



Green Gown
Awards 2016



Dissemination
supported by:



Finalist's case study

Students' Union of the University of Greenwich Student Engagement

A Student Hub for Sustainability & Employability

About the project

Summary

The Greenwich Sustainability Hub (Hub) was a student-led and staff-supported project based in the Students' Union in partnership with the Sustainable Development Unit at the University of Greenwich. The Hub utilised sustainability as a tool to provide key knowledge, develop skills and offer opportunities for students to gain experience valued by employers through employment and volunteer opportunities including delivering practical sustainability projects, events and campaigns. Student employed or recruited as volunteers were trained to implement projects such as Green Impact in local enterprises, or gain the skills to deliver workshops to educate children in primary and secondary schools. Since 2013 eighteen student Green Ambassadors have been hired, each with part-time contracts and gaining vital work experience alongside their degrees.

The Hub also recruited 164 volunteers, who contributed over 1,500 hours in total to various events, projects and campaigns. Skills developed included leadership, project management, communication, diplomacy, problem-solving and creative thinking.

Project partners

The Hub received £171,572 from the NUS Students' Green Fund from September 2013 until December 2015. In November 2015 the University approved the SusHub 2.0 proposal and a £32,000 funding budget from January 2016 until July 2016. The Hub project has now completed and a student group called the Greenwich Sustainability Society has been renamed to continue the Hub legacy as a student-driven initiative.

The results

The problem

Although the University of Greenwich has consistently achieved recognition for the pro sustainability attitudes, work and initiatives run by Sustainability Team, there is a relatively low level of student engagement in these areas, particularly from students who do not have sustainability directly built in to an area of study for their course. We want to bring about a culture change whereby sustainability is student driven, and Greenwich students work with the community and other students to enhance their experiences and employability through a range of pro-environmental initiatives, campaigns, activities and behaviours.



Profile

- Higher Education Institution
- 21,295 students
- 1,800 staff
- Urban

Category supported by



Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education



Green Gown
Awards 2016



Dissemination
supported by:



Finalist's case study

The approach

Throughout the Hub's programme planning and development it ensured that employability skills were at the heart of its purpose. The Hub projects were developed with the premise that whatever the area of study - from engineering to fashion, from science to finance - there is a place for every student to contribute to the debate and bring about solutions and action on the world's most pressing issues in the context of their own studies, research, and as citizens and future professionals.

As a way to harness this potential in students the Hub brought the prestigious Whole Earth? Exhibition on the Greenwich and Avery Hill campuses. Whole Earth? is the sequel to the critically-acclaimed Hard Rain project, a 2006 collaboration with Bob Dylan which has been viewed by over 15 million people in galleries in cities, many universities, and the United Nations headquarters. The Exhibition launch events announced six £1000 Whole Earth? Fellowships for student projects centered on one or more of the University Challenges inspired by the Whole Earth? Exhibition, and tailored to different programmes of study to solve. Each fellowship included a £500 research grant and up to £500 in project expenses. After undergoing a panel selection process, the winning candidates were invited to an initial workshop session on project management and developed their detailed project plans. Over the course of the following eight weeks, the students turned their projects into reality, supported by academic tutors and Hub staff. Constant communication was maintained with the students through weekly "check-up" calls to review project timeline and deliverables. Students also provided weekly blog posts and pictures which were published on the fellowships programme's webpage.

Our goals

The aims of the Hub are to:

- Increase the employability of students through providing employment and volunteering opportunities relating to sustainability;
- Increase sustainability attitudes and behaviours in student;
- Empower students to have an impact on their University and community.

Obstacles and solutions

Student attendance to events and activities	Link activities to programmes of study and create partnerships with targeted faculty members and/or student clubs and societies to enhance attendance, engagement, and impact.
Student impact and skills developed during work or volunteer opportunities	Create specific job descriptions with tailored action plans and milestones for each employment and volunteer position advertised.
Institution cutting funding for sustainability programmes	Look for opportunities to become financially self-sufficient and concentrate your energy on revenue generating projects.

Performance and results

The company Energise was appointed to assist the NUS Students' Green Fund in assessing the Carbon Impact of the Hub. We completed a comprehensive workbook and included the number, type and projected years of life



Green Gown
Awards 2016



Dissemination
supported by:



Finalist's case study

of each plant planted at the Avery Hill and Cooper building gardens, entered electricity, gas, and water consumption of the Students' Union building and compared it to the 2012 baselines, and submitted the recycling and reuse amounts diverted from landfill in order to be able to generate the 62 tonnes CO₂e estimate reduction from 2013-2015. Since then the Hub has continued to reduce carbon emissions across its various initiatives.

The Greenwich Sustainability Hub awarded the six £1000 Whole Earth? fellowships to student projects centered on one or more of the University Challenges inspired by the Whole Earth? Exhibition. Throughout the programme Sustainability Hub staff and academic tutors, helping to turn their ideas into reality, supported the students. The students project's findings were presented through a poster exhibition at The Crystal, the world's largest exhibition on the future of cities, and were accessed by 880 members of the public. In addition to gaining valuable work experience in their field of study and project management skills, several of the fellowship winners were able to extend their projects beyond the end of the programme. A workshop was organized at the end of the programme with the students to gather feedback about their experience and revealed high overall satisfaction, new project management skills, and "real life work experience" in their field of study. Academic mentors also praised the programme and commented on the students being able to apply their professional skills and engage with real-life project management.

The future

Lessons learned

Key lessons learned over the course of the Hub mandate and applicable to any student-driven initiatives:

- Link activities to programmes of study and create partnerships with targeted faculty members and/or student clubs and societies to enhance attendance, engagement, and impact.
- Create specific job descriptions with tailored action plans and milestones for volunteer position advertised.
- Look for opportunities to become financially self-sufficient and concentrate your energy on revenue generating projects.

Sharing your project

The Hub's Fellowship programme drew the attention of The Crystal, the world's largest exhibition on the future of cities. The Crystal agreed to host a 10-day poster exhibition showcasing the Hub's six winning projects and developed spin-off projects with some of the project winners. The poster exhibition was launched with a public event involving speeches by some of the participating academics. The progress of the students' projects was documented through a video, which had its first showing at the event. 880 members of the public accessed the poster exhibition at the Crystal including the fellowships video.

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

Being a finalist for this award embodies the great impact that the Greenwich Sustainability Hub has had on student engagement. By employing students and training 160 volunteers, by reaching 1,000 employees across five organisations, by teaching 300 children, and by engaging overall 3,500 students in sustainability, the Hub has produced an extraordinary legacy for our students, our University, and community.

John Schless

Chief Executive, Students' Union of the University of Greenwich



Green Gown
Awards 2016



Dissemination
supported by:



Finalist's case study

Further information

Link to case study webpage: <http://www.suug.co.uk/sustainabilityhub/projects/fellowships/>

Link to promotional video for the Exhibition: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKnMELkWMnM>

Link to WHOLE EARTH? Fellowships film: <https://youtu.be/Esr32xq5SmM>

University of Greenwich press release on Whole Earth? exhibition and programme launch: <http://www2.gre.ac.uk/about/news/articles/2015/a3220-whole-earth-exhibition-the-importance-of-sustainability-in-the-curriculum>

University of Greenwich press release on The Crystal exhibition launch: <http://www2.gre.ac.uk/about/news/articles/2016/a3616-saving-earth-students-schemes-go-on-display>