

Contact: John Nash

**FY 2021 CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY REPORT**

**Action Requested:** Receive the report.

The universities have highlighted at least one project for each of the three STARS (Sustainability, Tracking, Assessment and Rating System) categories:

1. Academics and Research
2. Campus Operations
3. Planning, Administration and Engagement

**Executive Summary:** Iowa's public universities are committed to a sustainable future through academics and research, operations and economic development. Respect for the impact on the environment is part of decision-making at all levels. Regent institutions broadly apply campus sustainability in the general operations of each institution, in curriculum and in experiences of students and employees. Sustainability is also utilized effectively when partnering with industry and government, and in technology transfer.

Each university participates in the Association for Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Sustainability, Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) program, which is the universal standard for tracking sustainability in higher education.

*Regent Facilities*

In the design and construction of Regent facilities, our three universities save \$136,000 annually by implementing *DocuSign*, an electronic signature software, *BidExpress*, an electronic bidding software and electronic document storage. Over the last year, 312 *DocuSign* documents were processed and over 200 *BidExpress* bids were solicited, saving trees, water and CO2 emissions.

**Sustainability websites:**

UI Office of Sustainability - <http://sustainability.uiowa.edu/>

ISU Office of Sustainability - <http://www.livegreen.iastate.edu/>

UNI Office of Sustainability - <http://www.uni.edu/sustainability>

Part 1 of 3  
**ACADEMICS AND RESEARCH**

A primary function of colleges and universities is to educate students. By training and educating future leaders, scholars, workers and professionals, higher education institutions are uniquely positioned to prepare students to understand and address sustainability challenges. This STARS category recognizes institutions that have formal education programs and courses, as well as sustainability learning experiences outside the formal curriculum.

**University of Iowa**

*Office of Sustainability and the Environment Mini-ICRU Research Grant Proposals*

In 2019, the Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE) began collaborating with the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates to create research grants in sustainability. The Office of Sustainability and Environment-ICRU grants are intended to encourage student-faculty research in the field of sustainability science and sustainable development. We define “sustainability according to the Bruntland Commission definition<sup>1</sup>, “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of *future* generations to meet their own needs”. While we expect research merit in each proposal, projects designed with an eye towards application and impact have been given preference by the review committee. [ICRU Website](#)

Successful proposals for this grant opportunity clearly identify a community or communities of impact, locally, regionally or internationally. In this regard, we consider the state of Iowa, University of Iowa campus and the Iowa City/Coralville area to be eligible and important communities of focus and critical elements of a University of Iowa Living Laboratory for sustainability that strengthens the core teaching and research missions of the University.



We encourage student/faculty teams from all Colleges and Departments to apply for these grants. Potential areas of study include but are not limited to social equity, climate change, resiliency, vulnerability, biodiversity, public art, communication, land use, water, food systems and environmental justice.

The following criteria are required for ICRU-Sustainability Research Proposals:

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<sup>1</sup> Bruntland, G. 1987. *Our Common Future* (The Bruntland Report). World Commission on Environment and Development. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.

- 1) Proposal title
- 2) Research emphasis
- 3) Community/communities of impact
- 4) Potential applications and impacts of this research
- 5) Importance of this research to the state of Iowa

Last year, 10 Sustainability-ICRU Grants were awarded in the following student/faculty research areas:

- State Innovativeness and Leadership in Environmental Policymaking
- The Peoples' Weather Map
- Lake Michigan Ozone Study: Characterization and sources of airborne particles
- Assessing patterns in wildlife in eastern Iowa cities
- Sanibel Captiva nature reserve biological research project
- Characterizing personal care products in ambient airborne particles
- Using olivine melt inclusions to understand volcanic risk
- Assessing patterns in urban biodiversity to support urban conservation
- Environmental Justice Makeover of Climate Communication

We look forward to awarding sustainability-ICRU Grants again beginning this spring.

### **University of Northern Iowa**

*UNI students help document a natural phenomenon*

When Laura Jackson sat down at her desk for her first day as director of UNI's Tallgrass Prairie Center, she was expecting her day to be spent settling into her new job — setting up her email, organizing her workspace and getting started on the projects she'd be working on throughout the year. The last thing she expected to do was take a call from a New York Times reporter.



