ENVIR 480 Sustainability Studio Presents:

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE PURCHASING

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON
Program on the Environment

COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON
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- **Sean Schmidt**, Sustainability Specialist, Office of Sustainability, University of Washington
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- **Ashley Riggs**, Assistant Director, Office of IT, City of Auburn
- **Doug Lein**, Manager, Office of Economic Development, City of Auburn
- **Alice Pence**, GIS and Database Specialist, City of Auburn
- **Kevin Cussen**, Co-founder and CEO, SafeFlame
- **Ashley Kuhn**, Senior Designer, School of Medicine, Washington University
- **Spencer Hoffman**, independent graphic designer
- **Jen Davison**, Livable City Year, University of Washington
- **Jenna Leonard**, Livable City Year, City of Auburn
- **Brandon Born**, Associate Professor, Urban Design and Planning, University of Washington
- **Karen Johnston**, Director, Service Business Development, The Lighthouse for the Blind
- **Brent Weichers**, Lean Six Sigma Master, The Lighthouse for the Blind
- **Rick Keil**, Director, Environmental Studies, University of Washington
- **Monali Patel**, Communications Specialist, Environmental Studies, University of Washington
- **Ann Corboy**, Administrator, Environmental Studies, University of Washington
Student Groups

- **Sustainability Through Diversity: Improving Supplier Diversity at the University of Washington**
  - Julia Chiado, Leila Jordan, and Tessa Yip

- **The City of Auburn Buy Local Project: Designing a Sustainability Movement**
  - Lia Carstens, Rosy Gentle, and Jordan Hoy

- **The City of Auburn Buy Local Project: Roadblocks in Communicating with Auburn Business Partners**
  - Sungkun Choi, Susanne M. Gov, Kate Vachon, and Brandon Wech

- **A College Kid’s Guide to Starting a (SafeFlame) Startup**
  - Ian Baldwin-Madison, Jennifer Huynh, Katia Maria Wirganowicz, Megan Greenstein, and Helen Yoo

- **Sticker Shock: Evaluating the Recognition and Influence of “Green” Logos at the University of Washington**
  - Mallory Culbertson, Jocelina LaRue, Shunxi Liu, and Jenny Lu

- **First Steps in Becoming a “Good Dawg”**
  - Lola Behrens, Robert Chang, Anna Johnson, Diana Lloyd-Jones, and Lucas Thompson
Report Introduction

As consumers, we often hear to vote with our dollar – that to support sustainability, equity, and social responsibility, we must make conscious decisions to purchase from companies that actively support and share these values. This quarter, the students of Sustainability Studio delved deep into the topic of socially responsible purchasing. What has been made abundantly clear over the course of this quarter is that corporations and large companies generally feel an obligation to market themselves as socially and environmentally responsible, but that the realizations of these goals are often ambiguous. While many companies boast environmental stewardship, few have been able to achieve even a partially-sustainable business model. Thus, as consumers we must understand that when we buy a product, we are only interacting with that product during one phase of its very broad and complex life cycle. In essence, this course asked us to consider how making informed purchasing decisions might alleviate the strain on an increasingly stressed planet. The quarter’s course topic was closely woven to corporate social responsibility (CSR), a practice in which businesses invest time, money and/or policy toward initiatives that make its business operations more equitable, sustainable, and socially responsible at all levels.

This course not only focused on corporate social responsibility broadly, but also on the life cycles of commonplace items and their impacts from cradle to grave. We additionally discussed supplier diversity and women and minority owned businesses and the positive impact supporting those businesses has on people, culture, and our economy. We hashed out the pros and cons of green marketing, and also focused on improving our personal leadership, teamwork, and professional skills. We attended a field trip to Lighthouse for the Blind, a nonprofit that provides jobs and training to individuals who are blind, deaf-blind or multi-disabled blind. Our guest lecture from Brent Weichers, a Lean Six Sigma expert, helped us understand how efficiency and waste streams can be diminished through more efficient work practices. We finished the quarter by looking at the human rights component of socially responsible purchasing.

Not only did Environment 480 afford us the opportunity to learn about corporate social responsibility, it connected us with businesses and organizations who are working toward a more sustainable future. Simultaneous to our lectures, students worked in small groups with outside professional client partners to take what we were learning inside the classroom and apply it to a real-world experience. While the scope of our projects ranged from the University of Washington campus to
international communities, each endeavor aimed to address a central question: how do we continue to build, create, and make progress without exploiting resources and labor? This quarter the class worked with three clients on six different projects. One group worked with SafeFlame, a start-up that builds cooking elements for use in developing countries. Two groups worked with the City of Auburn on their Buy Local project, one group was responsible for conducting research and gathering information from businesses and the other was responsible for developing graphics and designs for the project’s website database. The last client was the UW Office of Sustainability and UW Procurement Services, groups worked on developing the Be a Good Dawg Program increasing sustainable behaviors on campus, consumer perceptions of different labels, and the barriers to certification for women and minority owned businesses Each project is expanded upon in the following chapters.
Sustainability Through Diversity: Improving Supplier Diversity at the University of Washington

By

Julia Chiado, Leila Jordan & Tessa Yip

In partnership with UW Sustainability and UW Procurement

Sustainability Studio (ENVR 480) Fall 2016

University of Washington
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I. Project Overview

Our project examined the University of Washington’s supplier diversity, specifically considering how UW can improve its supplier diversity through the Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises (OMWBE) certification. Our objective was to identify ways the University of Washington can help increase the number of partnering Minority and Women’s Business Enterprise certified suppliers in order to improve the university’s supplier diversity. The client partners we worked with for this project were the UW Sustainability and UW Procurement offices.

For this project, we had three main research questions:

1. What are the benefits to businesses becoming certified by OMWBE?
2. What deters businesses from becoming certified if they are not already?
3. How can UW assist businesses and offer them the resources necessary to get certified?

II. What is OMWBE?

The Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises is a Washington State Office that seeks “To promote equity and increase participation in public contracting and procurement for small businesses owned by minorities, women and disadvantaged persons through education and certification.”¹ As a state office, OMWBE works to connect minority- and women-owned businesses with the government in order to provide resources to these businesses and certify eligible businesses under OMWBE. OMWBE certifies small businesses that are owned by women, minorities, and “socially and economically disadvantaged persons.”² For example, a few of the certification types are Women’s Business Enterprise (WBE), Minority and Women’s Business Enterprise (MWBE), and Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (SEDBE). OMWBE states that gaining these certifications can help businesses enter into more contracts with state agencies and businesses that have supplier diversity goals or requirements.³

³ Ibid.
III. OMWBE Certification Eligibility

In order to be certified by OMWBE, a business owner as well as the business itself must fit specific eligibility requirements. OMWBE provides the eligibility requirements, but determining whether or not an owner and the business are eligible can be challenging. The requirements provided online are broad, and businesses can ultimately find the requirements to be more complex once they apply for certification. According to the OMWBE State Certification Application, for an owner to be eligible for certification, they must:

1. Be a minority or woman.
2. Own at least 51% of the business
3. Control business operations
4. Have the power to direct business management and policies
5. Be a United States citizen or permanent United States resident

For a business to be eligible for certification, it must be:

1. A for-profit business
2. WA state licensed
3. Able to carry out the services specified within a contract
4. A small business based on U.S. Small Business Administration standards

IV. Process and Methods

We began by having an initial meeting with our client partners, Sean Schmidt (UW Sustainability) and Claudia Christensen (UW Procurement). During this meeting, we went over the objectives of the project and outlined project steps. We determined that an efficient way to gather information from UW’s suppliers would be through a survey. We created two surveys — one for businesses that were certified by OMWBE and one for those that were not, but were still eligible to receive certification. Sean and Claudia also put us in touch with Kim Delaney from UW Professional and Organizational Development. Kim provided us with information regarding UW’s suppliers and the university’s relationship with these businesses. Kim gave us feedback on the drafts of surveys, and then assisted us by distributing them to corresponding applicable businesses. In the email sent along with the survey, we also asked if any suppliers would be willing to speak with us for more in-depth phone interviews in order to grasp a deeper understanding of why some consultants were getting certified and

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5 Ibid.
why others were not. Several came forward, and we conducted five interviews. After gathering our results and discussing the implications and possible actions, we presented our findings to our peers.

V. Interview/Survey Data & Demographics

Over the course of three weeks, our team collected data from twelve participants in our survey (nine participants from uncertified businesses, three participants from certified businesses), and conducted five interviews with a mix of certified and uncertified businesses. The overall response rate was 21.7%. The demographic breakdown for each respective group is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Type</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Female: 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertified Business Survey</td>
<td>Caucasian: 55%</td>
<td>Female: 88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian-Indian: 11%</td>
<td>Male: 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian-Pacific: 11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black: 11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undisclosed: 11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified Business Survey</td>
<td>Caucasian: 66%</td>
<td>Female: 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian-Pacific: 33%</td>
<td>Male: 33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across the board, the majority of respondents were Caucasian women. All respondents were affiliated with a consulting firm specializing in a variety of sectors including management, leadership, team building, and organization capacity building.

I. Uncertified Business Survey
The main goal of the Uncertified Business Survey was to determine any obstacles faced by businesses that prevented them from gaining certification. Our questions aimed to pinpoint a variety of different potential obstacles, including awareness level, access to information, time, and resources. Sample questions included:

1. **On a scale of Very Aware to No Awareness, what is your level of awareness regarding Minority & Women’s Business Enterprises state certification?**

2. **If you have attempted a certification, what challenges did you face that kept you from fully receiving certification?**

3. **Has the State Office of Minority & Women’s Business Enterprises been a useful resource to you in any capacity?**

4. **What has prevented you from attempting to gain certification?**

This fifteen-question survey gave us insight into why businesses were not becoming certified. The responses for the survey were short answer, which allowed participants to respond freely to our questions, further specifying challenges.

**Obstacles that prevented/inhibited certification:**

Through our survey, we found that 77% of respondents saw the state certification process as too time consuming, and 33% thought the process required too much paperwork. This was reflected in our phone interviews, where consultants stated that they were unwilling to consolidate and analyze financial records from years before, and complete other tasks that seemed unnecessary in order to gain certification. Additionally, 22% of respondents explicitly stated that they did not feel the benefits of receiving certification were worth the time and effort of completing the process. Through additional information gathered in phone interviews, we suspect this number is truthfully much higher.

One supplier that was interviewed simply stated that she was already successful without certification, and if there was more value to it, that value was not clear to her. Another business
owner who is certified echoed this sentiment, stating she “wished certification was more meaningful”, and “there was a time [years back] when it seemed to matter more.” From these statements and our survey results, we concluded that the value and meaning of the certification (especially the value held by institutions such as UW) is not clear to businesses. Furthermore, if it were made more clear, these businesses would in most cases be more likely to pursue certification.

One encouraging trend showed that the higher the awareness level of the respondent, the more likely they were to have attempted certification at some point. This finding is reflected in the Figure 1 below:

![Figure 1: Distribution of awareness levels for survey participants.](image)

From this data, we were able to conclude that increasing awareness of the certification could help improve the percentage of suppliers attempting and obtaining certification. Improving accessibility and clarity of information would allow businesses to certify more easily. Additionally, decreasing the time and paperwork commitment required for certification would further incentivize businesses to gain certification.

