

The University of the West of England (UWE) and the University of Bristol Student Engagement Green Capital: Student Capital

About the project

Summary

The Student Capital project is placing students at the heart of Bristol's Green Capital year. Bristol is home to some 50,000 university students, which represents a significant proportion of the city's population. Student Capital is unleashing the massive power of the student community as a force for change in addressing sustainability issues across our city and beyond. Working together, UWE and Bristol University are committed to supporting, promoting, and celebrating student engagement with the sustainability challenges we face now and in the future.

Project partners

The main project partner is the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Funding from HEFCE's Catalyst Award G04 has made the Student Capital project possible.

The results

The problem

Bristol is the European Green Capital for 2015. There is a great opportunity for Higher Education institutions to support their cities in releasing the full potential of the Green Capital accolade, however the involvement of Higher Education institutions in previous Green Capitals has been limited. The Student Capital project aims to change this by putting students at the heart of Bristol's European Green Capital year.

The approach

The idea behind Student Capital is to help address sustainability challenges by mobilising the student community to engage in activities including volunteering, placements, and internships with a sustainability focus. The Universities are creating opportunities for students to get engaged in more ways than ever before throughout Green Capital year.

Our goals

The intention is to celebrate and promote students' sustainability engagement and to demonstrate the value of Higher Education in tackling the challenges faced by society.

Student Capital aims to:



Profile

- HEIs
- 50,000+ students (total for both institutions)
- 9,500+ staff
- Unique partnership project

Category supported by



Finalist's case study

- Achieve 100,000 hours of student engagement in activities with a sustainability focus throughout the Bristol Green Capital 2015 year
- Create a cohort of Green Capital Change Makers. The Green Capital Change Maker Award has been created to recognise and reward students that have given considerable time and effort to volunteering, placements, and internships with a sustainability focus
- Host a series of public events and conferences throughout the year to engage with the public and organisations across Bristol and the sub-region
- Build a new online portal to make it easier for organisations in the city region looking for help to make contact with students who are interested in getting involved in activities
- Establish a lasting legacy of the student experience of Green Capital which continues into the future

Obstacles and solutions

Making Student Capital visible to students	Working with the different departments in each institution to embed Student Capital in the existing structures. For example, as a result of this approach, Student Capital is now a core part of the volunteering offer at both universities
Reaching out to students who are not already engaged	To attract more students we created the Change Maker Award, which recognises their commitment and provides students with a tangible record of their efforts to take forwards from Green Capital year
Joining up working between the two organisations	Regular face-to-face meetings to build relationships, frequent joint engagement events for students from both institutions, and an open approach to sharing ideas and collaboration for the good of our students and the city

Performance and results

To-date the project has recorded over 80,000 hours of student engagement during 2015. This means that we are well on course to significantly exceed our target of 100,000 hours. Students have been involved in a vast range of activities and projects, and there has been very positive feedback from external organisations. Student Capital hosted the international Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) conference, which attracted delegates from a whole range of institutions to discuss sustainability in Higher Education.

The future

Lessons learned

Students are already engaging in a huge range of activities. The challenge is not trying to create enthusiasm and commitment from students, but rather finding enough activities and opportunities to satisfy the students' desire to get involved.

Sharing your project

The Student Capital project has been promoted and shared through social media, news stories, public events, Action Days, the Universities' volunteering and placement teams, and the project websites.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

Student Capital is directly linked to the values of the institutions and is the focal point for student engagement in Europe's Green Capital. Advancing knowledge, inspiring people and transforming futures is at the heart of all we do. Both Universities have an explicit strategic commitment to holistic sustainability education for all – with UNESCO GAP commitments and Green Capital 2015 pledges. This work is a core part of delivering these.

Further information

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Social media: www.facebook.com/GreenUWE (UWE) www.facebook.com/groups/BristolUniST (Bristol)

Web: www.uwe.ac.uk/studentcapital (UWE) www.bristol.ac.uk/green-capital (Bristol)