



## STUDENT SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

### Funding Application – Student-Led Projects (Under \$10K)

#### *Funding Criteria*

##### **A. General Rules**

1. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to submit requests for funding. Student-led projects require a faculty or staff sponsor in order to have funds awarded.
2. Funding can only go to university-affiliated projects from students, faculty, staff, and departments.
3. All SSC projects must make a substantial impact on students. This may be a direct impact or an impact through education and engagement. All SSC funding is 100% from student green fees, so the projects funded by the students must benefit them.
4. SSC encourages innovation and new technologies – creative projects are encouraged to apply.
5. Unless a type of expense is specifically listed below as having restrictions, SSC can generally fund it.  
The items referenced below should not be taken as a comprehensive list.

##### **B. Things SSC Can Fund, On A Case-By-Case Basis**

1. SSC can fund feasibility studies and design work; however, it must work toward ultimately addressing a sustainability need on campus.
2. SSC can fund staff positions that are related to improving campus sustainability. Strong preference will be given to proposals receiving matching funding from departments and/or plans for maintaining continuity of the position after the end of the initial grant.
3. SSC can fund outreach events with a central theme of sustainability, provided their primary audience is the general campus community.
4. SSC discourages funding requests for food and prizes but will consider proposals on a case by case basis that prove significant reasoning.
5. SSC can fund repairs and improvements to existing building systems as long as it works toward the goal of improving campus sustainability; however, a preference is shown to projects utilizing new or innovative ideas.
6. SSC can provide departments with loans for projects with a distinct payback on a case by case base. Loans will require a separate memorandum of understanding between SSC and departmental leadership pledging to repay the award in full and detailing the payback plan.

##### **C. Things SSC Will Not Fund:**

1. SSC will not fund projects with a primary end goal of generating revenue for non-University entities.

2. SSC will not fund personal lodging, food, beverage, and other travel expenses.
3. SSC will not fund any travel expenses.
4. SSC will not fund tuition or other forms of personal financial assistance for students beyond standard student employee wages.

**Your funding application should include this application and any letters of support.**

*Please submit this completed application and any relevant supporting documentation by the deadline listed on the SSC website to [Sustainability-Committee@Illinois.edu](mailto:Sustainability-Committee@Illinois.edu). The Working Group Chairs will be in contact with you regarding any questions about the application. If you have any questions about the application process, please contact the Student Sustainability Committee at [Sustainability-Committee@illinois.edu](mailto:Sustainability-Committee@illinois.edu).*

### **General & Contact Information**

**Project Name:** vermiCULTure

**Total Amount Requested from SSC:** \$10,000

**Project Topic Areas:**  Land & Water  Education  Energy  
 Transportation  Food & Waste

**Applicant Name:** Lavanya Upadhyaya

**Campus Affiliation (Unit/Department or RSO/Organization):** UIUC Student in the Physics and Statistics Departments. Affiliated with the vermiCULTure RSO as VP of Finance.

**Email Address:** [lavanya5@illinois.edu](mailto:lavanya5@illinois.edu)

**Check one:**

- This project is solely my own **OR**
- This project is proposed on behalf of (name of student org., campus dept., etc.): **vermiCULTure**

## Project Team Members

Name	Department	Email
Stuart Seputro	vermiCULTure	seputro2@illinois.edu
Lavanya Upadhyaya	vermiCULTure	lavanya5@illinois.edu
Maddy Liberman	vermiCULTure	madalyn3@illinois.edu
Griselda Escobedo (non-student)	vermiCULTure	griselda@universityymca.org

### **Student-Led Projects (Mandatory):**

Name of Faculty or Staff Project Advisor: **Eric Green**

Advisor's Email Address: **ewgreen@illinois.edu**

### **Financial Contact (*Must be a full-time University of Illinois staff member*)**

Contact Name: **Jenny Kokini**

Unit/Department: **Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment**

Email Address: **jkokini@illinois.edu**

## Project Information

Please review the proposal materials and online content carefully. It is highly recommended you visit a working group meeting sometime during the proposal submission process.

### Please provide a brief background of the project, its goals, and the desired outcomes:

We want to know: What is your project? What does it concretely produce, accomplish, or solve? Why is this project needed on campus?