II. Certified Business Survey
The response rate for the Certified Business Survey was much lower with only three respondents. However, we were still able to glean useful insights from the data we collected. The purpose of the Certified Business Survey was to gain understanding of any issues or challenges businesses encountered while gaining their certification. Some sample questions from this survey include:

1. What was the Minority and Women's Business Enterprises State Certification process like for you?

2. Were there resources available to help you get certified? If so, what were they?

3. Were there any barriers you had to overcome to get certified?

4. Has the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises been a resource to you? If so, did you find the Office to be helpful or not?

Survey results indicate that even businesses with certifications were unsure about the tangible benefits of becoming certified and felt that the process was too time consuming. One anonymous respondent wrote: “[the certification process] is unnecessarily time consuming. I dread each time we have to renew” and that becoming certified was “not beneficial” at all. This feedback corroborated the information we gained through our interviews and other survey.

VI. Project Challenges

If this project were to be conducted again, it would be beneficial to reach a larger pool of respondents. With a response rate of 21.7%, the data collected was only able to give us a limited look at the experience UW partners had with the OMWBE certification. By increasing the response rate, we could collect more detailed data. Additionally, we would conduct more phone interviews. The information we collected during phone interviews was some of the most insightful and helped our team direct further inquiries.

The time constraint of the project was also a challenge. Although the questions we asked were answerable within the project time frame, if we had more time for the project we would have been able
to research more specific next steps for UW. The survey and interview results were helpful in terms of determining how suppliers feel about the OMWBE certification but with more time we could have been able to also dig deeper into the UW’s perception of the OMWBE certification.

VII. Recommendations

Based on the data collected through surveys and interviews, it is clear that most businesses do not understand the benefit of becoming certified. After several conversations with University of Washington staff and other interviews, we learned that this perception is based on truth. While becoming certified by the Office of Minority and Women Businesses Enterprise can increase a business's visibility it does not guarantee business partnership. Entities such as the University of Washington are not required to allocate any specific amount of funding toward working with certified partners because state law only outlines recommendations for annual expenditures, which are not enforceable. However, the University of Washington encourages OMWBE certification because it allows them to easily report on their minority partnership demographics.

This system of recognition benefits the University of Washington’s image as a university that promotes diversity while allowing the university to allocate state funds however they see fit. Certified business partners are not guaranteed long-term funding or partnerships. Ultimately, their certification only allows them to remain “preferable” in the eyes of the university. As it stands, OMWBE certification appears to be more of a tool to tokenize minority partnerships in order to promote a desirable image for the university. Our research strongly indicates that the OMWBE certification is not beneficial enough to businesses to outweigh the time and resource demand required to obtain certification. We strongly suggest that the university seek to promote certifications that provide tangible, longer-lasting benefits to their diverse partners.

VIII. Future Steps for UW

For the University of Washington, goals should include diversifying their suppliers and increasing the number of diverse suppliers they work with. However, the UW needs to reexamine the reasons why it seeks to work with diverse suppliers. The university should identify if the reasons for working with diverse suppliers are for UW’s personal economic reasons, to benefit the university's image, to actually help small diverse businesses within the community, or all of the above. If the UW does want to increase their relationships with small, diverse businesses in order to help them increase the number of business
partnership opportunities and maintain stable business, then the university must acknowledge how they can help these businesses in genuine ways that extend beyond a single overvalued certification.

The UW can expand their relationship with diverse suppliers by concentrating more on valuable and useful certifications for diverse businesses. There are a number of diverse business certifications that exist beyond the OMWBE certification. For example, there is a national minority business certification under the Northwest Mountain Minority Supplier Diversity Council (MSDC) as well as an LGBT Business Enterprise certification through the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. Although it would need to be determined which of these already existing certifications have the most tangible benefits for businesses, the number of certifications shows there are many opportunities for UW to extend beyond the OMWBE certification.

A more overarching institutional shift UW can make in its supplier diversity is to improve its metrics and reporting. More robust metrics and reporting would mean that the university actually knows all of the small and diverse businesses they are working with. UW likely works with more diverse suppliers than they are aware of, but current spending metrics do not encapsulate this. Shifting how metrics work as well as expanding the certifications UW works with, will both increase the diverse businesses that UW has the opportunity to work with. More holistic reporting will show the actual number of diverse businesses. Ultimately, looking at the bigger picture of how UW’s supplier diversity methods is the best starting point to improving supplier diversity.

IX. Main Point

Upon the completion of this project, we have determined that the OMWBE state certification is not something that should be strongly encouraged for all suppliers UW does business with. From the responses and feedback we received, we feel that in most cases the value is not clear enough to justify the long and often arduous certification process. As mentioned above, we believe other forms of certification should be encouraged, and UW should assist in this. We also encourage the university to reexamine the value they place on such diversity, as well as adjust the way they record interactions with minority and women owned businesses. We hope our research will prove beneficial in supporting the university as it seeks to achieve stronger and more effective relationships with their suppliers.
The City of Auburn
Buy Local Project
*Designing a Sustainability Movement*

Project Team: Lia Carstens, Rosy Gentle, Jordan Hoy

Client Partner: Ashley Riggs, City of Auburn
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4. Drawing on Conclusions to Develop Recommendations
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Figure 1: Street View of Auburn’s Local Businesses. Photograph by Lia Carstens

Overview of Project
Through the Livable City Year project, UW partnered with the City of Auburn to “advance the city’s goals for livability and sustainability throughout the upcoming academic year.” This quarter, ENVIR 480 Sustainability Studio focused specifically on socially responsible businesses and purchasing, partnering with clients from Auburn to connect local residents and businesses as a way of promoting local purchases.

As the design team for the City of Auburn’s Buy Local project, our main objective was to develop the layout and interface for the Auburn Buy Local database website. The database is intended for Auburn citizens and businesses to encourage local purchasing. Buying local increases the economic resiliency of the city by keeping money in Auburn. Furthermore, it is often more socially and environmentally responsible than buying from businesses many miles away. Finally, local purchasing fosters a sense of community in the city, strengthening ties between consumers and businesses.

Throughout the project, we explored how website design can create a user-friendly experience for both businesses and consumers. By creating a website layout that utilizes universal design principles while also reflecting the character of the City of Auburn, the Buy Local Design Team aspired to assist the City of Auburn’s local purchasing sustainable efforts.

Our two main research questions were:

1. How can website interfaces assist in a community’s effort toward local purchasing?
2. What design elements contribute to a user experience effective for all internet abilities?

Over the course of the quarter we addressed these questions through research, fieldwork, and outreach to our resources including our client partners Ashley Riggs and Alice Pence from Auburn and graphic designers Ashley Kuhn and Spencer Hoffman.

Methods and Findings

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* University of Washington and City of Auburn launch first Livable City Year partnership. (n.d.)
Fieldwork

We began this project with a research trip to the City of Auburn. During this excursion, we captured photos of the city center. We photographed a variety of storefronts, sculptures and artwork on the sidewalks. Our goal was to depict the character of the community within our images. During our fieldwork, we also had informal conversations with local business owners and employees to gain a better understanding of the local character and perspectives in the city. To portray the unique charm of Auburn, we utilized the images captured throughout our fieldwork to create graphics for the website layout. This was a crucial design component that allowed us to contribute original content for the project.

Literature and Website Review

Through literature review, we identified user-friendly and effective design elements to use on the Buy Local website. Based off the needs identified by local businesses and our client partners, we could determine the best keywords and elements to make this a successful interactive website. Our research revolved around developing a better understanding of universal design standards and integration of design best practices.

Our research also included an examination of website function, which included research on similar databases and websites to determine what features work well. By performing this initial website interface research, we were then able to determine how and what we wanted to include in our own design, and we also took note of the features that did not work well.

Graphic Designer Consultation

To compensate for our team’s lack of design experience, we reached out to professionals in this field so that this project could benefit from their expertise. By utilizing their knowledge of graphic design and website layout functionality, we hoped to incorporate their feedback on our layout design to produce a product of professional quality. We consulted with two graphic designers, Ashley Kuhn and Spencer Hoffman, for this project.

Ashley Kuhn’s main advice to us was to consider where to place elements of the website based on their importance to the user. This makes it easier for the user to determine which elements they should look at first.7 As Newman et al explain, “New web standards are making responsive design

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7 Kuhn, A. (2016, December 5). Feedback requested on graphic design [E-mail to the author].
practical, allowing designers to create a single website that can adapt layout and content to viewing contexts across a spectrum of digital devices. The result should be a more satisfying experience for any user. For example, Kuhn thought our choice to use a top banner with the City of Auburn and Buy Local logos was excellent because it stands out the most on the page, and will therefore most likely be the first thing the user sees. Then, the user refers to the smaller parts of the website for their content of interest. By applying her feedback to our design, we could create a layout that would be viewable and practical on a variety of different devices.

Graphic design expert Spencer Hoffman’s main advice was to layout the website in a grid format to increase the usability and help user’s section off different parts of the website that offer different types of information, thus making it easier to find the information they are looking for. This echoes Newman et al., who state, “Grid systems draw on a set of base styles for columns and gutters to streamline the development of website layouts with user-friendly content alignment and spacing.”

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Website design

Through independent research and literature review, our next step was to conceptualize the website layout and design. Our team collaboratively brainstormed a website color scheme that complimented the graphics we used throughout the layout. We wanted the website color scheme to act as a backsplash that visually showcased the content of the website, and did not overwhelm the user.

We chose to use the grid format suggested by Hoffman, as it allowed us to easily categorize and organize the different functions of the Buy Local website.
Shortcomings of Data

The scope of this project was limited due to our inexperience with web design. Unfortunately, due to lack of graphic design expertise, we were unable to complete an entire user-friendly website design to our client’s standards. We learned that active, regular communication with a partner is extremely important to maintain feasible expectations and establish clear project objectives.

We also ran out of time to fully address our miscommunications with Alice. Toward the end of the quarter we sent Alice Pence our website design and graphic idea document and she stated that the content was not usable. In reply, the design team forwarded the photos we took in Auburn along with our graphics and color scheme in case they could be used in any way to promote the project. However, we did not receive any additional response from Alice Pence.

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10 Hoffman, S. (2016, December 5). Feedback requested on graphic design [E-mail to the author].
The resource that we needed most was more time to implement our designs and meet with our client throughout the quarter. We could have brought our design ideas and graphics to our client and worked collaboratively to incorporate them directly into the website. Due to the short timeline of this project, there were some misunderstandings as to what the City of Auburn wanted us to produce; what message the project intended to portray, and what desired esthetics the client found favorable. With more time and feedback from both our client and businesses in Auburn, we would be able to refine our design and produce a more usable website for the City of Auburn.

Figure 5: Shoe Forest & More… storefront. Photograph by Jordan Hoy

Final Conclusions and Recommendations

Our team recommends the University of Washington and other entities who may continue to work on this project use a combination of literature review, research, citizen science, and fieldwork to develop the Buy Local program website. Using an array of resources often prompts a more robust end product, and will more likely result in a web design that incorporates the unique needs from a wide variety of users. This was an effective approach for developing a user-friendly website interface for our
Our team also recommends establishing clear project objectives during the initial phase of the project. By outlining the expectations and developing a clear direction for the project, the team involved can effectively produce an end product that both the client and the team are satisfied with. We also recommend receiving feedback on the website design draft, both from professional graphic designers and consumers. We received feedback from professional graphic designers, Kuhn and Hoffman, who provided advice that we fully incorporated into our design. However, we did not have enough time in this project to receive feedback from consumers such as Auburn residents. We wish we had time to do this because this website is directed toward Auburn citizens and local business workers. They should be able to review the design and have a say in whether the website is user-friendly or not.