The reporter was working on a story on the declining population of monarch butterflies and wanted to interview Jackson about the Tallgrass Prairie Center's role in growing milkweeds. The milkweed is the monarch's only source of food during the caterpillar stage, and is the only plant a monarch



butterfly will lay eggs on. Though Jackson was aware of the role of milkweed in the lives of butterflies, she had not yet become aware of just how much the monarch population had been declining.

She didn't know it then, but the Tallgrass Prairie Center would end up playing a role in that network, leading to more understanding of the fascinating lives of monarch butterflies — specifically, their annual migration to Mexico — and a unique opportunity for UNI students to get involved.

In 2016, three years after she received that phone call from the New York Times, Jackson launched a special project for her Environment, Technology and Society class, a Liberal Arts Core course that is open to students from any major. The project focused on documenting the migration of monarch butterflies across campus. In the fall of 2019, students from the current two sections of this class participated in the project and made some exciting new discoveries in the process.

“A large portion of the monarchs that migrate to Mexico have been produced here in the upper Midwest corn belt historically,” said Jackson. “It really is this amazing natural phenomenon, but we don’t really think about how that creature is depending on flowers here for its migration to fly 2,000 miles. So I thought it would be fun to try to document the migration as it’s going through campus.”

Jackson set up eight stations on different prairie reserves around campus, consisting of poles marking off a 10-meter radius that students would stand in to count how many butterflies crossed through the circle in four separate 15-minute observation sessions. The data gained from these sessions helps give an idea of how many butterflies are making their great migration to the south for the winter.

The project gave many students their first experiences on the campus prairies. This led to a new appreciation for the campus prairies, and nature in general, in addition to the new knowledge they gained about monarchs. Students wrote about these insights in reflective papers they were assigned to write after completing their observations.

“The prairie was really tall and I felt as though, when I stepped into the middle of the prairie, I was stepping into the life of an animal,” wrote music education major Eric Green in his reflection. “When looking at the prairie, I had a first-hand look at how the prairie provided shelter and food in abundance and how it wasn’t just a bunch of grass idly sitting around.”

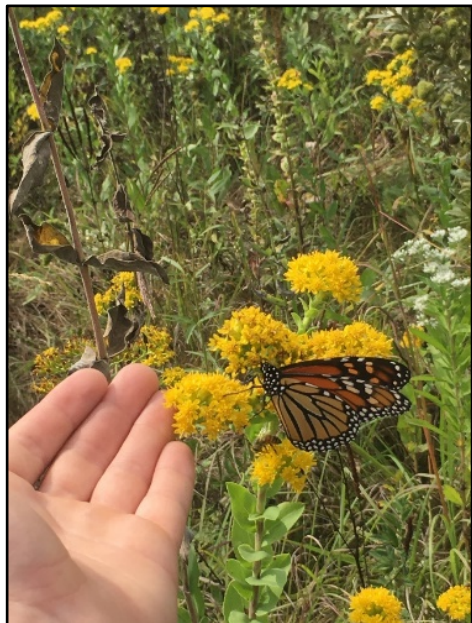
Giving students first-hand insight into these large-scale issues is exactly what Jackson hoped this project would do. She wanted students to ask important philosophical questions, as well as connect these larger issues and the natural phenomena discussed in class with their daily lives.



“In class, we talk about this idea of intrinsic value of a species versus valuing it for its utility to people. That’s a philosophical discussion that’s appropriate to have, and I try not to tell people what to believe, but just to have them think about that a little bit,” said Jackson. “So it isn’t just a ‘dancing through the meadow’ exercise. There are practical implications.”

In addition, it is not all climate gloom and doom. In fact, the findings from this year’s project suggest that a positive change might be on the horizon. Sightings have gone up since the project began — in 2016, class observations averaged just over six butterfly sightings per hour. Moreover, sightings increased each year, with the average reaching a high of sixteen per hour this year. On September 15, 2019, the migration’s peak on campus, students were seeing an average of twenty-seven per hour.





However, it is unclear if all of these monarchs will make it to Mexico and if this population increase will be sustained or is just normal fluctuation. Not to mention, the increase still is not enough to make up for the 90% decline that has happened since the 1990s.

“The numbers are going up, which is good, but that doesn’t mean that the problem is solved,” said Jackson. “What we want to see is a five-year average.”

Still, between the increased sightings Jackson’s classes have witnessed since 2016 and the new awareness of the environment that students gain, Jackson cannot help but feel hopeful.

