Champlain College
Sustainable Initiatives Fund

Original: April 2024 (based off of the Green Revolving Fund charter)
Revised: N/A

Mission

The mission of the Champlain College Sustainable Initiatives Fund is to encourage environmentally sound technologies and practices on Champlain's campus. The SIF will finance innovative projects that reduce the College's environmental impact, improve the educational environment, and generate financial returns while engaging students, staff, faculty, and administrators in the decision-making and implementation process. The fund will further the broader academic mission of the College while helping it to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and embody the College's values. At Champlain College, sustainability is embedded in the College's Strategic Action Goal 6.5: Champlain will model its commitment to sustainability through efficient facilities and operations management and will make progress toward carbon neutrality.

The fund functions as an independent fiscal entity managed by a committee of Champlain community members. This structure provides substantial cost-savings over time and offers opportunities for engagement and hands-on learning for the entire Champlain community. The fund will consider projects proposed by Champlain community members that promote sustainability in education, campus culture, and behavior, in addition to projects that focus solely on infrastructure.

Goals

- To foster environmentally sound technologies and practices on Champlain's campus or within the Champlain community.
- To empower students, staff, faculty, and administrators with opportunities to move the College toward sustainability and carbon neutrality.
- To ensure that beneficial and profitable green projects do not go unfunded due to capital constraints.
- To buffer Champlain's budget against rising energy prices.
- To transform Champlain into a national leader in sustainable practices and demonstrate that sustainability can be financially viable.

Criteria

The Committee will evaluate proposed projects on the following criteria, with consideration to how much funding is available in the given year:

- Promote awareness and understanding of sustainability in education, campus culture, and behavior.
- Directly or indirectly reduce Champlain's environmental impact.
- Encourage student participation, learning, and leadership.
- Engage members of the Champlain community.
- Use funding if other funding venues have been exhausted.

The Fund is intended to finance projects that improve the sustainability of Champlain College *beyond what it otherwise would have been*. Its monies should not finance projects that were going to be undertaken anyway,

though they may be used to expand the scope or effectiveness of such projects. Student projects are prioritized; any remaining funds may be utilized for Facilities based projects, so long as the criteria listed in the Charter are met.

Eligibility

Appropriate Projects

Funding may be allocated for all aspects of the implementation process that have been proposed and approved by the Committee. These may include (but are not limited to) construction and material costs, education, advertising, metering, wages, and maintenance. The Committee will be responsible to ensure that funds support only projects that have a positive impact on sustainability at Champlain and will reduce costs when implemented (when required).

Examples of Appropriate Projects

The following is a list of viable sustainability improvements for the SIF finance. The list is by no means exhaustive, but it should give a good idea of the type of projects that the Fund is meant to support.

- *Efficiency Improvements:* Installation of high efficiency pumps, lighting, boilers; weatherization and insulation; energy recovery ventilators.
- *Water Conservation:* Installation of low-flow appliances; systems which recover or reuse wastewater.
- *Renewable Energy:* Installation of on-campus and community renewable energy systems such as geothermal, solar thermal or photovoltaic, wind turbines, biomass.
- *Renewable Fuels:* Production of renewable fuels, such as biodiesel from agricultural waste or dining hall waste oils or investment in infrastructure like EV charging stations.
- *Green Building:* Investment in green building designs, such as green roofing, passive solar heating, and elimination of conflicting practices.
- *Sustainable Agriculture:* Investment in processes that recycle and reuse agricultural materials.
- *Waste Management:* Promotion of on-campus recycling and composting; investment in innovative practices like offices supplies recycling, plastic film recycling, upcycling, and e-waste.
- *Out-of-Classroom Education*: Seminars, workshops, poster campaigns, and other activities that inform and empower community members with regards to sustainability. Student conference travel can be supported, however if it is not tied directly to curriculum or a requirement, it's considered taxable and is 1099 reportable.
- *In-Class Education:* Projects and research experiences related to sustainability that could not have taken place otherwise. For example, classes may be able to implement projects that they otherwise would have only analyzed or proposed.
- *Behavior Change*: Projects that provide education and incentives to encourage sustainable practices in individual, organizational, and institutional behavior including, but not limited to, sustainable transportation education and incentives, signage, sustainability challenges and competitions, and purchasing education.

- *Payments for Labor*: Payment for community members working on projects related to sustainability (so long as the work contributes to the mission and goals of the Fund and would not have been paid from other resources otherwise).

Unsure if your project fits these parameters? Reach out to the Sustainability Coordinator to see how you can rethink your project to better align with the purposes of this fund.

Examples of Inappropriate Projects

- *Fossil Fuels:* Projects that directly use fossil fuels should not be invested in, unless the project quickly and significantly leads to a net decrease in fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.
- *Credits or Offsets:* Funds should never be used to purchase carbon offsets, renewable energy certificates, green tags, or any other credits. Rather, the SIF should focus on projects that directly improve the sustainability, leadership, and image of Champlain College.
- *Budget shortfalls:* Funds should not be used to cover budget shortfalls for the College, except by investing in appropriate projects that reduce College costs.
- *Salaries:* The Fund is not intended to cover student, faculty, or staff salaries, except as direct wages for projects when the Committee deems appropriate.
- *Faculty/staff conferences or travel*: The Fund prohibits any funding of faculty or staff conference travel and expenses.

Individuals/Groups may only receive funding for one project at a time. Additional projects may be considered once a prior project is completed.