VermiCULTure aims to provide both vermicomposting kits and educational materials to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus community. The education materials convey the importance of vermicomposting, which is the product of earthworm digestion and aerobic decomposition of food waste, and general food waste management. This project is needed on campus since there is currently no community level option for sustainable food waste disposal. The only recycling or waste management option in Urbana-Champaign is the Landscape Recycling Center, but they don't accept food waste and require payment to give materials. Moreover, there are no organizations, RSOs, or larger campus efforts in the area to compost, much less vermicompost.

### Where will the project be located? Are special permissions required for this project site?

If special permission is required for this location, please explain and submit any relevant letters of support with the application. SSC cannot fund projects without prior location approval.

Given our unique project, we do not need any specific site; thus, we do not have or need any special permissions for a project location. The only thing we need is a place to distribute the kits, a request that has already been granted by the University YMCA.

**Other than the project team, who will have a stake in the project? Please list other individuals, groups, or departments affiliated directly or indirectly by the project. This includes any entity providing funding (immediate, future, ongoing, matching, in-kind, etc.) and any entities that benefit from this project.**

*Please attach letters of commitment or support at the end of the application.*

Stakeholder(s)	Role in vermiCULTure
University YMCA	Gave us the platform and funds to start vermiCULTure

Participants	(those obtaining kits)
Members of campus community	Able to view information that we publicly share, as well as education on our social medias & website
Michael's Catering, UI Dining, Sam's Club	Provided used bins for distribution to participants
Facilities and Services	Provided used shredded paper as a brown mixture substitute
City of Urbana & Urbana Park District	Partner in backyard composting event
Q&A Group (Education Nonprofit from Indonesia)	Potential partner to educate Indonesians in vermicomposting, food waste management, and climate change. This partnership will benefit both Q&A Group and vermiCULTure. At the very least, the benefit to vermiCULTure is a huge exposure on Instagram (Q&A Group has 300k followers), which will give us a lot more room to spread the awareness of climate change, food waste management, and vermicomposting

We are not sure of future stakeholders, but we might have potential material donors. We also might have partnerships with local organizations and businesses in the coming future.

**How will this project involve and/or benefit students?**

*This includes both direct and indirect impact.*

**Overview and impact:** vermiCULTure directly impacts campus members because through vermicomposting, people turn their own food waste into organic matter that can be repurposed for alternative uses. We also have an indirect impact on the community, since we encourage education and practice, which has a lasting impact both on individuals and society as a whole. Through distributing vermicomposting kits and educational materials for campus community members to complete the composting process on their own, **vermiCULTure promotes community change through individual change.**

**Feasibility:** Vermicomposting kits are distributed at the YMCA. Anyone can vermicompost with the right materials and knowledge, and we provide both aspects. All materials are available locally or can be ordered online, and information is distributed virtually.

**Sustainability: Our organization promotes both environmental and educational sustainability.** We are officially established as an RSO, so more students can participate as members. Moreover, we are establishing partnerships across campus to sustain this project long-term.

**Replicability:** Composting is applicable in **many geographical settings**. Vermicomposting is relevant to **all campus communities** or other contexts such as urban environments where most people live in apartment settings.

**What are your specific outreach goals? How will this project inspire change at UIUC?**

We've already circulated an interest form throughout campus asking people if they'd be willing to participate in this vermicomposting effort. This interest form is how we got participants to engage in the kit distribution. Moreover, social media acts as one of our primary outreach tools, for both short-term and long-term, to educate those not directly participating and those who are involved. One of our future outreach goals is to partner with local organizations and businesses to aid us in the collection of organic materials and spread awareness. Thus, this creates an economic system in the process. vermiCULTure aims to attract more people to get involved, either by joining the team or participating individually in the composting effort. Moreover, vermiCULTure aims to implement a large-scale vermicomposting system, partner with campus gardens to obtain existing compost from participants, lower the amount of food waste that goes to landfill, and continue working to create a lasting impact in Champaign-Urbana.

**How will the project improve environmental sustainability at the Urbana-Champaign campus?**

VermiCULTure is the first official composting RSO to lower the amount of waste that goes to landfills by using local materials. By providing a food waste disposal solution to students, faculty, and staff, as well as educational materials to community members, we are increasing the sustainability of the UIUC community and informing Urbana-Champaign-Savoy community members about food waste.