“I’m getting the sense that people are learning, and they’re having a meaningful experience they will remember and be useful to them,” she said. “They may think they’re only doing this for an hour, but I’ve got them looking now — all of September, their eyes are peeled.

And wherever they move to when they graduate, there’s going to be some nature, and now maybe some of them have learned how to plug into that.”

### **Iowa State University** *Collaborating for Safety*

Many elements come to mind in considering design for social change, e.g. transportation modes and routes, accessibility in and between buildings and placement and design of outdoor spaces. Students of Daniel Neubauer, Assistant Teaching Professor in Industrial Design, took on a new twist to this consideration and embarked on a collaborative yearlong project aimed at social change through redesigning police uniforms and gear.



During the 2019 academic year, a senior industrial design class collaborated with the ISU Police Department to examine the issues officers face with their uniforms, gear and vehicles – and what designers can do to help solve those problems. This was a unique opportunity for both students and officers to work with one another toward creating and sustaining change through a relationship not typically thought of on a university campus.

Law enforcement is a prime market for product development, allowing designers to tackle designs that have remained unchanged for years, in spite of ever-changing demands of an officer’s job. Students gathered

data to better inform their designs by experiencing police gear firsthand. While wearing full gear, the students completed an abbreviated version of police training: running up stairs, performing CPR, applying a tourniquet, kicking down doors, dragging a 150-pound test dummy, handcuffing the dummy and identifying suspects.

During the course, the students designed a wide range of police gear, including:

- **Load-bearing vest:** Designed to take weight off an officer's duty belt while giving a non-militaristic aesthetic
- **Tactical search gloves:** Ideal for searching and pat-downs, as well as having puncture resistance and dexterity
- **Duty pants:** Allows police officers to keep their duty belt on while using the restroom
- **Radio microphone body camera:** A body camera and radio mic connected through a power cord that can be attached to mounts on the uniform's chest.



With designs completed, prototypes were the focus for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year. A new group of students undertook this, focusing on new and similar areas for improvement of police gear.

Not only did students complete creative and functional designs that could impact law enforcement nationwide and worldwide, they built relationships extending well beyond the classroom setting, seeing a different side of law enforcement and breaking out of their comfort zones. In addition, police officers, in turn, were offered a different perspective of the students they are charged to protect and serve. This innovative approach and project will pave the way for future studies and partnerships at Iowa State University and beyond.

As well as sharing their work with the ISU Police Department, this unique application of industrial design was presented at the Architecture, Media, Politics and Society Parade Conference at Florida State University in January. ISU PD Officer Greiter also joined students to present their work at ISU Day at the Capitol in February.

Part 2 of 3  
CAMPUS OPERATIONS

This STARS category encompasses everything within the daily operation of a campus. It includes quantitative data reporting in the areas of Building Operations, Climate, Dining Services, Energy, Grounds, Purchasing, Transportation, Waste and Water Usage. This overarching category notes that institutions can design, build and maintain a campus in ways that provide a safe and healthy environment for the campus community. It recognizes the outstanding efforts to maintain a more sustainable campus environment.

**University of Northern Iowa**

*The Panther Pantry tackles food insecurity*

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), created in 2015, serve as a blueprint to achieve a more sustainable future for all. They address global challenges, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. Goal number two in the seventeen SDGs is “Zero Hunger”. The hope is to end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round by 2030.

When this UN goal was envisioned, it was focused primarily on developing countries, but hunger and food insecurity are prevalent on university campuses across the country.

During the spring 2018 semester, a task force representing a cross section of the UNI Community evaluated student need related to food and other essential items. The task force reviewed the efforts of peer institutions, Cedar Valley resources, as well as local and state need.

As part of their efforts, a food security survey was administered to the entire student population. The results of the survey indicated that 16% of all UNI students experience food insecurity on a regular basis. At the same time, some demographic groups showed nearly half of their population being highly food insecure. Overall 88% of UNI students were in support of a food and essentials pantry on campus for student use.



Based on this overwhelming support, the Division of Student Affairs and Office of Student Life and Event Services took on the task of creating the Panther Pantry, which opened in the spring of 2019. The Pantry is run by a student executive board and relies on nearly 20 volunteers to manage the day-to-day operations.

The pantry is self-sustaining with primary funding coming from donations. There are two primary ways that the Panther Pantry generates support on campus.

