

2019-2020 CNI Student Engagement Projects: UC Irvine

Reema Bzeih, Masters of Public Policy University of California Carbon Neutrality Initiative Fellowship

Role

As the Carbon Neutrality Initiative (CNI) Student Engagement Fellow for UC Irvine, I took on a leadership role to inform and engage all personnel on campus to understand the efforts UCI is putting toward achieving a reduction of net carbon emissions to zero by 2025 and how students, staff and faculty play a role in achieving this goal.

Mission

In order to help the UCI campus understand how sustainability is practiced throughout the university and why it is important to do so, I wanted to find opportunities to create accessible and open spaces where people would not feel intimidated by the idea of sustainability and environmental awareness. My projects included hosting a weekly speaker series that discussed various topics of sustainability, helping lead development and planning for an online module on sustainable living behavior for residents in university housing, and launching an online sustainability-themed blog featuring articles written by university students.

Partnerships

UC Irvine's Sustainability Resource Center (SRC) helped me plan projects and provided me the resources necessary to host events and engage the student body. Rachel Harvey, Sustainability Program Manager and Udara Abeysekera, Program Coordinator also provided guidance and assistance with all of my projects.

The Sustainability Salon

The Sustainability Salon was structured as a forum in which anyone on campus could come and listen to featured speakers that were either involved, working or experts in the topic of interest for the week. We held the Sustainability Salon from Week 2-10 of Winter Quarter, and provided lunch for all speakers and attendees. I recruited the featured speakers and acted as a moderator for the discussion while maintaining dialogue between the panel and the audience. This event gave students a chance to meet professionals face to face and establish connections while also learning valuable information.

The Sustainability Salon was not only accessible to university students, but it also managed to be accessible to personnel outside UCI. A student from a neighboring high school reached out to the SRC and asked if she could also have a chance to learn about what was being discussed in the weekly Salons. Since the majority of the speakers brought visual presentations with them, it was very easy to make the information accessible to those outside UCI as well.



SUSTAINABILITY SALON

JOIN US FOR AN OPEN FORUM TO LEARN FROM ENGAGING PANELISTS ON CAMPUS AND AROUND ORANGE COUNTY WORKING ON SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS.

TUESDAYS 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
STUDENT CENTER G464
***LUNCH PROVIDED**

- WEEK 2 SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS TOUR: HOW IS UCI SUSTAINABLE?
- WEEK 3 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR EVENT WEEK
No salon this week - attend environmental justice programs on campus
- WEEK 4 FOOD, FOOD WASTE, AND SUSTAINABLE DINING
- WEEK 5 SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION
- WEEK 6 THE UCI CLIMATE ACTION PLAN
- WEEK 7 STUDENT INVOLVEMENT WITH SUSTAINABILITY
- WEEK 8 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN SUSTAINABILITY
- WEEK 9 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: HOW CAN SUSTAINABILITY BE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL?
- WEEK 10 SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS MANAGEMENT: FACILITIES WASTE TREATMENT, AND GREEN BUILDINGS

UCI Student Housing Sustainability | Carbon Neutrality Initiative | UCI Sustainability Resource Center

The Sustainability Spot

For this Spring quarter, I was unable to plan for any in-person outreach activities due to COVID-19. As the university transitioned to remote learning, I had to figure out a way to continue to stay engaged with UCI students and staff.

Therefore, I launched an online blog on the UCI Sustainability Resource Center's website that would allow students to submit any writing or creative work that was related to sustainability. Launching this blog allowed me to keep creating open and accessible spaces for environmental awareness and help people learn more about the importance of sustainability.



THE SUSTAINABILITY SPOT

A STUDENT RUN BLOG

#UCISRC

Online Module Development

I was also given the opportunity to help oversee the development of an online module that would be piloted in Fall 2020. This module would be distributed to staff and students living in university housing that would educate on sustainable at-home behavior related to reducing waste and energy usage.

This project was a continuation from the prior year, and with the help of two interns at the SRC, we were able to come up with a solid skeleton for the module and outline critical information that should be included in the final launch.

The main goal of this project is to help influence behavior changes and increase awareness of students and staff so that even after leaving university housing, they will be able to continue sustainable behavior in their living spaces. The efforts they make can not only contribute to reducing carbon emissions at UCI, but also outside UCI.

After My Fellowship

I hope that the fellows and interns after me continue to inspire discussions about environmental science and sustainability in an open, engaging and welcoming space that encourage students to participate in the movement.

I also hope the SRC continues hosting the Sustainability Salon speakers series and keeps up the Sustainability Spot blog even after a transition back to in person learning. Giving students a platform to speak will provide opportunities to positively influence the public.

I am excited to see what the final product of the online module will look like and would like to know what kinds of changes in emissions, electricity usage or waste will happen over the course of the next five or so years once it is officially implemented.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Rachel Harvey, Udara Abeysekera, Carrie Metzgar and the entire student staff at UCI's Sustainability Resource Center for providing the guidance, passion and support I needed to execute these projects!



Gathering in UC Irvine's Sustainability Resource Center for the Sustainability Salon.



A social media announcement by UCI's Sustainability Resource Center for an article on the Sustainability Spot.