the Future with Sustainability

Primary contact: Ainsley Larsen, Natural Resources undergraduate student

Staff/Faculty sponsor: none confirmed

Funding request: \$11,281.40

Proposal seeks funding to provide students in the residence halls, specifically FTFY students in the Sustainability Learning Community with zero waste laundry kits called to help students reduce their laundry waste and cut down on drying time, which saves electricity. The kit would include drier balls, stain sticks, a mesh bag and brochures talking about zero waste benefits. Supplies would be purchased through The Restock Shop, a local woman & queer-owned shop in downtown Burlington which has triple bottom line sustainability sourcing goals for each of their vendors. The proposal pays for 50 hours of Ainsley's time to support coordination, distribution and surveying of users twice during the academic year to study the effectiveness of this behavioral intervention. Liz Amler, Program Director, Sustainability Learning Community would be asked to help facilitate distribution and surveying.

*A motion not to fund the proposal was unanimously supported by a quorum of members present at the April 11, 2022 deliberation meeting. Members believed this proposal needed revisions. There was concern that it was too expensive because it did not seem like it would have a high impact, especially as a one-time offering. There were also concerns this plan could result in unintentional waste generation if students already owned these items or didn't want them. Members recommended considering an opt-in approach or loaning these kits out through residence hall front desks for shared use.*

### Organics Hauling Partnership Pilot with Green Mountain Compost

Primary contact: Corey Berman, UVM Recycling & Zero Waste Program Manager

Funding request: \$5,00.00

Proposal seeks to pilot a new organics hauling partnership with Green Mountain Compost by siting a stand-alone, dedicated container unit on campus which would decrease the necessity of our current hauler to visit campus everyday and put this process into action on a small-level pilot scale through a partnership with Green Mountain Compost (GMC). GMC would provide the container itself and the service of the container free of charge during the pilot itself. UVM personnel would be responsible for collection of materials at specified locations and delivery to the container. The goal is to determine both the capability and sensibility of hauling more of our own material on campus while assisting a local partner in determining their capability as they transition into hauling materials. The request for funds will mainly cover site planning and additional infrastructure needs, mainly the installation of a concrete dumpster pad and possible electrical service. The long term goal would financially benefit the university in decreased hauling costs while at the same time decreasing emissions and reducing truck traffic. Students benefit through increased safety and the potential of student employment or internships to assist with the program in the future.

*A motion not to fund the proposal was unanimously supported by a quorum of members present at the April 25, 2022 deliberation meeting. Members believed this proposal needed revisions to answer remaining questions including whether there was a site map, if electricians have confirmed they can run power, what expectations there might be from GMC after the pilot term and what would happen to the pad if the pilot wasn't successful.*