

Campus sustainability 0234-1 B1

Projects by Portland State students aim to further the university's green ambitions

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Portland State University, awash in money for teaching and research about sustainability, wanted to find out what students would do with a slice of that cash.

Oregon's largest university aims to become a regional, even national, touchstone for sustainability learning, and it has \$25 million from the private Miller Foundation to get started.

So, what would the students do to further PSU's green ambitions?

They could have tackled the rest of the world's problems, but most decided to start with themselves.

Many of the 50-plus proposals came



SHELBY WOOD

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from undergraduates, who took aim at what they consider unsustainable parts of campus life — from how they eat and drink, to what they throw away, to how they arrive at class.

Their ideas ranged from bucolic to downright martial, from a community garden to a "recycling police force" that would fine students \$1 per recyclable item that ends up in the trash.

"Portland State wants to be seen as on the cutting edge of sustainability.

My sense as a student is, we're not quite there yet," said Sion Zivetz, a graduate research assistant who helped coordinate the grant process.

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PDX Green: Students need tangible results by end of term

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Some of the winning projects will venture beyond campus, but even with those, "we wanted to make sure that students bring the knowledge they get outside of PSU back to the campus community," Zivetz says.

Students had to prove they would produce tangible results by the end of spring term — fewer than four months from now. About 17 proposals made the cut and will receive between \$1,000 and \$7,000 each, part of \$70,000 in grant money set aside for student-led projects.

The recycling police, alas, are not among them. A few who are:

"Action plan" for food

Cameron Smith, a senior, is majoring in liberal studies in part because PSU doesn't offer a major in sustainable food.

Sustainability grant winners 0234-2

Portland State University students competed for \$70,000 in grants to improve sustainability "on and connected to campus." Some winners:

Water: Analyze consumption patterns for the city of Hillsboro to determine the most significant determinants of residential consumption, including which strategies decrease water use.

Publishing: PSU's Ooligan Press (www.ooliganpress.pdx.edu) will sustainably publish a book to be used as a teaching tool.

Bamboo: Increasingly common in landscaping, horticulture and urban screening, bamboo emits isoprene, a biogenic volatile organic compound that leads to the accumulation of tropospheric ozone. Project will survey emission rates and produce a list of low-emitting bamboos for use by urban planners and horticulturists.

Composting: Workshop for students and faculty members will teach the basics of composting food scraps with worms.

More information: Go to ecowiki.pdx.edu/miller-grant/. In the left-hand menu, click on "Idea Generator."

He hopes his proposal to create an "action plan" for improving food sustainability on campus will mean future students have that option.

PSU's Food for Thought Cafe, where Smith works, should be a "living laboratory" to explore how the cafe's emphasis on local, organic food might be pushed out to the entire campus, and how to quantify the benefits, he said.

Looking at publishing

While publishing houses in

Vermont and Canada have made strides, sustainable book publishing isn't the norm. Melissa Brumer and her classmates want to change that by creating a book through the university's Ooligan Press that provides a road map for the industry.

That could mean trading petroleum-based inks for vegetable versions, reducing chlorine in the paper-bleaching process, using alternatives to wood pulp and keeping more production closer to home, to avoid carbon emissions involved in

shipping, said Brumer, a graduate student.

Bottled water problem

For a university trying to build a green reputation, PSU drinks too much bottled water, said senior Rebecca Aaby.

When she and other members of the Environmental Club surveyed a small sample of students, those who buy bottled water said they don't have reusable bottles or forget to bring them to class, or they consider tap water to be less pure.

The group will use its Miller grant money to educate students about the source and quality of Portland's public water, to sell at least 500 reusable water bottles and to install two water filtration centers in busy parts of campus, to allay any fears that PSU pipes may dirty the water that flows to campus.

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