



SUSTAINABLE STEWARDS PROGRAM

Thanks to generous private support, the Center for Sustainability in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) established a Sustainable Stewardship Program in the fall of 2011 to promote enhanced environmental stewardship on the Cal Poly campus farm through student intern projects. The program is used to develop and implement projects designed to enhance agro-environmental stewardship of the farm and rangelands, which are extensive and comprise nearly 10,000 acres on the San Luis Obispo and Santa Cruz County campuses. Projects involve assessing, monitoring and implementing sustainability metrics and practices, as well as inventorying and highlighting CAFES initiatives for sustainability.

We have found that this program is an excellent way to encourage cross disciplinary collaboration on campus, as it engages faculty, staff and students from numerous academic departments. It also provides students the opportunity to work closely with the Agricultural Operations Department, which assists in the management of the campus farm and with the Facilities Services Department, which oversees Cal Poly infrastructure and a related Green Campus program. The program also assists the University in achieving overall sustainability goals, offering great potential to help Cal Poly conserve water, energy and resources, save money, and protect the environment. Perhaps most importantly, this program is highly valued by student participants, because it gives them “real world” skills in the area of sustainability, an increasingly popular topic among youth.

Over the course of the inaugural year, and under the direction of Center Director, Hunter Francis, the focus was on activities that would help the College develop baselines for activity in the realm of sustainable resources and agricultural management. The resources and tools developed by the student interns benefited the Center and the College, as well as future interns. Now in our second year, we are able to expand this program to five interns, who are building on the foundation made in the first year.

This program has already become a recognized and important contributor to CAFES’ Learn by Doing education has created an excellent model for training tomorrow’s stewards of our agricultural and natural resources.