Underrepresented Students in Sustainability (USS) Support Fund

To financially support undergraduates exploring careers in sustainability & the environment, particularly those who are affected by underrepresentation in the field.

Students and staff at the University of Iowa Office of Sustainability collaborated to create this fund as a resource for underrepresented students interested in environmental sustainability. Grant funds may be designated for educational expenses, compensation for unpaid work, materials for student projects, and other opportunities related to a student’s education and professional development in sustainability.

All students with an interest in environmental sustainability are welcomed to apply.

Basic Eligibility Requirements

- Minimum GPA of 2.5*
- Be a currently enrolled student at the University of Iowa
- Funds may be used for a wide variety of opportunities and expenses but should be tied to a student’s educational or professional development in sustainability.

*Students with a GPA below 2.5 are encouraged to apply and may submit a short explanation of their circumstances.

Preference may be given to students who:

- Identify with a group that is underrepresented in environmental sustainability.
- Come from economically, geographically, or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds (including demonstrated financial need).
- Have demonstrated interest in environmental justice and working with underserved populations.

Suggested Uses for Grant Funds

- Compensation for unpaid work: research, volunteering, time spent with USS mentor, serving on a committee, etc.
- Materials for student projects: student compensation, physical materials, services, etc.
- Educational expenses: textbooks, related living expenses, etc.
- Other opportunities: conferences, professional development, certifications, trade association membership, etc.

Application Process

- Students will submit an application with their name, graduation year, educational focus, and desired grant amount. Students will be asked to answer two short answer questions in approx. 250 words or less describing
  - (1) what they will use their grant funds for, how they estimated their desired grant amount, and how it relates to their educational/professional development in sustainability;
and (2) why they are a good candidate to receive this grant. Students are welcomed here to explain their personal motivations or need for the grant funds, including how it would improve their current standard of living and/or advance their educational/professional development. (Students should also explain if they fall into a category described under “Preference may be given to students who:” above.)

- Applications will be reviewed anonymously by a small committee of University of Iowa students and staff. Grant funds will be distributed on a monthly basis. The deadline for each month is the last day of the previous month. Exceptions may be made by emailing sustainability@uiowa.edu with an explanation of circumstances. Applicants are encouraged to apply at least two months (one funding cycle) in advance of when the funds are required to ensure that they are provided in a timely manner.

- Applicants will be notified of their application status no later than the last day of the month in which their application was reviewed. Notification will be provided in the form of an email from the Office of Sustainability.

- Funds will be distributed as a check(s) payable to the applicant. Funds may be split across multiple checks if not needed all at once.

- Accepted applicants will be encouraged to check in with the Office of Sustainability at least once a month (frequency depending on the length and type of project) either through a meeting or a written summary through which Office of Sustainability staff can offer advice and support. Feedback may be used to provide guidance for future students.

Determining Funding Amounts

- Awarded funds are anticipated to average approx. $150 per student per semester. Students may ask for as much as they want, but their award may only cover a portion of their request.
  - If a student cannot complete a project with the funds awarded to them, the funds will not be provided until the student has all of the funds that they need. The committee may choose to assist a student in finding and applying to other funding sources.