Figure 6: Comstock’s Book Shop. Photograph by Lia Carstens

Next Steps

We have several next step recommendations for this project. If our team were to continue this project, we would want to know how user-friendly local businesses think it is, what elements they find
useful or not useful in regards to the website’s purpose, and improvements we could make to the website. Going off this idea, the number of website views could be tracked in order to quantify how often the website is used during a pilot phase. This can be helpful in knowing if the database is effective or not. We also recommend additional outreach to Auburn local businesses, as they should be more aware of the Buy Local project and understand its goals. From there, the city and Auburn businesses should encourage consumers to utilize the website. As seen in other research on buy local programs, there is a need for increased activism in Buy Local Campaigns and in the promotion strategies to ensure that relevant consumers buy local.\textsuperscript{11}

**Main Point**

In order for the Auburn Buy Local project to be a success, it must be accessible and easy to use for the greatest number of people. In addition, creating an effective design and arrangement of visuals can portray the project and the city of Auburn as more sustainable, ultimately encouraging more Auburn citizens and business to buy locally.

Stimulating local purchasing within the city of Auburn is an impactful approach toward increasing sustainability and creating a more livable city. Simply by increasing the availability of information on local businesses, the city can do a lot to increase local purchasing as consumer spending, drives 70 percent of economic activity.\textsuperscript{12} By encouraging businesses and Auburn residents to source from local suppliers, the City of Auburn is progressing toward becoming a more sustainable city; local businesses will receive increased patronage, dependence on fossil fuels is decreases as less inputs are needed for the transport of products, and deeper relationships are fostered throughout the community.


Figure 7: Storefronts of Auburn’s City Center. Photograph by Rosy Gentle
The City of Auburn Buy Local Project: Roadblocks in Communicating with Auburn Business Partners
Sungkun Choi, Susanne M. Gov, Kate Vachon, Brandon Wech
University of Washington

Client Partners
Doug Lein: Manager at the Office of Economic Development
Ashley Riggs: Assistant Director of IT
Alice Pence: GIS and Database Specialist
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Appendix A
Overview of Project

As a group, we focused on the research side of the City of Auburn's Buy Local project. The objective of the project was to collect information on Auburn-based businesses in order to populate the website database, and to additionally fine-tune survey questions based on business owner responses. The Auburn government relies on sales tax as part of its revenue, but most local businesses are getting their supplies from outside sources beyond the city. According to Doug Lein, manager of Auburn’s Office of Economic Development, $1.8 million of potential sales tax revenue annual leaks from the city due to consumers and local businesses purchasing goods outside of city limits.\textsuperscript{13} The city’s primary goal for this project is to develop a user-friendly, streamlined database for business owners and local consumers seeking suppliers and vendors within city limits.

The main questions asked by our group were:

1. Which method of communication is most successful for retrieving business information?
2. What is the overarching reaction that local businesses have toward this website?

Because we had to ask business owners for permission to publish their information on the database website, we were constricted to data collection through direct email and phone call correspondence. Our hypothesis was that many businesses would respond favorably to email communication but not phone calls.

Methods

Email

The goal of the research team was to contact and survey 40 Auburn-based businesses to populate the web database. The information that the research team gleaned will eventually be available to the public. We initiated our conversations with Auburn businesses by drafting an introductory email that we sent to all 40 businesses. The email explained who the research team was, what the Auburn Business Collaboration was, and asked the business owners to provide a 250-word description of their business. Since this was an introductory email with an expected follow-up phone conversation, we ended the email asking the correspondent to provide a few times when they would be available to chat. Appendix A contains a transcript of the email we sent to the businesses between November 17 and December 2.

\textsuperscript{13} D. Lein, personal communication, November 17, 2016.
Constructing the email was a delicate process, as we needed to sound professional and convey the importance of the project without being demanding. On November 15, we received the 40 business contact sheet (see Table 1), which included email address, contact names, phone numbers, titles, and the company address.

**Table 1: List of Local Businesses received by Doug Lein**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT</th>
<th>COMPANY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susanne Gov</td>
<td>TMX AEROSPACE- THYSSENKRUPP MATERIALS IN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susanne Gov</td>
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<td>Susanne Gov</td>
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<td>Susanne Gov</td>
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<td>Susanne Gov</td>
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<td>Susanne Gov</td>
<td>Jason's Coffee Shop &amp; Fine Baked Foods</td>
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<td>Susanne Gov</td>
<td>Classic Farmhouse</td>
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<td>Susanne Gov</td>
<td>LASER CUTTING NORTHWEST</td>
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<td>Brandon Wech</td>
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<td>BELL MACHINE INC</td>
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<td>Brandon Wech</td>
<td>CHEM STATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brandon Wech</td>
<td>CONTRACT HARDWARE INC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon Wech</td>
<td>Hills of Comics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phone Calls

Telephone surveys were a novel experience for all of us. We met with Doug Lein on November 17 to receive training on the proper protocols for calling businesses. To prepare for each call, we would prep our data entry sheet with all the information that we already had access to.

Usually when we called, we would have to explain to a receptionist why we were calling before we were connected to a sales associate who could answer our questions. Once we were speaking with a sales associate and had explained the project, we started going through the questionnaire. As stated above, we had access to some information already and only needed their confirmation. Other questions we needed to guide business owners and associates through. If the research team could contact an employee who could answer our questions, the average phone conversation lasted between 4-5 minutes. We would thank the business for their time and submit the information to the database.

Questions on the survey ranged between straightforward inquiries (confirming the business name) to defining keywords or business categories for each business. This latter question was one many business associates were not prepared to answer. To help remedy this, we developed a keyword list to help assist business associates and owners in choosing words that were associated with their business. When the web database goes live, this keywords list will help local consumers and other businesses easily find the service they are searching for.

The other portion of our project involved developing recommendations for the survey. Eventually, database will allow local businesses to fill out the survey and enter their business information independently, without speaking to someone via email or over the phone. However, during this pilot phase, Auburn wanted the research team to go through the survey with local businesses to better identify ways that the survey could be improved. Our goal was to make the survey intuitive and streamlined so that data entry was simple and effective. During each phone call, we took notes on the things that we believed could be improved, and compiled and categorized these notes at the end of the project.

Findings

Email

Our hypothesis, that businesses would respond more favorably to email communication than by phone communication, was not supported by our data. We received 11 responses for the 40 emails sent out and around 8 of the email responses were from an automatic bot reporting that the person who received the email was not available. Figure 1 is a visual pie graph detailing the positive response rate by
email. We defined a positive response as responses where the email correspondent provided a narrative by email. The darker shade represents no response, while the lighter shade represents positive responses.

![Figure 1: Positive Email Response versus No Response](image)

Two of the email responses we received were from TTF Aerospace Inc. and Ampac Auburn location. The email correspondent for TTF Aerospace Inc. was Tim Morgan, the CEO and co-founder of the company. Morgan responded to the email stating that he was “not sure how much value the ABC initiative offers our company, as we are non-retail or wholesale.” This email provided insight into why email respondents were significantly low: businesses may have felt that the Buy Local database was not particularly useful for their business. In his email, Morgan wrote a general narrative response on what their business is and how it works. He also asked about a time for the phone call meeting and what other types of information to include.

The other email respondent was from Rick Shaw, the Vice President and General Manager of Ampac in Auburn. Shaw provided a short description of the Ampac business, but did not respond with a time for a phone call meeting, even after we sent an additional email. Below is the narrative we received from Shaw about the Ampac business:

“Ampac is a global leader in providing innovative packaging solutions to a variety of markets. Our product portfolio includes printed flexible polyethylene packaging, laminated roll stock and pouches, microwaveable, wax overwrap, tote bin liners, bulk case liners, and can liners. Ampac

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15 R. Shaw, personal communication, November 21, 2016.
offers complete graphics capability to handle a project from creative art and graphic design, through photography, separation, prepress, and flexographic platemaking."\textsuperscript{16}

Shaw’s response provided a good level of detail about the business, and additionally informed us of some of the industry keywords that may be most effective to include in the keywords database.

Most email respondents were from those in the manufacturing industry, although this was not statistically significant due to the small sample size of respondents. Since 92 percent of businesses did not respond by email, we assumed that the lack of response was due to one of three factors: 1) unavailability, 2) no interest in the Auburn Business Collaboration initiative, 3) the email was not correct. Furthermore, many of the email contacts we received were specifically email addresses for business licensing purposes, not sales inquiries, and may have therefore been sent to an inappropriate person in the company.\textsuperscript{17}

**Phone Calls**

We received 16 responses for the phone calls that were conducted. Figure 2 provides a visual pie graph detailing the positive response rate. We defined a positive response as responses where the caller answered most of the survey questions. The darker shade represents no response.

![Figure 2. Positive Phone Call Response versus No Response](image)

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} (D. Lein, personal communication, November 17, 2016).
Over 90% of the phone calls we conducted were cold calls. For the purpose of this report, cold calls were defined as calls that were made without an appointment. Many of the phone contacts on the list provided by Doug Lein were unavailable or incorrect, so in order to contact the agreed-upon total of 40 businesses, we had to retrieve emails from the company website. We found that many of the phone calls listed on the company website were front desk receptionists, thus we had to go through several lines in order to reach a sales manager who could answer the survey questions. Through cold calling, we discovered that all sale inquiries done over the phone must go through a receptionist before the call can be forwarded to a sales person.

Some of the responses we received during calls were not helpful for entering information into the database. It was often difficult to get into contact with an employee who could answer our questions. For example, secretaries would respond to our inquiry by stating that a sales manager was unavailable and that s/he did not want to respond to any of the listed survey questions. To cite a specific example, in a phone call meeting with a receptionist at Pacific Wire Inc., the responder asked to put their company in a “do not call” list. According to the Federal Trade Commission website, consumers may ask telemarketers to not receive calls by them without consent by asking the marketer to put them in a “Do Not Call” list. This might explain the initial hostility from some callers as we were often mistaken for telemarketers and received several hang-ups as soon as we explained the purpose of the call.

**Shortcomings**

The research team’s data collection was entirely dependent on the ability of the Auburn businesses to answer survey questions over the phone. Although the research team contacted 40 local businesses, we successfully reached only 40% of them. Thus, the shortcoming in our data is that the research team did not collect the information needed for the database from the Auburn businesses. If the research team could approach this project differently, we would extend the project timeline significantly. The shortcomings in our data were due to the lack of rapport that the research team had with the businesses in the City of Auburn. The local businesses of Auburn were not familiar with the members of the research team, why we were calling, or what the advantage of answering the survey questions was. If the research team had more time to complete this project, we could have spent more time introducing ourselves to business owners, introducing the purpose of the Auburn Business

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Collaboration, and provided a clear incentive for them to answer the survey questions. If the research team were allotted more time for project completion, then cold calling businesses may not have been necessary.

**Recommendations and Next Steps**

As stated in our findings, emails were responded to 8% of the time, while phone calls were responded to 40% of the time. In order to achieve a higher response rate, the research team has developed a list of recommendations for the City of Auburn. We believe that these recommendations could be useful for the City of Auburn in future outreach and data collection campaigns.

