Student Generated Sustainability: Continuous feedback and analysis to inform collaborative sustainability at UAF.
Submitted by: Christopher DeCou (crdecou@alaska.edu, 9079789256) on 2/28/11

Amount Requested

$300

Proposal Summary

In order to establish long-term sustainability efforts at UAF I am proposing the development of an online survey to collect full-text (natural language) submissions from UAF students concerning their perceptions of sustainability and green initiatives at UAF. These submissions will then be analyzed using grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2003), and quantitative phenomenology (Lower et al, in preparation) to characterize the expressed needs and desires of UAF students towards creating and participating in ongoing sustainability efforts. In order to incentivize and encourage student participation in the online survey I am requesting $200 to purchase a gift certificate that will be awarded to a survey participant selected at random. Through scientific characterization of students’ perceptions and attitudes, this research will serve to inform future sustainability efforts, as well as provide a continuous feedback mechanism for the RISE board and office of sustainability. Moreover, a website developed and paired with the survey will allow for continuous reporting of student submissions through live graphical representation of word frequency data from text submissions. Integration of student feedback, natural language analysis, and rapid dissemination will allow for the generation of student-generated initiatives and interest in sustainability, creating a platform whereby students may provide and respond to the expressed needs and values of the larger UAF student community.

Technical Advisors and Collaborators

Dr. Timothy Lower, UAF Psychology Department, talower@alaska.edu

Budget Detail

Participant Incentive: $200
Advertising: $100

Budget Justification

Participant Incentive $200: A gift card will be offered to incentivize student interest and increase participation in the online survey.

Advertising $100: Paper flyers will be generated and posted around campus, in addition to advertisements in the SunStar and on university-sponsored media to promote participation in the online survey.

Project Value

Providing students with an accessible online platform for submitting natural language attitudes, beliefs, and opinions concerning sustainability efforts at UAF will allow the office of sustainability to pursue future projects and initiatives that are informed by students’ expressed needs and desires. Scientific analysis of student submissions to the online survey further ensures that students have the ability to communicate representative and community-generated messages that enable feedback to be properly viewed at a thematic level beyond the level of individual comments. This project would therefore enhance the current operations of the office of sustainability, promote socially sustainable environmental stewardship, and motivate relevant student-based educational outreach.
Implementation Plan

Survey questions will be developed by applicant in consultation with Dr. Lower, the office of sustainability, and student-community experts.

Applicant will consult with technical experts to design online website and dynamic word frequency engine for continuous feedback.

Applicant will generate advertising and promotional materials.

Applicant will apply for IRB approval for analysis of data collected from human subjects.

Online site will be published using Google apps and linked to relevant online UAF resources.

Following extended data collection period the applicant will select a random participant to receive the incentive award of $200.

The site will remain active indefinitely in order to provide a long-term platform for student generated feedback concerning sustainability at UAF.

Note: The specific duration of the data collection period will be developed in consultation with the RISE board and the office of sustainability.

Qualifications & Experience

I am an undergraduate psychology student at UAF and have been involved in several different research projects during my studies at UAF. I am currently the student coordinator and a student researcher in Dr. Lower’s Astrobehavioral Sciences Laboratory. As a member of this lab I have been involved with quantitative analysis of natural language data for the purpose of characterizing the expressed needs and beliefs of large numbers of individuals for the purpose of assisting in the generation of representative messages. This experience has given me significant understanding of collection and analysis of natural language data, as well as the ability to scientifically observe thematic messages among full-text data.

In addition to my work with Dr. Lower’s lab I have been actively involved in Dr. Skewes’ Behavioral Health Lab as a student researcher. In that capacity I have assisted with survey administration, data collection, data cleaning, and data analysis. My work in Dr. Skewes’ lab has also given me the opportunity to work with a research team to collaboratively pursue common objectives and engage in ongoing analysis of relevant science.

Also, I am currently conducting a study of “perceptions of suicide and suicide prevention in rural Alaska,” as an undergraduate research fellow with Alaska EPSCoR. As an undergraduate research fellow I have learned how to develop interview protocols, cultivate relationships with cultural and community experts, and prepare an IRB protocol for research involving human subjects. I look forward to applying the lessons of my research experiences to the development, promotion, and analysis of messages from an online platform to collect student perceptions of sustainability efforts at UAF.

Group/Department

Psychology Department

Sustainability Area

Education and Curriculum, Social Sustainability, Process and Institution