SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

SOU SUSTAINABILITY CENTER (Pre-Proposal)

President Cullinan,

We believe Southern Oregon University is uniquely positioned to showcase sustainability as a key campus element. Current campus resources including our on-campus recycling program, environmental studies program, sustainability leadership certificate, Net Impact Club, Ecology Center of the Siskiyous, and our integrated sustainability education across campus already set SOU apart as a destination for students interested in sustainability science and practice. The SOU Sustainability Center we propose mobilizes existing resources in new and innovative ways to showcase sustainability as a key feature of SOU.

The SOU Sustainability Council has formed and charged a SOU Sustainability Center Planning Team to formally explore the potential of developing an on-campus sustainability center. The Center would formalize SOU as a destination campus for students interested in environmental studies and sustainability and set SOU apart from campuses throughout the Northwest through collaborative student programming and curricula. Over the past six months, we have been meeting with Vice President Eldridge to discuss potential sites for the project. We have identified university-owned property south of Science Works as uniquely suited for the project. The property currently has irrigation access and level ground for a farm, several out buildings for program development, a home suitable for housing a sustainability demonstration house, parking for school busses for potential outreach with Science Works, and exposure to a major city corridor in Walker Avenue.

The SOU Sustainability Council proposes to utilize green tag fees for the development of this project. Initial financial forecasts indicate that the first phase of development could be completed with funding exclusively derived from Green Tag fees. Phase I of the build would include the development of a campus farm and outdoor classroom. The projected $70,000 worth of organic produce would be distributed using a social business model as recently presented at the OUS Social Business Challenge. Seventy percent of the produce would be distributed at no cost through a weekly campus farm stand. Joint research between ACCESS and SOU faculty indicate food insecurity to be an ongoing problem for SOU students and families. Remaining produce would be sold through a faculty-based community supported agriculture (CSA) program providing revenue for ongoing oversight and maintenance of the farm. Phase II would include renovation of the existing home on the property as an appropriate technology center. Green tag funding would be used along with grant and corporate sponsorships to fit the building for housing and programming to showcase the center. The building would serve as housing for student interns, as a gathering place for sustainability programs, as a community building platform, and as a public outreach facility.

The SOU Sustainability Center Planning Team seeks conceptual approval to continue planning and development of the center. Upon conceptual approval, an Advisory Committee will be formed, comprised of key students, faculty, staff, and administration to provide oversight and input into the final project proposal and ongoing integration into SOU curriculum. We intend to present a final proposal for the project in Spring of 2013 with anticipated initial work on the site beginning in Fall of 2013. Our full proposal will include the collaborative work of facilities management, undergraduate capstone research into existing centers across the country, business plan development through our School of Business, and faculty partnership from Environmental Studies and Social Science Policy and Culture.

We sincerely look forward to the opportunity to plan for and develop what we believe will be an exceptional resource for SOU, for our community, and for students across the country in search of a campus with clear dedication to sustainability.

Thank you for your consideration,

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