- Provide a thorough introduction to the project of interest
  - Send a formal written notification to businesses explaining the need for their participation
  - Send a link containing the questionnaire with the information that they will need to provide
- Provide a clear incentive to businesses; and explain why it is important for companies to cooperate
- Introduce third parties who will be partnering with the City of Auburn for the specific outreach campaign
- Provide third parties (in this case the research team) with the materials necessary for project completion in a timely manner; abide by the agreed upon timeline/deadlines
- Establish reliable communication with partners working on the project
- Verify that each email is correct and current

Although contacting the businesses and gleaning information for the database was difficult, the research team developed some recommendations for the survey after engaging in these phone conversations. As stated in our methods, another portion of the research team duties was to identify ways to improve the survey to make it more intuitive and streamlined. Below are a few examples of survey recommendations:

- Operating days and hours entry box need more characters
  - The box currently too short for businesses with different daily hours
- Business type should not be a pull-down menu
“Research” and “Law” were not included in Business Type, yet were a primary category for many businesses in the pilot

Alternatively, Business Type could still be a pull-down menu, but could include a subsequent option labeled as, “Other Business Type” with an editable field.

- Mailing address should come right after the location address so it can quickly be confirmed by surveyor
  - Alternatively, a check box that allows businesses to automatically use the location address for their mailing address would make the process much more efficient. Otherwise, if unchecked the Mailing address fields remains editable.

- More specification as to what type of primary contact would be most beneficial for the database
  - E.g. “Primary contact for Sales (inquiries)”

- Additional explanation of what is meant by “business keywords.”
  - E.g. If business type was manufacturing, the database should provide suggested keywords to describe manufacturing.

- The “Narratives” field should include the word or character limit so businesses know how much they can (or should) write.

**Main Point**

There are two main points that we feel encapsulate our project. Our objective was to develop recommendations to improve the questionnaire for the database. Furthermore, the research team was a resource for the City of Auburn to improve the information gleaning process as a whole. The second main component of our project was to gain experience and improve our professional communication skills. Every aspect of our project dealt with communication, from communicating with our client partners to surveying the local businesses via email and phone calls. As we outlined throughout our report, many of the issues we faced during our project stemmed from communication issues with businesses in Auburn as well as with our client partners. As students, we have gained valuable insights from this project, especially in regards to professional communication, which we can apply to future projects that involve communicating with third parties. Our team feels that we have learned the importance of facilitating an ongoing dialogue with a client partner when collaborating on a project. Ongoing dialogue is important in order to deal with arising issues, and to communicate expectations as
efficiently as possible. On a professional level, we have learned the necessity of being able to take rejection and bluntness from the public in a stride while maintaining a professional demeanor. We also better understand the importance of communicating intentions and reasoning, (e.g. why we are contacting businesses), to receive more receptive and positive responses. Overall, we learned that effective communication is imperative for any project, regardless of content, to move forward and accomplish a project. We sincerely hope that the City of Auburn takes our recommendations into consideration and that they have gained as much, if not more, than we have from working on the Buy Local Project.
Appendix A: Introductory Email to Auburn Businesses

Hello [Insert Company Personnel],

My name is ________, and I’m working with the City of Auburn in developing The Auburn Business Collaboration (ABC) Database. Many times, when locals leave Auburn for shopping or services, it is because they are simply unaware of the options available in their own city. The goal of the ABC is to allow businesses, such as yourselves, to more easily find suppliers within Auburn who offer products of interest, instead of taking business outside of Auburn. ABC will allow the people of Auburn to have an accessible catalogue of local businesses that will encourage businesses to buy locally, thus fueling the local economy! The long-term goal of the ABC is to lessen the gap of economic leakage in Auburn’s economy as well as stimulate more job creation within the city of Auburn. Soon, an information update for this program will be a part of your business license renewal, but you have the opportunity to get familiar with the program and get on the map early.

A description, or “narrative” of your business is needed for the database, so I’d like to ask you to send me an email which includes a self-description of your business in 250 words or less.

Lastly, I would greatly appreciate it if we could schedule a phone appointment within the next two weeks, I’m free __________. Please, don’t hesitate to reach out if you have any questions at all. My job is to make this process as easy for you as possible.

Sincerely (regards, or any other concluding remark that’s appropriate),

___________
Appendix B: Keyword Bank

We developed a “list” of keywords based off business types (e.g. Manufacturing, Legal Services, Retail) from our questionnaire, and then expanded the list with related search terms. The purpose of the keyword bank is to help our client partners better define the categories and search parameters they want to incorporate into the database.

**Business terms: Manufacturer types:**

Manufacture, Manufacturers, Manufacturing, Construction, Constructing, Building, Producing, Production, Producer, Fabrication, Remodeling, Builder, Assembly

**Potential Search Terms**

**General Manufacturing:**


**Food and Beverage:**

Distillery, Liquor, Cocktails, Alcoholic Beverages, Alcohol, Brewing Company, Hard Ciders, Ciders, Grocery Stores, Store, Food, Groceries, Cafes, Coffee, Tea, Bars

**Other:**

Legal Services, Law, Lawyers, Consulting, Consultation, Legal, Financial Services, Retail, Shopping, Clothes, Shoes, Employment Services, Help to get Employment
Common Search Phrases:

The line can be filled with any search term
Where can I find _____, Location of ______, I need ______, Where to get______, Who sells ____,
Who deals with ______, What place has _____, Places that have ______, Places with _____

Some Considerations:

- The way that general consumers (e.g. the people of the City of Auburn) search will likely be very
different from how other businesses may search.
  - Businesses may look up specific parts they need or very specific products
  - Consumers will likely search using more general terms
  - Two versions of the search function – one for consumers and one for businesses – may
    help to all parties effectively use the searchable database.
A College Kid’s Guide to:

Starting a (SafeFlame) Startup

Ian Baldwin-Madison
Jennifer Huynh
Katia Maria

Megan Greenstein
Helen Yoo
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Overview

SafeFlame is a relatively new startup company founded in 2015 by Kevin Cussen and David Crawford. The goal of SafeFlame is to offer clean-burning energy alternatives to regions typically reliant on biomass fuel such as wood and charcoal. Annually, there are nearly four million deaths related to the burning of these dirty biomass fuels, most commonly through smoke inhalation. SafeFlame technology utilizes a central combustor that takes organic matter and turns it into clean energy, powering stovetop burners in different resident dwellings. It is currently a for-profit company sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and University of Washington. The company is dedicated to making a global difference inside residential homes. SafeFlame examines the current local markets for dirty fuels like coal and wood, and offers its innovate technology for the same price. Residents are not spending additional money or time for healthier technology, but are saving more with the help of SafeFlame. To ensure that the technology is operating properly, SafeFlame staff will inspect and perform maintenance on the combustors on a biweekly basis. The goal of the company is to empower developing world families on a heating and cooking source that is clean burning.

This technology additionally works to improve the livelihood of these communities through job opportunities working as the maintenance technicians on these machines. Currently, the company has launched a pilot in Guinea and is hoping to pilot the technology in two more regions in 2017. However, for the company to take these next steps, SafeFlame will need additional monetary funds, partnerships, and community recognition.

Our group was tasked to help co-founder Kevin Cussen achieve these goals through workstreams consisting mostly of research and networking. In doing so, our collective goal was to further SafeFlame’s progressive mission by creating a base foundation for groups to continue and build upon in the future. After Kevin conducted a short 30-minute interview with each of us, he was able to split us up into groups based off of our prior knowledge.

- Ian was the lead for the applications to the UW Campus Sustainability Fund, which would help SafeFlame receive more capital to then hire interns and further pilot testing.

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• Katia helped with social media presence, as the company only had 20 Facebook likes on their homepage. In order for SafeFlame to accomplish its mission it needed other community and environmental agencies to know SafeFlame existed and what exactly objective and causes are.
• Helen researched grant opportunities and provided Kevin with a list of possible opportunities that SafeFlame would be a good fit for based off of a ranking system.
• Jennifer looked into international partners with the same social and environmental alignments as SafeFlame.
• Megan worked within the groups to help with different projects that required more extensive, time-heavy work.

The group came together to provide Kevin and SafeFlame with the necessary components that go into starting a startup and getting a small business off the ground.

Methods

As requested by Kevin, our group focused on specific workstreams that would increase SafeFlame foundations and presence. Each member worked independently and supported one another on these projects to provide Kevin with a strong basis of what components are needed for a startup company to “take off.” Each subproject required its own set of resources to complete the task.

Grants/Funding:

Being a startup company with innovative ideas committed to human health, SafeFlame needed help in securing grants and funding in order to market its sustainable technology to target audiences. While it had a small list of grants, SafeFlame needed more resources and research to find additional sources of funding.

Using campus resources and libraries, Helen navigated through different research databases and recommendations from grant experts. Most of her grants were found on the grants database site http://www.grants.gov that provided different outlets critical in navigating the grant researching process. She researched the grants with keywords related to SafeFlame such as “biodigester” and “sustainability.” She also narrowed down her search by looking for grants separated into SafeFlame-related categories like
“Environment,” “Energy,” and “Natural Resources.” She then homed in on each category, looking for what would best fit SafeFlame’s needs, and cross-checked them to make sure no duplicates were recorded.

The grants were then organized with information including due date, organization/sponsor, criteria, website link, and how SafeFlame was a relatable fit. Once this information was entered with as much detail as possible, it was color-coded to highlight where SafeFlame’s priorities should follow. A part of the final research database is shown below:

![Figure 1: Snapshot of the final grant spreadsheet](image)

**International Partners:**

Because only one pilot project has been launched in Guinea, the amount of information for next year’s location was minimal. As a result, Jennifer’s main goal for the quarter was to lay out a foundation

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of possible organizations that would be capable of working with SafeFlame. With this, she analyzed ten top-rated organizations that people would recommend to others based on personal experience, expenses, scholarships, etc. This was found through articles and recommendations from classmates and friends. From looking at similarities between these top institutions, along with focusing on what partnerships each institution has engaged in, Jennifer took these results and compiled them into a workstream.

Organizations were found from volunteer databases, search engines, and verbal recommendations from past volunteers. All information was put into a Google excel sheet for easy access and edits. Jennifer also included basic data such as mission statements, the headquarters/main base of the institution, areas of focus, and predicted time needs for outreach. Excel worksheets were the best way to compile this data because it can be sorted and organized in whatever way the editor desired, whether that would be based on best fit, mission statement, or location.