The first is through donations. Many departments have already hosted food drives on behalf of the pantry. In addition to non-perishable food and necessity items, the pantry always accepts monetary donations. For



example, recent University initiatives in this area include “Giving Tuesday” and the COVID Support Fund. In addition, prior to opening the doors, a crowdfunding initiative brought in \$12,113 in donations. This initiative helped with the startup costs of the pantry and will continue to fund the pantry’s operations. Monetary donations like this make the largest impact to the pantry.

The second way to support the pantry is by volunteering. In order for the pantry doors to be open, it needs to be staffed during hours of operation. The executive team routinely accepts volunteers from throughout the UNI community.

Through the first year of full operations, the Panther Pantry has been a huge success. Since the beginning of the 2019-2020 academic year, there have been 3126 total visits from 450 individuals students. The students served represent a cross section of the campus, including students from 35 different countries. Over 20,000 pounds of food and necessities have been donated to these students in just the last eight months.

The next big initiative within the Panther Pantry will focus on increasing the levels of student engagement through four strategies.

- 1) Looking into ways to educate users on other means that may be of service to them in the Cedar Valley community
- 2) Educating the UNI community on food insecurity
- 3) Partnering with student organizations on how they can work with the Panther Pantry
- 4) Providing opportunities for student organizations to work with the Northeast Iowa Foodbank



## **Iowa State University**

### *Combating Food Insecurity*

An [April 2018 study](#) of college campuses found that more than one-third of students are struggling with food and/or housing insecurity (with this percentage being even higher for students of color and those who identify as LGBTQIA+), impacting students’ academic performance and wellbeing. These study findings resonate locally as Iowa State University continues to see increasing numbers of students, faculty and staff reporting challenges with food security.

These increasing trends prompted the [Division of Student Affairs](#) to launch an effort to give back to Iowa State University and the Ames community by addressing food security on campus and creating the Food Security Workgroup in 2018. Along with Student Health and Wellness and ISU Dining, the division is partnering with several campus units in addressing food insecurity including: Student Government, Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost, Department of Residence, ISU Foundation, and Dean of Students Office.

Efforts from this initiative have resulted in a number of significant deliverables:

- Completion of comprehensive review of national university-based programs that address food security and producing an ISU-specific report identifying low/no cost, moderate cost, high cost opportunities.



- Supplementing support for [The SHOP](#), a student food pantry, including initiating an education drive focused on increasing and enhancing awareness and donations; establishing a Foundation account that directly links gifts to resourcing the pantry; identifying community grocery stores to provide free delivery of purchases made through monetary donations and investigating additional permanent food donation drop-off sites around campus.
- Planning toward establishing a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit acceptance at all ISU Dining retail locations.
- Adding questions for health center and counseling intake screenings, as well as custom questions to ISU's biannual participation in the National College Health Assessment, specifically aimed at gathering data on food security.



One especially unique deliverable offers the opportunity for ISU students to offer direct assistance to their peers in need – ISU Dining's [Give a Swipe Program](#).



After learning about efforts in New York to offer meal sharing to university students, the ISU Dining team started discussions and strategizing about offering a similar opportunity for ISU students to offer food security to their peers in need. The Give a Swipe program, kicked off in 2019, offering students the opportunity to donate Dining Dollars or Flex Meals, or a combination of both, from their own meal plans, to be converted to meal swipes and passed to other students.

Meals can be donated by completing a form on the ISU Dining website, during a scheduled donation period between fall and spring semesters. Once donated, ISU Dining works with campus departments including Office of Student Assistance, Student Wellness, Financial Aid, International Students & Scholars and Student Counseling Services to identify students in need to receive donated meals. During the kick-off 2019 donation period, 176 meals were donated. In 2020, this number nearly doubled with 335 meals donated.

## University of Iowa

### *Intra University Campus Sustainability Partnerships*

In the 2019-2020 school year the Office of Sustainability and the Environment has launched a program aimed at creating opportunities for embedded sustainability partnerships with campus partners. While the Office continues to offer internships to students that are project or program based, the creation of a new class of embedded internships was viewed as a way to foster collaboration across campus while enhancing student learning and effectiveness. This academic year the program piloted three embedded internships with partners from Housing and Dining, The

Center for the Health and Environmental Effects of Contamination (CHEEC), and The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC).



