

## Mini-GSA Certificate & Going Green Programs

*Key words: Diversity, Decentralization, Certificate, Reusable*

### Mission

Our main goal for these programs was to offer **easy but impactful** tools and incentives for graduate students to become **more sustainable** during their daily research, teaching practices and meetings. By involving the GSA, I hoped to decentralize the concept of sustainability and make it accessible to all graduate students, regardless of their fields or cultural diversity.

### Introduction

As the current Executive Vice President of the Graduate Student Association at UCR (EVP GSA), one of my roles is to implement UC Office of the President policies and goals on my campus.

As a returning CNI fellow, I realized there was a severe lack of awareness about sustainability practices and carbon neutrality in some parts of our campus, such as humanities and arts. As there is no office of sustainability at UCR, I took up the task to develop campus-wide awareness programs about sustainable practices.

UCR-GSA, being the official student government of the graduate and professional student population at UC Riverside has the resources to carry my message to every graduate student on the campus. The GSA comprises of 'Mini-GSA's', which represent every department in every college at UCR. Mini-GSAs are departmental graduate student associations, which advocate for departmental specific needs and issues and are the ideal envoi to reach the students.

Using this GSA platform, I created three campus-wide programs: 1) the Mini-GSA Certificate program, 2) GSA Goes Green program and 3) Dance Department Goes Green program.



### Mini-GSA Certificate Program

The Mini-GSA Certificate Program was an attempt to create grassroots projects by motivating students from every department to come up with their own 'carbon neutral idea' and self-implement it. Each Mini-GSA developed sustainable practices aimed specifically at their own departmental needs.

### GSA Goes Green

The GSA Goes Green Program focused on making every executive board, general council, and committee meetings greener by asking attendees to bring their own reusable utensils, plates, and bottles. GSA also hosts a conference badge recycling box and a food and basic needs donation box in the office.



### Dance Department Goes Green

In partnership with the department's chair and faculty, a list of sustainability practices was made to be implemented in dance studios, classrooms and faculty meetings. An awareness drive was organized for all members of the department on how to become 'green members' of the UCR campus. A 'walk your trash' campaign was carried out, encouraging people to use the centrally located recycle bin and reduce the number of small trash cans in the building thus changing the culture.

#### Acknowledgement:

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### Highlights:

- ✓ 7 Mini-GSAs were certified with the Certificate of Sustainability, signed by the Chancellor.
- ✓ Significant increase in the number of graduate students bringing their reusable food utensils at meetings, promoting Zero-waste meetings.
- ✓ Dance faculty meetings are now paperless.
- ✓ Projects made visible by Inside UCR press.
- ✓ Reduction of carbon footprint was achieved by diverse groups of graduate students.

### Challenges Faced

UCR has no office of sustainability, thus there is a severe lack of support for graduate students to come up with ideas for grassroots sustainability practices, and to encourage the UCR community to participate in the reduction of carbon footprint. Furthermore, engaging non-STEM majors to implement sustainable practices was a challenge. Towards the end of my fellowship, I realized that the sub-field of 'environmentalism' may have been a field to investigate further to encourage more Humanities and Arts departments to participate in the certificate program.