In addition, a separate sheet to the excel document was added for organizations that would not be considered a close fit. This included short explanations of why these programs may not be the best choice; such as abilities, or goals. Below is part of the final research partnership research results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Main Base</th>
<th># of Employees</th>
<th>Fit with SafeFlame: +, +, *</th>
<th>+ (80-100% match)</th>
<th>- (40-60% match)</th>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Why Should We Engage</th>
<th>When Should We Engage</th>
<th>Jennifer's Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross Cultural Solutions</td>
<td>Costa Rica - Guatemala - Mexico - Peru - Tanzania - Trinidad - France</td>
<td>Main Office Location: New York</td>
<td>Has invited over 30,000 volunteers and 20+ employees throughout the globe. On their main website, there are over 20 different volunteer opportunities mentioned</td>
<td>Fit:</td>
<td>has a great emphasis on improving the health and well-being of people in developing countries, also a similar focus and mission statement.</td>
<td>To improve cross-cultural services that improve the health situation, and economic opportunities for vulnerable women, children, and elderly. We are an international non-profit organization with a political or religious affiliation.</td>
<td>Website Source: <a href="https://www.culturalsolutions.org">https://www.culturalsolutions.org</a></td>
<td>- Funding</td>
<td>- Networking</td>
<td>- If the next 1.4 years, when SafeFlame is able to reach a good number of followers that are willing to participate in their next volunteer project.</td>
<td>- A long-term partnership for being able to connect to other regions across the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners in Health</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Boston, MA</td>
<td>Includes 5 members of the board committee, 15 staff, 31 country directors, and over 500 local member</td>
<td>Fit:</td>
<td>Like Cross Cultural Solutions, they focus on healthcare, economic development, and bringing resources to those in poverty and leaving them available.</td>
<td>To provide affordable solutions for poverty in health care. By establishing long-term relationships with sister organizations based on mutual needs of partners in health to improve the health and well-being of vulnerable women, children, and elderly.</td>
<td>Website Source: <a href="http://www.ph.org">http://www.ph.org</a></td>
<td>- Senior Staff</td>
<td>- Worked in South America</td>
<td>- Next year, at least trying to start organization and keeping in touch within the next 2-4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation</td>
<td>Recent programs: Africa, China, India, and the Middle East</td>
<td>Seattle - Washington, D.C</td>
<td>Current size of foundation employees: 1,375</td>
<td>Fit:</td>
<td>Would be a valuable partnership for receiving funds in a new pilot project that supports providing a higher quality of life through sustainable resources and change.</td>
<td>From poverty to health, to education, our sense of focus offers the opportunity to simultaneously improve the lives of billions of people. Our belief that partnerships bring together the best and brightest programs, and working with the best organizations around the globe to identify issues, find answers, and drive change.</td>
<td>Website Source: <a href="http://gatesfoundation.org">http://gatesfoundation.org</a></td>
<td>- Funding</td>
<td>- A good way to start good relationships with possible donors</td>
<td>- Once collaboration is decided, this can either be a substantial partnership, or something that can be shortened</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Volunteer Programs Association (IVP)</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Los Angeles, California</td>
<td>Includes 10main staff members on their website, a number of employees under their umbrella is unknown</td>
<td>Fit:</td>
<td>Association has worked with many other organizations that have a similar mission statement to SafeFlame, or connecting us in finding new volunteer opportunities can be extremely useful.</td>
<td>IVPA is committed to standards of excellence in the field of international volunteering and IVPA member organizations must uphold the IVPA Principles and Practices as guidelines for good programming as well as meet a series of membership criteria.</td>
<td>Website Source: <a href="http://www.volunteerinternational.org">http://www.volunteerinternational.org</a></td>
<td>- Smaller</td>
<td>- With other organizations</td>
<td>- Needs to be settled soon enough to receive recognition from the foundation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Snapshot of the institution partnership spreadsheet
To reduce the workload for future international outreach projects, SafeFlame will be able to find institutions for their specific needs and add new organizations using this spreadsheet.

**Campus Sustainability Fund Application:**

![Image](https://csf.uw.edu/about-us/our-mission)

*Figure 3: The UW mission regarding the Campus Sustainability Fund.*

To ensure an iterative application for the Campus Sustainability Fund (CSF), the most prevalent method Ian used for this prong of the project was outreach to clubs, faculty, students, and CSF officials. Ian also scheduled meetings with representatives from these groups to brainstorm and help enrich SafeFlame’s application. After enough information was gathered to fill out a CSF Letter of Intent, Ian and Kevin discussed best methods for highlighting SafeFlame’s technology with the CSF. As the application was still in progress during the writing of this report, additional methods will include more in-depth research and development for the physical stove and biodigester, as well as more literature review and examinations of past proposals.

**Social Media:**

Prior to its partnership with ENVIR 480, SafeFlame maintained about 20 Facebook followers and posted about once a month. With little social media recognition, Katia’s goal was to improve SafeFlame’s Facebook presence by attracting new followers interested in the company’s mission, as well as to network with similar organizations. In order to do this, Katia posted on Facebook once or twice a week with media intended to attract attention from new followers and other environmental organizations. Posted content included short documentaries regarding clean cookstoves, graphs displaying data from SafeFlame’s

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research in Guinea, infographics, and statistics. To enhance these posts, hashtags such as #cleancookstoves and #sustainability were added. Organizations with similar missions were also mentioned, such as the United Nation’s Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves.

Incorporation Research:

Katia also researched different business incorporation types to better direct SafeFlame into the best incorporation status for its criteria. Kevin indicated that the best incorporation type would:

1. Accept payment for services (i.e. be revenue-based)
2. Accept grants as catalytic funding
3. Have shared ownership/management

Furthermore, Kevin was also interested in limitations of profit use and the ease of forming international partnerships as they pertain to the different types of incorporation statuses.

Katia researched S Corporations, Limited Liability Corporations, and Non-Profits statuses. In order to research these three categories, online legal and business resources were utilized. The results were then compiled into an easy-to-review “Pros and Cons” tables for Kevin’s use.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy limited liability protection</td>
<td>Owners must be US citizens or perm residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners report their share of profit and loss on their individual tax returns</td>
<td>S corp cannot have more than 100 shareholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No double taxation of income: That means that an S Corp’s revenue is not taxed at the corporate level, it’s only taxed when paid out as salaries or dividends to shareholders. That alone could save a S Corp hundreds of thousands of dollars.</td>
<td>The shareholders will be taxed for any income the company has, even if they did not receive any portion of that income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company can attract investors through sale of shares of stock</td>
<td>The IRS requires all officers and owners of an S Corporation to make a salary, even if the company is not yet making a profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants to S corporations are not taxed, unlike LLCs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Pros and Cons table for Business Incorporation Statuses

Findings

Grants/Funding:

After four weeks of research, Helen and Megan found 20 possible grants and funding opportunities that were unknown to SafeFlame prior to this partnership. While there were many resources available in providing this information, due to time constraints, the grants they found for SafeFlame may not all be applicable. There was not an opportunity to discuss the specifics of each grant opportunity with Kevin and determine which ones he wanted to pursue in the following application cycles. However, with this grants and funding opportunities database, Kevin received a greater range of the types of resources, grants, and timelines necessary in securing funding. By utilizing our preliminary research, future groups can choose which grants most closely fit SafeFlame’s criteria.

International Partners:

Jennifer and Megan found a total of 30 possible organizations that may be good partners for SafeFlame in locations they may be interested in. Because there were already built search engines for finding programs through personal choice filters, finding potential partners was not as difficult as expected. In addition, they also found seven organizations that should not be contacted due to conflicting availability and/or goals. Through Kevin’s review and approval, four institutions were selected to be eligible to contact within the next two months for El Salvador’s pilot project. These partners included Help International,\textsuperscript{23} Cuso International,\textsuperscript{24} and Aid in El Salvador.\textsuperscript{25}

Campus Sustainability Fund:

The CSF Letter of Intent, submitted in late November, was approved for further proceeding with the application process. Overall, the letter was written with multidisciplinary consideration and is an excellent opportunity for further research and development. The CSF committee preferred two of the three projects submitted for funding, one of which being the construction of a cart with a stove installed that runs on biogas. The other project is a live demo of SafeFlame technology through a type of barbeque cook-off night. Biogas could be showcased in this event in a number of ways, including cooking waste-free meals and bringing in a local chef or restaurant who may be interested in biogas cookstoves as a safe

cooking technology. With the CSF, SafeFlame could implement in sustainable practices in a local environment and gain recognition in a student-focused community.

Social Media:

Posting more frequently on SafeFlame’s Facebook page resulted in increased engagement and an increase in followers. Specifically, when hashtags and organizations were mentioned in posts, post engagement and views increased significantly. In the three-week period of focused social media work, SafeFlame almost doubled in followers and engagement went up from an average of 30 people to about 60 people reached per post.

However, there were time limitations on this project. In an ideal situation, more time could be invested in more frequently posting by many members of SafeFlame. More posts, coupled with a variety of engaging content types and tags, can expand SafeFlame’s reach and attract the attention of new audiences.

Incorporation Research:

After researching incorporation statuses, a non-profit status was determined to be the best fit for SafeFlame. S corporations are better geared toward large domestic corporations and LLCs, and although better for small domestic or abroad corporations, cannot easily accept grants or funding. As a result, a non-profit status is best for SafeFlame as it can easily be international and accept public donations and grants.  

However, there were limitations on the information found, which could have skewed the results. As Katia has limited legal and corporate background, her access to reliable legal resources was limited and thus impacted the amount of information found. Additional legal advice is recommended.

Recommendation

In future projects with SafeFlame, it is essential that communication continues being the key in collaboration and partnership. This requires brief progress check-ins before and after each stage of the work. It is also important that expectations and guidelines are shared before any work can begin, so that no misunderstandings prompt insufficient work. Kevin, our client partner, did an excellent job with

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constant communication to each individual through an initial phone call, face-to-face meetings, and weekly email correspondence. We hope that this continues with future students of Sustainability Studio, as we appreciated the weekly updates along with the set weekly goal. However, we would also have appreciated more feedback from other SafeFlame employees through emails, whether that be in the form of check-ins, commentary, or suggestions. Communicating with just Kevin set some limitations as he was not available to meet and talk during set studio days. We would also advise SafeFlame to work on relaying precise information to the students in order to not overwhelm them. At many times during this process our group faced frustration with what seemed like a lot of work, when in reality the expectations were just not clear. The workstream at the beginning of the project consisted of 40 different items that needed to be accomplished, which seemed very overwhelming. Once these were distributed into more easily managed and clear workstreams, our workload was much better handled.

**Next Steps**

Kevin will continue to be a client partner for Environmental 480: Sustainability Studio for upcoming quarters. For groups furthering this project, the approaching steps will be building off of our research. By using the information gathered by our team, the next group of students can further develop each of the workstreams we worked on to produce more tangible results in the form of funding, international partners, social media, and the CSF.

For the current grant and international partners work, we hope that next quarter’s class will continue these excel sheets so that they can be better filtered for the company’s uses. With that in mind, partners and grant applications should be filled out and applied to as soon as possible. These two components are important contributions for the pilot project in 2017, and without them, hosting a volunteer program by this upcoming summer will be nearly impossible. The future student groups should follow up with the different grant and partnership opportunities to identify whether they are plausible and which companies would be interested.

We hope work with the Campus Sustainability Fund application also continues in this partnership. As a type of local grant, future students can practice and experience the grant and funding process firsthand. Moreover, they can physically see the results of such processes through the implementation of SafeFlame on the UW Seattle campus. The final proposal for the two projects submitted to CSF was due January 26th, 2017.
In addition, we hope that these students will continue the social media work Katia has established through Facebook and other social networks. We hope Kevin and everyone speaking on behalf of the SafeFlame organization post more frequently in the future to help spark interest for the posts being shared.

For types of incorporation, Kevin should discuss and confirm with a legal business advisor if transitioning to a non-profit is the best decision for the company.