UI Dining has been a sustainability leader on campus for several years, undertaking efforts such as installation of pulpers to collect organic waste for composting, implementation of tray-less dining, procurement of local foods, and most recently integration of meal forecasting software. Understanding the significant environmental and financial impacts of food waste, UI Dining and the OSE partnered to create a sustainable dining internship position that aims to capitalize on Dining's current efforts and identify new opportunities to expand sustainability in dining operations.

Last fall, this intern conducted food waste audits and correlating opinion surveys in all three major dining halls. The data revealed common issues that led to unnecessary food waste, such as excessive portion sizes, unpopular recipes, improperly cooked food, and simply taking too much food. Working directly with Dining staff in each dining hall, the student intern has developed

recommendations tailored to target waste specific to each dining hall. This student is also reviewing reports from Dining's newly installed meal forecasting software and identifying opportunities to reduce waste measured after each meal. Additionally, the student intern is developing a sustainable dining marketing campaign to influence student behavior while dining.

The OSE has also continued its partnership with UIHC on a sustainable hospital internship position. Last fall, this student began to implement recommendations identified through waste audits conducted by the previous sustainable hospital intern. The intern focused heavily on adding new recycling bins and signage throughout UIHC units, removing excessive trash cans identified by UIHC staff, developing a staff composting pilot program, and surveying staff sustainability knowledge. Through the staff surveys, the intern found there is a high demand for UIHC sustainability information to be available online.

As a result, the intern began working with UIHC's marketing team to develop a sustainability section on the UIHC staff website. Additionally, the intern led efforts to enroll UIHC in the Healthier Hospitals Initiative, a free, voluntary program designed to help hospitals reduce energy and waste, choose safer and less-toxic products, and purchase and serve healthier foods. As a representative of the UIHC Sustainability Committee, the sustainable hospital intern gained the committee's support to enroll in the Healthier Hospitals Initiative, which the committee then recommended to UIHC Administration (approval is pending).

The OSE has also recently forged a partnership with the Center for the Health Effects of Environmental Contaminants (CHEEC) to study herbicide, pesticide and fungicide use on campus. A graduate student hired in the fall of 2019 has worked closely with UI Landscape Services, Athletics groundskeeping and UIHC to assess current practices and make

recommendations based upon best practices at peer institutions. The report for these efforts will be forthcoming in summer 2020.

*IMU Compost Project*

The Iowa Memorial Union has been at the forefront of diverting waste from the landfill by having both compost and recycling receptacles throughout the building for many years. However, IMU custodial staff identified persistent contamination in the compost receptacles, preventing the material in the compost receptacles from actually being composted. The compost facility utilized by the UI requires compost to contain less than 1% contamination in order to be accepted for processing. Concerned that compostable material was being landfilled, UI Student Government consulted the OSE to help identify the problems leading to contamination and develop a plan to reduce contamination to acceptable levels. In collaboration with UISG, the OSE conducted waste audits in February 2019. The audits were conducted daily for two weeks and the data collected was used to establish baseline waste composition and contamination levels in the landfill, recycling and compost receptacles.



After conducting the waste audits and observing the waste receptacles used for collection, the OSE determined that the high contamination levels were due in large part to the design of the waste receptacles. To address this, the OSE collaborated with UISG and IMU administration to purchase and implement new waste receptacles designed to reduce contamination. The old bins had several problems that contributed to contamination.

The color scheme of the old receptacles did not match traditional color schemes for recycling and compost. The new bins use blue for recycling and green for compost, which is supported by behavior research related to waste management. The old receptacles had identical lids for compost and landfill waste, so when the user was standing at the receptacles, it was difficult to tell them apart. The new receptacles have different openings for each bin, and the compost receptacle has a hinged lid that the user must lift in order to place items in that bin.

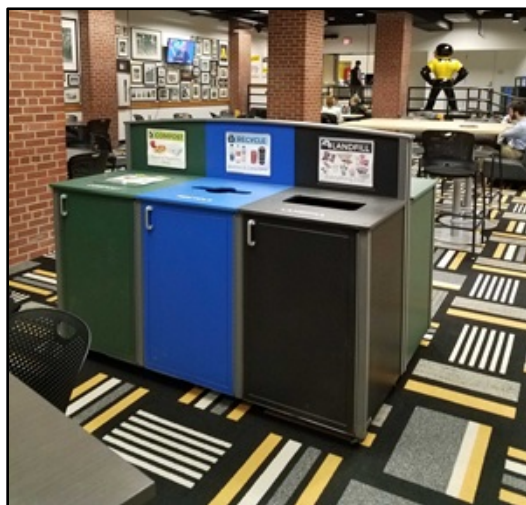


The signage was on the body of the old receptacles, requiring users to step back and look down to determine what should go in that bin. The new receptacles have an attached backboard with eye-level signage.