Application Process

To receive project funding, community members must submit a form with project information to the Committee. Facilities need only submit a brief project description with cost estimates for SIF funding, which will streamline the process and minimize any additional administrative work for Facilities staff. Students and community members must submit a full proposal to the Community Fund Committee and the proposal must be reviewed by one or more Committee members before the Committee will vote on it.

Proposals from students and community members

Before the Committee can vote to approve financing through the Fund, a proposal must be submitted that includes a clearly stated: project description; implementation plan; budget; timeline; and evidence of educational/cultural value. Local, state, and federal incentives should be considered if applicable. Cost-savings and environmental impact numbers should be used when possible, but educated estimates may be used when exact numbers are costly or not feasible to calculate. Information about a similar, successful project at Champlain or another school will be useful.

Applicants must fill out the Google Form. Applicants are encouraged to establish financials, implementation details, and the project timeline as completely as possible on their own. However, they may consult with Facilities and the Committee for advice and assistance, if necessary. Only after project details have been clearly detailed and reviewed by the Committee will the proposal be voted on.

Proposals from Facilities

The Facilities representative on the Committee should submit a brief description of the project which includes: evidence of alignment with the underlying goals of the SIF; basic construction costs; and estimated cost-savings figures. Efficiency experts from Vermont Gas and Burlington Electric Department may assist with these figures.

Facilities projects should meet the following criteria:

- Produce financial savings that will pay for the initial cost of the project ideally, within five years.
- Quantifiably improve the environmental sustainability of Champlain College (e.g. improved energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, and waste reduction).
- Use loan funding cost-effectively as measured by the environmental impact reduction per dollar.

Management

The fund will be managed by an SIF committee including at least:

- Staff members (4) including
    - Facilities Director
    - Campus Services Coordinator
    - AVP of Operations
    - Representative of Advancement Office
- At least two (2) faculty members
- At least two (2) students

The Sustainability Coordinator will coordinate the Fund's activities, manage the influx of proposals, and serve as a liaison for the Fund with the College administration and broader campus community. The AVP of Operations or their designee will supervise the disbursement of funding. Topical expertise will be provided by the Facilities Director, as well as efficiency experts from Vermont Gas and Burlington Electric Department. The student body will be represented by at least two undergraduates and are expected to serve a two semester term. Faculty will be represented by one to two members, and are expected to serve a one year term. As we hope to continue to solicit funds for this project, the Office of Advancement will also be represented.

Committee members may serve additional terms if interested. In the case of resignation, in conjunction with the Committee, must choose a replacement as soon as possible.

We welcome anyone from the campus body to participate in this committee, though the number of voting members will be limited to the folks listed above and those with committed terms. If you are interested in being a part of this committee in any capacity, please contact the Sustainability Coordinator.

Funding

Startup funds for the Sustainable Initiatives Fund came from donations via the Office of Advancement (including 2012 donations of $30,000 from Green Mountain Power and $10,000 from an individual donor), and rebates from Burlington Electric Department (BED). The SIF is currently funded through operational budgets. The SIF is open for donation through the Office of Advancement; you can select 'Miscellaneous-Restricted' and type the fund's name in the comment box.

Procedural Process

The Committee will assess and vote on project proposals, disburse loans, and help with planning and implementation of projects when required. Specific roles are outlined in the "Management" section above.

The Committee will meet formally at least twice per semester while classes are in session. Meetings will be used to hear project presentations, discuss and vote on proposals, and take care of any other business relevant to the fund. The Committee will communicate to discuss day-to-day fund management and issues, as needed.

The Committee will discuss but need not vote on Facilities proposals for SIF financing. Facilities staff members need only submit a short written description of the project, its cost, timeline, and savings. Only in the event that a potential Facilities project seriously diverges from the mission and goals of the Fund, or two projects are competing for the same limited funding would the viability of a project require further discussion.

Applications for financing will be **accepted on a rolling basis with semester deadlines of November 1 and March 1; committee decisions will be made within 2-4 weeks of the proposal submission**. One or more members of the Committee will review each proposal prior to its formal consideration to ensure that it provides adequate explanation and justification. If additional information is needed or revisions are required, the Committee will advise the applicant, who will need to make adjustments to the proposal before the full Committee will consider it. Applicants are encouraged to submit a preliminary proposal well in advance of the two week deadline in order that the applicant can receive feedback and have sufficient time to make revisions that can result in a fundable proposal. Once proposals are finalized for consideration, **applicants are asked to present them in-person to the Committee whenever possible.** However, proposals may be voted on by the Committee without a formal presentation, if necessary.

Unanimous Committee approval of projects to be funded through the Fund is preferred in all cases, with a minimum of four members voting. If one or more Committee members does not approve of a proposed project, the Committee will determine whether a project revision request will be made to the applicant. Decisions regarding additional presentations, discussions, or deliberations, either in –person or via remote communications will be at the discretion of the Committee. A proposal may be modified by the Committee before approval, or approval may be conditional upon other project environmental specifications or outcomes. Upon approval of a proposal, the Committee, applicant(s), and any non- Committee participants will be expected to proceed with project implementation as quickly as possible. **If the proposal lists a committee member as a project lead or contact, that committee member must abstain from voting; additionally, if a committee member feels too close to project to be objective, they can choose to abstain from the vote as well.**

Members of the Committee (or an appointee) are **responsible for producing annual reports on the status of the SIF**, including progress on funded projects, decisions to fund new projects, and the financial performance of the fund at large. These must be published on the SIF/Sustain Champlain website and released upon request to Champlain community members. **Reports will be drafted and finalized early in the fall semester each year**.

The Committee may modify or amend any part of this Charter by unanimous consent, so long as the amendment does not conflict with the fund's mission and goals.