There were some gaps within our research and partnership duties. A lot of the time the search engines we used did not provide the most qualified answers to the grant/opportunity and international partners questions we were working to answer. Seeking professional knowledge on how to best research these different aspects of the project to make an optimal experience would be a good starting point for the next group as well. For example, with the CSF, we fell short with the deadline, so for the next set of students, we recommend making a detailed sheet of when the grant opportunities expire to make sure this obstacle is avoided.

**Main Point**

The group of SafeFlame in the 2016 Autumn quarter was tasked with giving this startup company a foot in the door concerning expansion of a small business. By working effectively in our independent workstreams contributing to our collective group, we synthesized our research in a way that allowed SafeFlame’s the start it needed to develop into a recognizable and respected organization. We provided a lot of information that goes into the backbone of getting a company off the ground. We learned how to stay on task and the value of weekly updates and check-ins with our client partner. Although we each worked on different workstreams and weekly tasks, our group came together to strategize the plan for a successful outcome. When faced with difficulties, we helped each other achieve our goals through collaboration and communication. As a group, we would not have been able to accomplish as much as we did if we didn’t separate the work out. Splitting the work into different workstreams and having both individual and collective components helped contribute to our overall outcome and also provided real-life experience in business projects in a professional setting.
Sticker Shock: Evaluating the Recognition and Influence of “Green” Logos at the University of Washington

Client Partners:
Sean Schmidt (UW Sustainability) & Claudia Christensen (UW Procurement)

By:
Mallory Culbertson, Jocelina LaRue, Shunxi Liu, Jenny Lu
ENVIR 480 Sustainability Studio
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Overview

As the University of Washington is always striving to achieve a higher standard of sustainability, it is relevant for us to understand the importance of various logos and certifications that will lead the university to utilize a more sustainable procurement process. The overarching goal of our project was to find out which factor(s) in green labeling play the most significant role(s) in purchasing decisions and develop an understanding of the relationship between how logos affect procurement. This project’s main objective was to gauge recognition of common logos found on items that are regularly purchased by the University of Washington and how the appearance of these logos impact purchasing decisions. “Greenwashing”, defined as when a company tries to portray itself as more environmentally-minded than it truly is, has intensified in recent decades. Despite the intentions of companies who are benefiting from the greenwashing phenomena, there are many companies that have good intentions and obtain green certificates and logos for their product to help protect the environment and demonstrate their social responsibility as a corporation. “Green Purchasing” refers to the procurement of products and services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose.

Currently, the UW Procurement office analyzes UW spending patterns to determine the best contracting approach to meet institutional needs and in deciding certain approaches, “preferred supplier” relationships may be established. Preferred UW suppliers ensure that certain goals and requirements are met and the establishment of these relationships are beneficial for UW and our suppliers established. It is important to do an assessment of the current level of green label and certification knowledge throughout campus to develop a strategic plan to improve on our procurement processes. Furthermore, a better understanding of the relationship between green logos and procurement will be useful for UW procurement when considering preferred supplier contracts. This project is small-scale, as we are limited by time and other factors; however, our findings are important as it is the first step to building the groundwork that is needed for a more sustainable campus. To achieve our goal, we collaborated with the UW Sustainability and the UW Procurement offices throughout the duration of our


project and are confident that the results from our project exemplify an imperative need for further research and exploration into this topic.

**Methods**

To find out how logos impact purchasing decisions, we selected various logos that met a set of criteria. The logos were chosen because they are found on items commonly purchased by the University of Washington, or had to be mandated by the State of Washington or the University of Washington. They were also all logos that indicated some form of sustainability or sustainable action. The logos that were chosen include USDA Organic, Energy Star, Green Seal, 100% Recycled Paper, Compostable, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT), and Green Guard. After deciding on what logos to use, we did some research to find out more about what each logo is advertising, and what products they can be found on.

USDA Organic is a label commonly found on food and other agriculture products that are considered organically grown and raised. To become certified, products must meet the guidelines and must be evaluated over a few months’ time. After being approved in the evaluation, organization pay a fee to obtain the certification. Energy Star is a logo commonly found on appliances, building materials and kitchenware that are energy efficient and meet different guidelines. Energy Star – certified items are required for some purchases at UW. Green Seal is a logo that is on products and can also be for services such as hotels that comply with standards to achieve leadership in sustainability. 100% Recycled Paper is also a logo used in this study because all state entities in Washington State including the University of Washington are required to use 100% recycled paper. The BPI compostable logos can be found on items that can be either industrially or naturally composted, and is a requirement for UW’s Housing and Food Services (HFS) food ware. FSC is a certification given to forest products that are deemed ecofriendly by the non-profit organization. EPEAT is a certification for electronics that meet requirements to be certified as environmentally friendly and is managed by the EPA. It is also a required logo for all applicable products purchased by the University of Washington. Green Guard is a certification for

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products with low chemical emissions that help buyers choose more environmentally sustainable materials. Figure 1 represents the logos used for this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logo</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="#">Green Seal Certified</a></td>
<td>Paints, Cleaning products, Paper products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="#">GREENGUARD</a></td>
<td>Building materials, finishes, Interior furnishings, furniture, Cleaning products, Electronic equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="#">100% Recycled Paper</a></td>
<td>Paper products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="#">FSC</a></td>
<td>Paper products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="#">USDA ORGANIC</a></td>
<td>Food products, services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="#">Compostable</a></td>
<td>Packaging, Food products, services, Technology products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="#">Energy Star</a></td>
<td>Electronic products, Kitchen appliances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="#">EPEAT</a></td>
<td>Computers, Printers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This is a requirement - UW paper must contain 100% recycled paper*

*This is a requirement - UW electronics must be ENERGY STAR certified*

**Figure 1: Summary of logos and their descriptions.**

After selecting our logos, we created a UW Catalyst survey to send out to different departments across the three UW campuses. Given the time constraints for the project, sending out a mass email with an attached Catalyst survey to UW staff responsible for purchasing was the best option to gather many responses. The respondents were given a two-week timeframe to respond to the survey.

The survey consisted of multiple choice, Likert scale, free response, and short answer questions. Each question series was repeated for every logo. Respondents were asked if they recognized the logo, and how likely said logo’s presence would affect their purchasing decision on a product. If they recognized a logo, they were asked to specify the product have they seen the logo on. The short answer questions asked included, “Are there certain labels or certifications that you look for when purchasing products for your department, and if so, what labels or certifications do you look for?”, “What kinds of products do you primarily purchase for your department?”, and “When making a decision between products, what tends to be the deciding factor?”. These questions were primarily added to gain a deeper understanding.
of why people purchased certain products. We also asked respondents if they were willing to carry out an in-person or phone interview for more in-depth responses.

Findings

When analyzing the data compiled from our Catalyst survey, there were three striking trends that immediately became apparent. First, the logos that survey respondents were more likely to come into contact with on a day-to-day basis were by far the most recognized, while the logos that were more likely to be seen on products only used a few times a year, if at all, were much less recognized. The USDA Organic and Energy Star logos, which are found on food and electric appliances respectively, were the top two most recognizable logos, which is understandable considering food and appliances in which to store or cook food are products that the typical survey respondent will interact with multiple times a day. Our least recognized logo, the Green Guard logo, is found on items like paints, sealants, and construction materials - items that are used much less frequently by the average survey respondent. Below is a graph of our logo recognition results:

![Logo Recognition Graph]

*Figure 2. Summary of logo recognition from our survey.*
The second conclusion we drew from our results is that purchasers are more likely to be influenced to purchase products that carry logos the consumer trusts. We believe trust is established both by familiarity of the logo as well as the design of the logo itself. Energy Star and USDA Organic were the most recognized and some of the most influential, and likely gained purchaser’s trust through familiarity. We know that the Green Guard logo gained the trust of purchasers because although it only carried 14% recognition among respondents, 71% of those same respondents would be more likely to purchase products if they carried the Green Guard logo. However, this study did not investigate how logo design – such as color scheme and similar design elements – was the main reason for trusting certain logos over others.

The third main conclusion we’ve drawn from our data is the effectiveness of making certain logos a requirement for purchasing (Figure 3). The University of Washington requires that the EPEAT, Energy Star, and 100% Recycled Paper logos appear on applicable products, but our data shows that the appearance of some of these logos is doing little to influence purchasing decisions, despite their mandatory nature. The 100% Recycled Paper logo had the most influence, with 100% of respondents being more likely to purchase paper with that logo on the packaging, which signals to us that the effort to push for 100% Recycled Paper has been an effective one, at least in terms of purchaser awareness. However, EPEAT, which is also required by the University of Washington for electronic goods, went relatively unrecognized and non-impactful. Our data would suggest improving purchaser awareness of the EPEAT logo.
The most notable theme drawn from our short answer questions brings us to our fourth main conclusion — that cost ultimately plays the deciding role in purchasing decisions. When asked the optional open response question “When making a decision between products, what tends to be the deciding factor?”, 100% of survey respondents with “cost.” As with most purchasing decisions, the cost of an item is one of the biggest concerns. This can be problematic when a purchaser has to choose between conforming to the purchasing standards required by the University of Washington and staying within budget. If the University wants to encourage purchasing items with specific certifications, it needs to ensure purchasers have the budget to do so.

Limitations

It would be disingenuous to present these findings without including the limitations we faced in data collection and potential bias inherent in our survey. First and foremost, our survey was completed by a total of seven respondents, which can’t be reasonably considered representative of the entire University of Washington. This was the result of both a limited amount of time to collect data as well as a
low response rate and small group of contacts to survey. The survey was emailed multiple times to the provided list of contacts, but there came a point when we had to close the survey in order to perform our analysis. A more thorough surveying of purchasers is encouraged to validate our analysis.

The second limitation we faced in our data was self-reporting bias. Our survey hinged on respondents honestly and accurately assessing their own recognition of logos and their influence on their purchasing behaviors, which leaves room for exaggeration or error. Additionally, there is potential for a gap between what a respondent thinks about their purchasing of products with certain logos and their actual record of purchasing products because of the appearance of certain logos.

If given more time and resources, we would have liked to conduct several interviews with purchasing staff, as well as vendors. Additionally, we would like to have had the UW Sustainability or other UW entity send out the survey to encourage survey response, however we realize that doing so could encourage other biases to emerge. Ideally, with more time we could craft a survey that encourages both the frankness allowed by anonymity and the respect of an institutional survey.

Conclusion

Throughout the Green Logo and Certification project, the Catalyst survey results and follow-up interview response indicate that the logos without green color or explicit definition are less recognized by purchasing people as well as the impact on purchasing perception. From the short answers of our survey, we found that the cost is the most significant factor affecting department purchasing behavior. On the other hand, the lack of advocacy and education on green logo prevents people considering more sustainable options. Additionally, legal mandates from state or federal agencies, such as a Washington state law mandating that all state agencies buy 100% recycled paper, or that all state funded agencies must purchase goods from companies that utilize Class II prison labor, can limit the options for state entities as well.

Recommendations

We have come up with four recommendations for the University of Washington’s follow up to this project. The four recommendations will serve as potential action for UW. The recommendations are conceived in order to create economic, environmental and social impact for sustainable purchasing in UW (Figure 4).
Figure 4. The relation of four recommended action for sustainable purchasing in UW.