**2019 Recycling Receptacles**



**2020 Recycling Receptacles**



The new receptacles were introduced in February 2020 and post implementation waste audits were repeated daily for two weeks. Based on the data, the new receptacles have been successful in significantly reducing contamination. In 2019, 18% of what was in the compost bins was landfill waste and 2% was recyclable material, for a total of 20% contamination. In 2020, the compost bins contained 2% landfill waste and 0% recyclable material, an 18% reduction in contamination.

Although the compost contamination level is currently 2%, which is more than the 1% allowed by the compost facility, behavior observations suggest that the dining staff were responsible for at least some of the contamination. Dining staff were observed scraping plate waste from the plate return area into a compost bin. During the observation, they were scraping all materials, including non-compostable items into the compost bin.

The dining manager was notified and asked to ensure staff were trained to properly use the compost bins. Once classes resume to normal, additional waste audits of the compost bins will be conducted to determine if staff training reduces the contamination levels to below 1%, which would meet the level needed to send the material to a local compost facility.

**Part 3 of 3**  
**PLANNING, ADMINISTRATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

This STARS category encompasses a wide variety of planning, engagement and outreach areas. It includes quantitative and qualitative data reporting in the areas of Coordination and Planning, Diversity and Affordability, Human Resources, Investment and Public Engagement. This overarching category notes that institutions of higher learning can make significant contributions to sustainability throughout society by sharing their experiences and expertise with others. Sharing best practices and lessons learned can help other institutions, communities and individuals realize efficiencies that they otherwise may not have considered.

**Iowa State University**

*Supporting Community, One Sofa at a Time*

Every year during student move-out and lease changeover weeks, the City of Ames Resource Recovery Plant sees an influx of couches, wooden furniture, clothing and more being disposed. At the same time, new students moving in are in need of furniture and other household items. The solution? [Rummage RAMPage](#), a collaborative effort to pair unwanted items with those seeking low-cost options for furnishing their homes and keeping reusable items out of the landfill.

First initiated in 2016 through partnership between the City of Ames and the Iowa State University Office of Sustainability, this event takes place annually to cover the timeframe of off-campus leases ending and students moving out in late July through the start of new leases beginning and early August move-in.

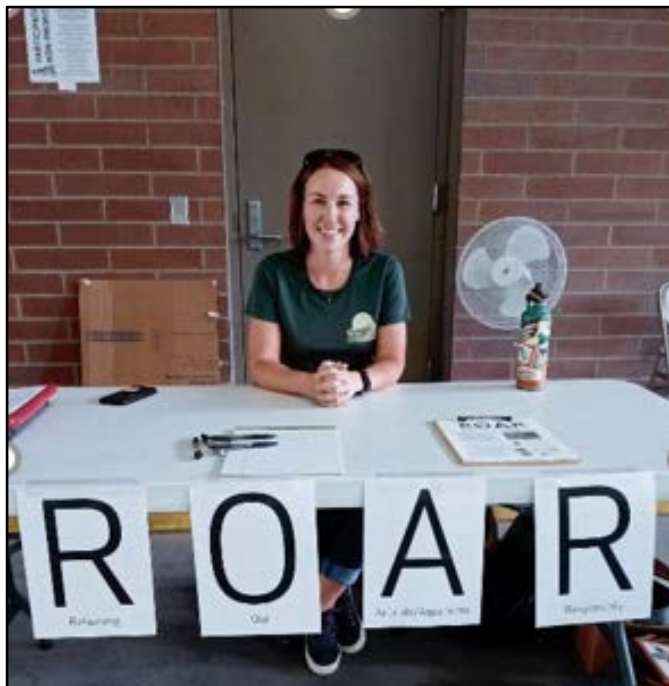
The event is set-up like a rummage sale – at a community scale. Community members, student or non-student, are invited to drop items off for donation or pay a small fee and have donations picked up curbside. Items are inventoried, priced and put on the sales floor – which is visibly signed to direct shoppers to areas of interest. Items are priced to sell, with most small household items being \$1 to \$10 and furniture usually under \$50, depending on selling condition. Last year, a “rare and unique finds” section was added to highlight and price higher value items as well as a “make an offer” section to ensure the as much material as possible could be repurposed instead of landfilled.



