

# SUSTAINABILITY SEMINAR

## THE CHALLENGE

### Course Overview

Do you have what it takes to compete in the world of sustainability? Do you feel as if your passion towards the environment can contribute to beneficial rewards? This is a class of action. Students will learn about sustainability through a team of eco-leaders and compete in a variety of fun and inspiring challenges to shape their own unique definition of the common buzzword “sustainability”. This class goes beyond the typical setup of lectures and quizzes to engage and mobilize students around a variety of environmental topics. Classes are held once a week and the course is graded pass/fail.

### Week 1

- The classroom will be divided into teams of 3 or 4 – teams should be assigned by the professor to eliminate exclusion or awkwardness among students. Teams can be switched up halfway through the semester of for each challenge.
- Opening discussion on sustainability – what does it mean to the students? Different definitions of sustainability in general are introduced to the class as well as how those relate to the campus.

### Week 2

- Scavenger Hunt – the second class will consist of a scavenger hunt that leads the students to different areas on campus that are related to major sustainable initiatives or learning resources. Each team will receive a different order of clues, and the first team to return with all clues collected will be rewarded
- Destinations for the scavenger hunt can include offices of sustainability, dining services that are using sustainable methods to produce food, greenhouses or gardens on campus, etc.

### Week 3

- Student and/or staff eco-leaders from campus come in and speak. Find speakers that are currently working on a large sustainability initiative or have successfully accomplished a project that has made campus more environmentally friendly.
- Students and staff can also be invited from nearby universities to speak about initiatives that their schools are doing as well to share and collaborate.

### Week 4

- Teams come up with a broad idea for a major project to implement on campus. This project will be the main component of the class, and ultimately determine the student's pass/fail grade.
- The project should be something tangible and achievable within a year time-span. It should be something that results in a more sustainable school, in any aspect.

### Weeks 5-8 (October)

- The month of October will focus solely on Project Green Challenge. It is a requirement of the class and each student can choose to sign up as a team or individually.
- Classes during this week will focus on the corresponding topic of the day. Students can work together on the challenges to create inspiring results.
- There will be a Leaderboard specifically for the class, the winning team or individual will receive a prize.
- A field trip will be scheduled during this month – possibilities include a local farm or a farmers market, a tour of Whole Foods Market or local green grocer, clean energy companies, etc.
- Proposals will be due at the end of this month for each group's major project. They should continue to work on this until the presentations.

### **Week 9**

- Water conservation – why is it important
- What is going on in the local area that affects water quality
- What is happening to improve water conservation on campus

### **Week 10**

- Agriculture – how are agricultural methods leading to damaged ecosystems, contaminated water, poor human health, and biodiversity crises?
- Why is it important to support local, seasonal and organic foods?
- What are the agricultural methods being used on green spaces/gardens etc. on campus (see Green the Greens Toolkit on TTG website)

### **Week 11**

- Waste – Discussions on how to live a zero waste lifestyle and why that is important
- Are there any zero waste initiatives at the school? What are they
- What other ideas could be implemented and how?

### **Week 12**

- Biodiversity – explain the biodiversity crises we are currently facing.
- Why is it important to preserve wildlife?
- Students research one local species that have recently gone extinct and why.
- How is biodiversity handled on campus land?

### **Week 13**

- Recycling –
  - o How is it approached on your campus?
  - o How is the material disposed of?
- Is campus recycling being done as thoroughly as it could be?
- How could it be improved?
- Students should leave this class with an understanding of what is actually recyclable and what is not. A discussion should also take place on how recycling is the very last step towards living an eco-friendly life, first people should reduce and reuse.

### **Week 14**

- Consumption – how has society changed in its consumerism habits throughout the years?
- Why do we feel like we constantly are in need of new products that are essentially all the same?
- Students should cite examples of unnecessary consumption in their own lives. What is “necessary” in this day and age?
- Link consumerism patterns with environmental challenges

### **Week 15-16**

- Project Presentations – each team should have chosen a topic that interests them and create a project around that topic.
- Each group will present their project and focus on how it could be implemented on campus. Projects should include a clear goal, timeline and steps to achieving the goal.
- The teacher(s) will select a winning team and together work to get their project funded

### **HOMEWORK**

- Weekly assignments
- Screen three documentaries focused on environmental challenges
- Start a petition about a problem that you think needs fixing
- Write to a local representative to enlist their support
- Create a Pinterest board including all of the resources that you learn about and utilize
- Read two books on sustainability issues
- Assess your campus for what they do well and what can be improved