



Enhancing the Undergraduate Student Experience through Extra-curricular Activities Impact Statement

Investigators

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SUMMARY

Extracurricular involvement opportunities and engagement are expanding in the School of Environment and Natural Resources (SENR). Engagement in these opportunities has increased the effectiveness of SENR in recruiting and supporting future professionals while also directly connecting students with the land-grant mission of the institution.

SITUATION

Involvement in extra-curricular activities has a direct correlation with higher retention rates, better graduation rates, and ultimately better job outcomes for students involved. These opportunities are particularly effective in recruiting and supporting underrepresented minorities and first generation students on the pathway into STEM careers. Through these experiences, students develop soft and hard skills, a professional network, and leadership experience. As post-graduate employment becomes more and more competitive, these outcomes are essential in helping students acquire positions within their field. Extra-curricular opportunities also connect students with means to participate in Ohio State's land-grant mission as undergraduates, serving the state through the application and dissemination of knowledge.

RESPONSE

The School of Environment and Natural Resources provides a variety of opportunities for students to engage in development and learning outside of the classroom. Student organizations have been part of the SENR community since its beginning and there are currently thirteen active organizations based out of the school. In their first and second year, students are also able to participate in one of two living-learning communities focused on environmental and natural resources themes, the SUSTAINS Learning Community, and the Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) Scholars.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

School of Environment and Natural Resources

Enhancing the Undergraduate Student Experience

IMPACT

In 2016, over 1,000 Ohio State students (ENR majors and beyond) participated in activities with extra-curricular opportunities through the School of Environment and Natural Resources. The Soil Judging Team, one of our oldest student organizations, provides students opportunities for hands-on professional skill-building related to soil resources and ecosystem services, including regional and national competitions. The Fish and Wildlife Society, Forestry Forum, and the Peace Corps Club connect students directly with professional networks and opportunities in their intended careers, while Real Food OSU and Students for Recycling organize students to create change on the campus and in Columbus communities. The SUSTAINS Learning Community and ENR Scholars are effective recruitment and retention tools. While the overall university yield rate for autumn 2016 was 32%, ENR Scholars yield rate was 54%, including a 52.2% yield rate with students of color. Additionally, the ENR Scholars program boasts a 98% first year retention rate and a 72% four year graduation rate (university: 58.9%) and 94% five-year graduation rate (university: 79.4%). Through SUSTAINS and ENR Scholars, students participated in over 3,000 hours of service learning in 2016. These service projects were primarily focused on the Columbus community. Through these activities outside of the classroom, SENR is expanding Ohio State's land-grant mission and impacting both students and the state.

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