1. Enlarge research scale
   First, we suggest that UW should support more research and collect big data in the purchasing habits for every department. Big data can increase the accuracy and comprehensiveness of UW department’s different purchasing perception. Due to the short time range and limited workforce in this project, we realize the quantity of data and scale of research objects are vital to draw a viable strategic plan for UW in further development on green purchasing. In order to enlarge the research scale, UW should carry out more research projects from faculty to student level every now and then. Accessible resources are also necessary for researches. To ensure researchers receive enough data from different departments, UW should assist the individual researchers or teams with available resources such as contact information for departmental purchasers, and provide a possible email introduction. An in-depth understanding of the general purchasing pattern and specific purchasing list can help generate a feasible sustainable purchasing plan throughout campus.
2. Collaboration with UW suppliers

To only look at the purchaser’s side in the green purchasing objective can create bias that may affect the outcome of sustainable development at the UW. We think that it is important to research and analyze the suppliers’ point of view on green logo and certification. We learned that the certification for products and suppliers are still costly and lengthy processes, and understanding the process of logo certification from the supplier can pinpoint the advantages and disadvantages of the effectiveness of green logos. Therefore, UW can draft a plan that benefits both departments and suppliers. A “win-win” situation is the ideal outcome of sustainable purchasing and it should encourage producers to manufacture more green products and consumers to buy more green products. The effectiveness and fairness of certification process should be agreed by both parties because the cost may vary with the green logo on it. However, if the customers understand the importance of certifying a product in environmental and social purpose, they may be willing to pay a little addition to the product value. If more green certification can be accepted by the suppliers, consumers will have more sustainable options.

3. Logo Design

We strongly recommend UW to continue research on the impact of green logo from its design. Even though we haven’t focused on this perspective in our project, we think it will be a valuable research direction. Generally, we found that people are more familiar with logos that are green in color or have familiar environmental-friendly symbols and words. We hope UW can conduct more in-depth research on the logo design itself to make it more recognizable and popular. The different aspects of a logo, such as color, size, font and image can vary consumers’ purchasing perception. Visual appeal is not only the requirements for trademark, but also should be implanted in green logo design. We think an attractive logo can help raise the awareness on the environmental issues each logo addresses/supports. Logos are not just distinctive marks, but a symbol of appreciation on nature and human rights.

4. UW Strategic Plan

Finally, this data will be useless if no action is made after analysis. We recommend the UW develop a strategic plan to educate all UW faculty members on green purchasing. Lack of information regarding logos, what they mean, and when they are mandatory is a major barrier to sustainability at the UW. Therefore, as a large research institution, UW should carry this
responsibility to educate its staff with appropriate knowledge on green purchasing and pass this on to our next generation to accelerate achieving sustainable society. Green logo advocacy can be implemented in the Sustainability Festival and Earth Day as a theme. This plan should include the object of green purchasing for each department. For example, UW may want to reward departments that reach a certain level of sustainable purchasing stewardship. The healthy competition will become trend that may prompt other departments to follow, allowing UW to become a greener and more sustainable campus.

Next steps

This project can be considered as a stepping stone for various future research endeavors that can further improve upon the sustainability of UW’s procurement processes. In addition to collecting more data through surveys, we believe that in-person or phone interviews will capture a deeper review of purchasing factors that may vary between departments due to different needs. It is important to also conduct research with UW’s suppliers, as collaboration with suppliers will give us an insight on the processes of logo certification. This type of collaboration will be beneficial for both parties because we will be able to better understand each other’s’ needs. Furthermore, we suggest that research of human perceptions of different aspects of a logo design can be conducted and will contribute to a more thorough understanding of the relationship between green logos and procurement. Obtaining results from research suggestions listed above will allow the UW Sustainability office to develop a strategic plan in raising awareness on the importance of green purchasing. Education on green purchasing will not only benefit UW procurement, but these programs can be further developed to reach out to UW students or other local communities. The suggestions listed above address various key gaps in our projects as we were limited by time and other resources; however, we believe that each step listed is manageable given more time and the results from further research will strengthen the sustainability aspect of the procurement processes at the University of Washington.

Main point

It is evident from our results that people are more likely to buy items with logos that they’re familiar with, which leads us to conclude that the University of Washington will need to familiarize its faculty members on various green logos to encourage the purchasing of more sustainable products. A
strategic plan on educating staff on the importance of green purchasing and green certifications will lead to a more sustainable procurement process throughout campus. Furthermore, we conclude that further research on this topic is essential to determine a more in-depth understanding of the relationship that exists between green logos and procurement. With a deeper understanding of this relationship, UW Procurement will be able to develop a more comprehensive analysis on how to determine the best contracting approach to meet institutional needs.
First Steps in Becoming a “Good Dawg”

Team Members:
- Lola Behrens
- Robert Chang
- Anna Johnson
- Diana Lloyd-Jones
- Lucas Thompson

Client Partners:
- Claudia Christensen
- Sean Schmidt
Project Overview

Our ENVIR 480 group partnered with the University of Washington’s (UW) Sustainability Office and the UW Office of Procurement. The two UW offices have already accomplished a great deal in improving environmental practices on campus, yet they wanted a student group partner to help launch a brand new program called Be A Good Dawg (BAGD)\(^\text{35}\). The main purpose of BAGD is that it will encourage members of the UW community to embrace sustainability whenever possible, whether that be through purchasing, commuting, or composting. The program is set to launch February 2017.

Sean Schmidt and Claudia Christensen provided us with a general idea of the program, and encouraged us to push creative boundaries. Aside from a single webpage containing links to other useful related information, BAGD had little outreach, marketing, and communication materials when we started this partnership. This provided a lot of opportunities for us to create a number of different materials in support of BAGD to help get the program off the ground at the University of Washington, Seattle.

To begin, we first brainstormed what ‘being a good dawg’ meant to each of us, and combined our thoughts into a cohesive preliminary mission statement, which is as follows:

“To promote communal sustainability, lead by example, and ensure environmental and social stewardship is being practiced in all university communities and at every level of management.”

The idea of BAGD is that sustainability should be practiced like a habit. It should be included in student and faculty’s daily activities and decisions. Anyone can Be A Good Dawg, as long as they make choices with consideration to promote environmental stewardship.

A number of research questions surfaced as we attempted to fulfill our objectives. The first (and primary) question was, how can our ENVIR 480 group help the Be A Good Dawg program get a successful start? Given the newness of the program and the time constraints facing us, our group theorized the best way to help BAGD get a successful start was to create a list of future potential projects that the program could address after its February launch. We wanted to present this

\(^{35}\) Be a GOOD DAWG! (n.d.). Retrieved December 16, 2016, from https://green.uw.edu/good-dawg
information in an easy-to-understand format, so that all individuals working on BAGD could readily use our project deliverables however they saw fit. A number of other research questions arose as a result, which included:

1. What sustainability efforts are students and faculty already doing?

2. What sustainability efforts do students and faculty need help improving on?

3. What about bias? Do members of the UW community have the knowledge to accurately assess their impact on the environment?

A number of predictions also formed around our research questions. For instance, we hypothesized that the most common sustainability efforts already being done on campus were the most well-known, such as recycling and using alternative transportation. We also predicted that some bias would definitely be present in a certain percentage of community individuals, depending on their major or previous experience in environmental issues. We did not, however, have any major predictions as to what aspects of the community needed improvement, and were depending on our research to make this information available.

Methods

Our project methods were fairly straightforward. When starting from nearly ground zero on a project like BAGD, we found it pertinent to look at the why of project, before we delved any further into our methods. Since we knew the initial kickoff for the program was in February of 2017, we had to narrow our focus to what we could do that would be most beneficial within that timeframe, as well as what could be built upon and utilized by students and Office of Sustainability employees following the completion of our ENVIR 480 project. This is how we landed on a matrix of opportunity. This matrix provides information specific to communities, departments, students, and faculty in all corners of the UW campus in regards to sustainability habits and practices. This matrix illuminates, in the simplest form, specific aspects of the UW Seattle community which are negatively impacting the environment that could use more attention/improvement. The matrix also provides preliminary data for the BAGD program to use to really hone in on its programming come February.
To populate our matrix of opportunity we created two surveys - one for students and one for faculty. Starting with the student survey, we asked students to describe their living situation (such as dorms/residence halls, on-campus apartments, Greek housing, or commuter). We then asked for their expected graduation year, what their major was. After collecting this demographic-type information, we then asked survey respondents to evaluate how well s/he participated in eight different green/sustainable habits. To better define what each habit was, we provided one or two examples. The habits we evaluated make the core of what it means to UW Office of Sustainability to “Be A Good Dawg”. The criteria we evaluated was:

1. Do you buy green? (do you try to purchase products with green eco labels?)
2. Do you buy locally? (for example: organic local food, farmer's markets)
3. Do you use alternative transportation? (busing, biking, walking, carpooling, electric vehicles)
4. Do you try to conserve energy? (cold clothes washer option, electric cars, reducing thermostat usage)
5. Do you recycle? (bottles, boxes, electronics, paper)
6. Do you compost? (at home, on campus composting bins, for your personal garden)
7. Do you try to reduce your paper consumption? (electronic over writing or tangible texts)
8. Do you take advantage of the UW surplus store? (when looking for office supplies)

Each student had to identify how often they engaged in a sustainability practice using the following Likert options: all the time (100%), most of the time (75%), half the time (50%), infrequently (75%), or none of the time (0%). Each question was followed by an optional free response question for the student to elaborate on their previous answers or add anything additional they wanted to share.

The faculty survey was intended for faculty to answer on behalf of what their department was doing as a whole. The survey asked, in free response form, their name, department, title, how long they have been employed within the department, and how long they have been employed for UW. Then the survey moved into the same sustainability criteria and Likert scale questions as the student survey. However, for the faculty survey, we added an, “I do not know” answer option. Similar to the student survey, the survey ended with an optional free response section.
We utilized Sean through our project process. We ran our surveys by him to ensure we were collecting beneficial and purposeful data. We also utilized what the Office of Sustainability qualified as criteria to “Be A Good Dawg”. Its criteria had a slightly wider range than what we addressed in our survey and highlighted in the matrix of opportunity, yet we tried to follow the same categories to collect as much useful data as possible. The BAGD criteria is:

- Buy green, buy local
- Make purchases using the UW Business Diversity Program Guide
- Choose alternative transportation
- Conserve energy
- Recycle & compost
- Buy office supplies & equipment through UW Surplus
- Reduce your paper use
- Get a green certification for your office, lab, dorm room, or Greek house
- Check out Housing and Food Services Green Living page
- Be prepared for emergencies
- Participate in the annual UW Combined Fund Drive and Husky Green Fund Drive

The student groups we specifically targeted for surveying were ASUW, Commuter Commons, On-Campus Housing, Greek Life, and our own friends/peers. The departments we specifically targeted for the faculty survey were School of Environmental and Forest Sciences, Foster School of Business, School of Informatics, School of Public Health, and the Mechanical Engineering Department. We were very intentional about who we reached out to in hopes that this would improve our survey completion rate. We also wanted a diverse student pool in terms of majors, year at UW, and living situations. We also wanted a diverse set of departments to better demonstrate what was going on internally, and sustainably, in all corners of campus.

We had multiple routes of reaching out to these specific communities. We drafted two email templates - one for students and one for faculty. The email entailed what the BAGD program was, our mission statement, why we needed their survey response, and why it was important for them to fill it
out, and the link to the survey. The email templates are attached at the end of this chapter as Appendix A.