Day 1 of the event is only for donation and ensures a full sales floor is ready for opening sales, to the 50+ shoppers lined up waiting for the sales floor to open. Subsequent event days offer the opportunity to donate as well as shop, with the final day being sales only at half price. All items remaining at the end of the event are first offered to community non-profit organizations to assist with their missions, then distributed, as accepted, to community reuse/thrift stores - and finally landfilled.

As well as taking household items for sale, a number of items are also accepted to, in turn, be donated to support the work of community support resources. Unneeded toiletries, for example, are collected for local shelters, as well as campus and community organizations connecting needed supplies with those in need. Clothing, shoes, bedding, food items, and books are also collected for donations.

In addition to rehoming unwanted household items, R.O.A.R (Rehoming Our Animals/Aquariums Responsibly), a collaboration of the Ames Animal Shelter, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Wildlife Center, Story County Animal Shelter and Story County Conservation, joined Rummage RAMPage in 2018 to offer a pet surrender event alongside donating household items. ROAR offers an important addition to this event, items that are not able to be moved which can, in some cases, include pets. ROAR offers information about rehoming outlets for pets, as well as a location for on-site surrender to ensure placement in an adoption facility. To date, this addition has rehomed five pets and offered information and numerous consultations to facilitate connections to outlets for rehoming and adoption.



Housed in the City of Ames Intermodal Facility, Rummage RAMPage claims 2.5 levels of the parking ramp, with half a level being dedicated specifically to donated sofas. In 2019, over 58 tons of housewares was diverted from being landfilled, nearly tripling the inaugural diverted tonnage in 2016. Within that total were over 300 sofas.

As well as supporting community through reduced waste and economic savings, Rummage RAMPage also offers a unique fundraising opportunity for area non-profit organizations. All event proceeds are split among community non-profits who volunteer at least 10 hours of support service during the event. In 2019, 22 organizations donated nearly 1300 volunteer hours to support the multi-day event that gleaned over \$33,000 (a sevenfold increase from 2016). Funds were distributed to each organization according to the percentage of total volunteer hours provided.

### **University of Iowa**

#### *Underrepresented Students in Sustainability (USS) Mentoring Program*

Last fall, OSE interns proposed development of the USS program to create a resource for underrepresented students interested in environmental sustainability. The USS program engages non-traditional and under-represented students in exploring careers in sustainability and the environment. The program's primary focus is fostering academic and professional success by offering more accessible mentoring opportunities to undergraduates from first generation, minority or disadvantaged backgrounds. USS connects students with qualified faculty mentors interested in providing guidance and advocacy for the next generation of leaders in the field. [USS website page](#)

"The University of Iowa Office of Sustainability is placing underrepresented students at the forefront of its focus through a new mentorship program that bridges the gap between students and faculty members in their professional development." – [The Daily Iowan, September 26, 2019](#)





#### *Program Goals*

- Bridging the gap between underrepresented students and qualified professionals who share an interest in environmental sustainability.
- Offering a support system and increasing retention for underrepresented students in sustainability-oriented fields.
- Preparing underrepresented students to join the next generation of leaders in sustainability and the environment.

#### All students interested in sustainability are encouraged to apply, but preference is given to students who:

- Identify with a group that is underrepresented in environmental sustainability.
- Come from economically, geographically, or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Have demonstrated interest in environmental justice and working with underserved populations.

#### *Mentoring Guidelines*

All faculty with expertise in environmental sustainability are encouraged to join the program. Mentors are required to meet with their students for an hour (at least) once a month and are encouraged to: share their office hours with students, ask students to send weekly email updates, invite their students to collaborate on a project, attend a relevant lecture or skill-building event with their student. At monthly meetings, mentors and students are encouraged to discuss their experiences, goals, and plans. USS mentors aim to help their mentees build relationships, offer a system of support, and prepare students for the future.

#### *Potential Areas of Expansion*

The USS program currently recruits professors for mentoring. We may be able to expand by offering mentoring positions to staff and other qualified professionals. We are also considering expansion of the program to include Graduate Student Mentors.