**If applicable, how does this project impact environmental injustice or social injustice?**

- We are reducing food waste, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions and climate change issues.
- We are combating common problems with composting -- lack of space and lack of materials. Since we are giving out vermicomposting kits and education materials for free, we are also eliminating the barriers that many have with composting, which are the following issues: 1) individuals must purchase their own materials, 2) they must obtain large spaces to compost in a regular fashion (vermicomposting does not require this component), and 3) educate themselves on how to perform this process, which some may not be able to do due to financial constraints.

- vermiCULTure also makes composting equally accessible for everyone. We aid people to compost on their own, promoting individual sustainability regardless of their economic status, among other factors.

## Scope, Schedule, and Budget verification

**What is the plan for project implementation? Describe the key steps of the project including the start date, target completion date, target date for submitting a final report, and any significant tasks or milestones. Please be as detailed as possible.**

- **Project beginning and Y-USA milestones:** The start date of this project was during the Youth Climate Solutions Summit during October of last year. One significant milestone is completing the first portion of our project (distributing 50 kits to UIUC students, faculty, and staff) for Y-USA by May. This SSC grant will fund the second portion of our project, distributing another 50 kits to UIUC students, faculty, and staff.
- **Tentative Timeline for the summer and fall 2021 semester:**
  - July 1:* Begin purchasing and locating materials for the 50 kits
  - August 15:* Send out the interest form to UIUC students, faculty, and staff to find new participants
  - September 15:* Begin kit distribution to participants. This will include worms, bins, trowels, and bags.
  - During entire project:* Share educational and promotional materials through social media and website

**List all budget items for which funding is being requested. Include cost and total amount for each item requested.**

*Please be as detailed as possible.*

*50 Worm bins @\$100 (Total: \$5,000)*

*50 mini trowels (Total: \$200)*

*25 Fiberglass adjustable screen mesh (Total: \$375)*

*50 Organic soil (Total: \$275)*

*50 8-quart coconut coir moisture control (Total: \$125)*

*50 Spray bottles (Total: \$500)*

*50,000 Worms (Total: \$2,500) (1,000 worms/bin)*

*Miscellaneous (e.g. distribution event logistics cost, event materials such as tables, estimate for one event: \$100, advertising) - Total: \$500*

*Premium social media/website plans to promote educational materials: \$100*

*Printing supplies for pamphlets, instructions on how to assemble kits, etc.: \$50*

**Total: \$9,625**



**If the project is implemented, will you require ongoing funding? What is the strategy for supporting the project in order to cover replacement, operation, or renewal costs?**

*SSC provides funding on a case by case basis and should not be considered as an ongoing source of funding*

We will not require consistent and ongoing funding from SSC. In terms of funds, we will use up the University YMCA grant money, which expires in May, and any other grants we receive. In order to support our funding long-term, we will consistently apply for various funding opportunities, either internal or external relating to the University, and will actively fundraise as a project team and find sponsors, starting from our current partners.

**Please include any other obtained sources of funding. Have you applied for funding elsewhere?**

*Please attach any relevant letters of support as needed in a separate document.*

We have not applied for funding anywhere else yet. The only funds that we have received are from the YMCA when we applied for the Youth Climate Solutions team.

**Have you applied for funding from SSC before? If so, for what project?**

No, vermiCULTure has not applied to SSC before.

**How will you bring awareness and publicize the project on campus? In addition to SSC, where will information about this project be reported?**

So far, our team has progressed in the financial, social, and operational aspects. We have distributed participant and applicant interest surveys online, which have helped us gain coverage and following. We have also posted promotional materials via campus and community newsletters and sustainability platforms, created and maintained active social media platforms for the project (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram), purchased and implemented vermicomposting bins and worms and other materials, sourced local material and diverted waste to our program (used 5 gallon bucket and shredded paper), and met with various experts across campus and the CU community.

This project will continue to be advertised through our social media platforms. We will continue to update our followers, participants, and stakeholders on our progress. We will also keep advertising vermiCULTure's efforts through newsletters.