In addition to our emails, we followed up with in-person visits to departments and student groups. Members of our group found it helpful to visit offices in the department to see who the best person to fill out the survey may be, and to follow-up on email introductions with an in-person push to really ensure a response. We visited the student group, EcoReps, in-person as well. EcoReps is a group of Greek representatives that meet once a week to discuss ways to improve sustainability in the Greek community. By sharing what the BAGD program was and what its mission entailed with the Greek representatives in-person, we gave students a face to the project and more of an incentive/push to take the survey themselves and share the survey with other students in their chapters.

Following the dispersal of surveys and collection of responses, we compiled our data to evaluate the students and departmental results. These results are laid out in the following section. We used our results to highlight areas in our matrix of opportunity and presented those areas in need of attention to Sean and Claudia, as well as the UW community, during our group presentation on Thursday December 8, 2016. Here is where we made our recommendations and highlighted which “Be A Good Dawg” criteria and specific communities have opportunities for improvement as the program launch in February 2017. We concluded our project process by sending our data and matrix of opportunity over to the UW Office of Sustainability to be used in future work on the program.

**Results:**

We received 115 student responses and 12 faculty responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students-115 responses</th>
<th>Faculty-12 responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recycling</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composting</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Transportation</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy Conservation</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Conservation</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Label Purchasing</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Purchasing</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surplus Store Purchasing</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Summary of sustainable activity rates for students and faculty/UW departments.

Figure 1 provides a summary of the sustainable practices examined on the surveys and the average percentile rate at which students and faculty perform them. We can categorize the practices into groups: waste disposal (recycling and composting), conservation (alternative transportation, energy and paper conservation), and purchasing (green label, local, and surplus store purchasing).

Students performed best in waste disposal practices with scores of 87.5% in recycling and 70% in composting. There was a slight drop in conservation with scores of 70% in alternative transportation, 64% in energy conservation, and 60% in paper conservation. Lastly, there was a significant drop in purchasing practices with scores of 40% in green label purchasing, 34.5% in local purchasing, and 7% in surplus store purchasing. What we can see is that our students found it easier to be sustainable in waste disposal, slightly more difficult in conservation, and very difficult in purchasing. “It is pretty hard being sustainable as a college student” stated one anonymous student survey respondent. While this respondent didn’t specify on any practice, her/his viewpoint is understandable. It is no secret that being sustainable or green can be difficult. It can be challenging to keep a consistent mental note to always recycle, or to use less energy, or to only buy products with green certifications. College students are often on a budget and preoccupied with classes, thus making it increasingly difficult to be sustainable. Our program will do its best to teach students that being sustainable can be easy, affordable, and impactful.

Faculty responded similarly to the students, except with higher scores across the board. These higher scores may be due to policies and regulations in each of the schools. They also scored best in waste disposal practices (99% in recycling and 93% in composting), slightly worse in conservation (93%
alternative transportation, 91% in energy conservation, and 89% in paper conservation), and the worst in purchasing (68% in green label purchasing, 70% in local purchasing, and 72% in surplus store purchasing). An anonymous faculty response shed some light on this, stating that, “some UW processes/procedures make it difficult to be fully sustainable/eco-friendly.” Faculty members must comply with the school’s regulations. Official procedures overrule personal decisions.

What we took away from both the student and faculty results is that there is room for improvement in all practices. We can also see similarities between the student and faculty responses. Both scored best in sustainable waste disposal practices (recycling and composting), had small drops in conservation practices (transportation, energy, and paper), and scored worst in sustainable purchasing practices.

We were able to get our student survey out to, potentially, thousands of students through All-Campus ASUW emails, meetings with EcoReps, and sharing amongst our peers. For the faculty survey, we were able to share the survey with a handful of faculty members in five schools. While we cannot confirm an actual number of how many people saw the survey, we do know that it was significantly more than the 127 total responses we received (we estimated around 2000-3000 individuals saw the survey). What this tells us is that there were a large number of non-responders. What does this mean? Is it a lack of sustainable interest or concern? Is it a bit of laziness or forgetfulness? While there are many hypothetical interpretations for this result, we suggest that additional surveys be conducted to better understand UW communities and their sustainability habits. Perhaps the use of incentives or alternative surveying methods will improve response rates.

Limitations:

Sean gave us the liberty to take this project in any direction. This was both a blessing and a curse, as it took some time for us to finalize a specific goal. By the time we came to conclusion to survey the school and fill out our Matrix of Opportunity, we had about 6 weeks left in the project timeline.

The most challenging limitation we faced was getting people to take the survey. It was easy to get our friends to take our survey, yet, getting strangers to take it was a completely different story. We can approximate within reason that a few thousand people saw the survey, yet we received around a 5% reply rate. The point is if we struggled to get people to take a five-minute survey for the improvement of their own school, how will we do when we ask people to change their lifestyle habits?
At first we really believed that we could get a few thousand responses out of the 40,000 UW students and faculty. We quickly realized that getting that much feedback wasn’t going to happen, but we still put a great deal of time and effort into outreach. To increase our number of responses, we started emailing significantly more faculty and approaching student groups to share the survey amongst larger populations. What we found out is that people are willing to do a small favor for someone they know. However, by finding people willing to share the survey with their personal groups, we were able to expand and get more responses. This was a really beneficial step, as we were able to double our responses in the later weeks of the quarter.

Getting someone to act, especially out of their own self-interest, is one of the most difficult things to do in the world. What is the best way of convincing someone to do something without offering something in return? This question is crucial when it comes to saving the planet. While we all share this world, not everyone is willing to act upon saving it, even in the form of taking a quick survey. Be a Good Dawg will be working to partially solve this complex question.

**Next Steps**

Before discussing data trends and devising a strategy for the future of the program, it is important to note that we cannot simply accept our survey results at face value. Although we encouraged respondents to be honest and we must trust that they were, there are likely discrepancies between how individuals answered the survey and how they conduct themselves in their everyday lives. This is especially true for faculty respondents who completed the survey on behalf of their department. As such, it would be valuable to continue the research effort to determine which resources are and are not being utilized by members of the UW community.

That aside, the information gathered from our surveys allows us to move forward with the development of our Be a Good Dawg program. A key takeaway from our data is that students and faculty alike experience the most difficulty practicing sustainable purchasing habits. This finding reflects a common belief that adopting environmentally-conscious practices is expensive and thus impractical. For example, “organic,” “fair trade,” “ethically sourced,” and “vegan” products are typically more expensive than their alternatives, which, for many individuals, reinforces the notion that living sustainably is economically infeasible. What’s exciting about the Be a Good Dawg program, however, is that it may serve to mitigate such misconceptions about what leading a sustainable lifestyle actually
requires. In context, our results found that students only utilized the University surplus store about 7% of the time. The surplus store is an incredibly cheap way to practice sustainable purchasing, and the fact that most of our student respondents don’t take advantage of it possibly demonstrates a lack of information or a misconception about what “green purchasing” really means. It is possible that buzzwords and jargon have made environmentalism not only unapproachable, but intimidating. The Be a Good Dawg program aims to bridge these information gaps, and ultimately inform UW community members about the ways in which they can practice and maintain more sustainable lifestyle habits.

Main Point:

There is still a lot of work that needs to be done before the Be a Good Dawg program launches. But the work that we have done throughout the quarter has given a solid base in the direction which BAGD can go. With the preliminary mission statement and research we have conducted in hand, UW Sustainability knows what to focus on, and what to put less time into. Thanks to the research conducted this quarter, we know every community group of the University of Washington is on their way to being Good Dawgs.
Appendix A: Emails soliciting survey responses

Student email

To whom it may concern;

Hello, my name is _________ and I am a current student in ENVIR 480 Sustainability Studio at UW Seattle. My classmates and I are partnering with the UW Sustainability Office to start a brand new program on campus called Be A Good Dawg. The goal of this new program is to promote participation in sustainable practices at all levels of daily activity, for the primary sake of making the ethically right decision. The idea is to be aware of the environmental consequences of one’s actions and make the right choices every day, without putting one’s personal needs first. Anyone can Be A Good Dawg.

I am reaching out to you because our group is collecting data for this new program. We have developed a survey for UW students. The purpose of this survey is to both identify strong sustainability points (where you’re already Being A Good Dawg) and make note of potential areas of improvement. Would you be willing to reach out to students affiliated with __________ and ask them to participate on our behalf? The survey is available on catalyst and takes approximately 5 minutes to complete. The link is available here: ___________.

Thank you in advance for your participation. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please email me at ______________. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

________________

Faculty/departmental email:

Dear __________,

Hello, my name is _________ and I am a current student in ENVIR 480 Sustainability Studio at UW Seattle. My classmates and I are partnering with the UW Sustainability Office to start a brand-new
program on campus called Be A Good Dawg. The goal of this new program is to promote participation in sustainable practices at all levels of daily activity, for the primary sake of making the ethically right decision. The idea is to be aware of the environmental consequences of one’s actions and make the right choices every day, without putting one’s personal needs first. Anyone can Be A Good Dawg.

I am reaching out to you because our group is collecting data for this new program. We have developed a survey for you to fill out on behalf of your program. The purpose of this survey is to both identify strong sustainability points (where you’re already Being A Good Dawg) and make note of potential areas of improvement. The survey is available on catalyst and takes approximately 5 minutes to complete. The link is available here: (POST LINK HERE)

Thank you in advance for your participation. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please email me at _________________.

Sincerely,

____________________.
Report Conclusion

In our modern world, we have been socially conditioned into a lifestyle of constant consumerism on an environmentally damaging scale. A large contributor to this behavior is our ignorance. Fighting our ignorance of our consuming habits is the first hurdle we must tackle to reaching a more sustainable society.

Because we live in a society constantly going through temporary trends and fads, we become accustomed to only seeing the products, not the process. How many of us actually know where our latest purchase came from, how it was made, and the resources it took to produce it? These important facts are often hidden from us. Corporate transparency is one way we can address these concerns. While such means are providing new opportunities and improvements, different standards of transparency make this a difficult parameter to use.

Similar issues also reside in branding, where we may choose to buy a more “environmentally-friendly” labeled product but remain unaware of what that actually means or what legal standards are required for this type of label. By learning about our individual and collective purchasing choices, we can begin to understand and address the difficulties in resolving these interlinked environmental issues. After all, how can we determine how sustainable we are if we can’t determine our standards, the processes, and ethics our purchases were made on?

With a growing environmental awareness during our current time, progress is being made to find solutions. Different approaches, practices, and regulations are being implemented across a variety of environments, including the UW Seattle campus, the city of Seattle, and other parts of the world. While each have distinctions to reflect their unique socio-economic factors, their overlapping areas of progress and accountability mark the relationship between humans and the changing environment. Social change is not possible with the work of one individual, but that is where is must start. By challenging ourselves to live a more sustainable life through our purchasing choices, we are setting up a model for others to follow. This creates a ripple effect that eventually culminates into a more collective, larger and powerful force.

Throughout the class, we have learned that there is no single definition for social responsibility and social responsibility as a whole. However, we can collectively agree, as cliché as it sounds, that being socially responsible, whether that be on an individual, corporate, or government level, is really about making the world a better place. It’s not about pointing fingers – it’s about understanding that there are
irresponsible actions occurring throughout the world, and that there is a need to set a framework for being socially responsible in order for the whole of humanity to move toward a more sustainable future.