#### **Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities**

The Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities Continues to have impact across the State of Iowa. Below are two selected projects designed to help Keokuk and Manchester.

##### *Keokuk*

Now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC) has partnered with the City of Keokuk in Lee County to complete more than 20 projects for the 2019-20 academic year. A team of four graduate students in the School of Urban & Regional Planning has taken on one of those projects- they are helping Keokuk develop a trails plan that features a unique “greenways” element. Greenways in Keokuk would mean converting low-traffic street segments into non-vehicular paths, which could help the City lower maintenance costs, retain stormwater to reduce flooding, improve neighborhoods aesthetics, and create safe pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The team will help City officials understand alternatives as they tear up streets to achieve EPA-mandated storm and sanitary sewer separation and consider treatments for reconstructing the sites. The community wide pathways and trails network is designed to promote health and wellness within the community in a cost-effective manner. Fulbright student Nadia Silva from Angola talks about her experience working on the project in this video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KB1xCLM8uK0&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KB1xCLM8uK0&feature=emb_logo).

#### *Manchester*

As part of their Senior Design Capstone course, Civil & Environmental Engineering students are working with official in the City of Manchester on a design to protect properties from flooding. Recent land development in areas around the city have created new flooding issues for a large area in the community, causing numerous properties to fall within FEMA's 100-year flood plain. The flooding issues generally occur in heavy rainstorm events.

The engineering team is modeling design alternatives, such as a retention basin or wetlands, that could slow water flows enough to mitigate the flooding and, ideally, to allow for a floodplain map amendment or revision to take the area, or some portion of the area, out of the floodplain. This is IISC's first project with the City of Manchester, who will be one of two IISC communities for the 2020-21 academic year.

#### **University of Northern Iowa**

##### *Packing the Dome for MLK Day*

In another project aimed to address hunger, the University of Northern Iowa Office of Community Engagement began planning an MLK Day of Service event in conjunction with the Northeast Iowa Food Bank (NEIFB) and Volunteer Center of Cedar Valley (VCCV) in the summer of 2019. This event is hosted annually by the Service and Leadership Council and NEIFB. The food-packing event has been a partnership for the last six years between all three agencies.





The goal for the 2020 event was to expand the program into the UNI-Dome, allowing the event to grow from 500 volunteers and 17,000 bags packed to 1,600 volunteers and 48,000 bags packed. With event planning and support from the UNI Service and Leadership Council and Panther Party, financial support from John Deere and UAW Local 838, and in kind support from the Atlantic Coca-Cola Bottling Company the dream was able to become a reality. The “Pack The



Dome: Martin Luther King Jr National Day of Service” event at the UNI-Dome on January 20th, 2020 was the largest, single-day of volunteering event that has ever been organized in the Cedar Valley.

Participants were invited to help package food for the Northeast Iowa Food Bank's BackPack Program. The Backpack Program serves 13,680 children, at 145 different schools across Northeast Iowa Food Bank's 16 county service area. Before school lets out for the weekend, children receive assembled bags of kid-friendly meals and snacks that can fit in their school bags and can be prepared without an adult's help. The 2020 Pack the Dome event covered about a third of the inventory for the whole year, or nearly 48,000 bags of food.

Volunteers at the event included UNI students, faculty and staff, students from Union and Hudson High Schools, employees of MidAmerican Energy, AECOM and Deere and Co., AmeriCorps NCCC members from the Vinton campus, and people from all over the Cedar Valley community. There was a need to ensure that community members, along with UNI students, faculty and staff knew that there was a space for them to get out and serve on MLK Day. Making it a Day on and not just a day off.

Through the VCCV Get Connected platform, volunteers were able to sign up for the event ahead of time, allowing event planners to know how many volunteers to expect. Additionally, it provided



an opportunity for the VCCV to connect with these volunteers into the future through the Get Connected platform. Individuals that showed up the day of and had not pre-registered were put on a waitlist at the door and were able to participate once registered volunteers had signed in. Of the 1,600 volunteers that attended the event there, was a 95% retention rate of volunteers signing-up and showing up.

The 2020 Pack the Dome event succeeded in bringing volunteers from the university and surrounding communities together in order to observe the Martin Luther King Jr. Federal holiday as a day of service. In addition, this project encouraged those who served on MLK day to make long-term commitments to community service, through bringing people together to focus on service to others.

