UC SANTA BARBARA

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Shelly Leachman

A Decade of Green Grants

Less than the cost of a burrito.

When a group of UC Santa Barbara students first conceived the idea for a student-funded green grants program, they agreed the quarterly fee should be less expensive than a lunch run to Freebirds.

The price of burritos has gone up since then, but the fee hasn't: Ten years on, it's still $3.47 per quarter per student that fills the annual coffers for The Green Initiative Fund (TGIF) at UCSB.

Since it first went live a decade ago, TGIF has awarded more than $1 million in grant money for more than 100 student-funded sustainability efforts on campus. Applications are now being accepted for the 2015-16 granting cycle.

"Students originally proposed a green fund; students voted it in; the committee that chooses the projects that get funding is a majority students; and students reaffirmed the lock-in fee two years ago when they again voted for it overwhelmingly," said Jewel Snavely, UCSB campus sustainability coordinator and TGIF grants manager. "This is something that the students value, which is one of the greatest things about TGIF."

Over the years, TGIF has launched dozens of notable green advances and helped the campus leverage additional support to extend projects with a larger scope.

Take the hydration stations that now dot the campus. Since the 2011-12 granting year, TGIF has funded 24 such stations, enabling students, staff, faculty and visitors alike to fill reusable bottles with filtered water at no cost. A station at the Recreation Center has hit 150,000 refills; one situated on the library's first floor is nearing 100,000. With 42 total stations now on campus — additional units were funded by UCSB Housing & Residential Services and the Associated Students Coastal Fund — the project is reducing demand for single-use plastic water bottles and yielding energy savings by eliminating water fountain chillers.

The Campus Sustainability Champion program, which annually funds a faculty project that advances sustainability, started as a TGIF proposal. And it, too, has since been adopted as a blueprint for other campuses and the entire UC system, which now run similar initiatives.

A few additional highlights from TGIF's first 10 years:

• A lithium-powered lawn mower for the UCSB grounds crew

• Big Bellies composting bins

• Photovoltaic arrays at three of UCSB's Natural Reserves

• Campus Water Action Plan

• Recycling bins in every campus office

• LED lighting for the Arts Building, campus greenhouse, UCen 2 and Career Services Workshop Room

• Recycled water in Bren Hall restrooms

• Electric vehicle charging stations and ZipCar locations

• Energy retrofit for Student Health Building

And coming soon: a solar charging table that will be free for students to juice up their laptops, phones and other digital devices.

"It's really grown a lot over the years and the variety of ideas that come through is so great," said Mo Lovegreen, director of campus sustainability. "Irrigation systems, water lines, a weather station on campus, recycling and composting, solar projects,

internships, scholarships for students to attend the California Higher Education Sustainability Conference … I don’t think there is any area of campus that hasn’t been touched by TGIF. It’s been an amazing success.”

With up to $170,000 each year to award, TGIF selects winning projects by a voting committee composed of five students, one faculty member and one staff person. There is also a nonvoting advisory panel that provides counsel as needed.

The committee receives, on average, 25 applications per cycle and funds some 14 projects each year, according to Snavely. Though projects are not exclusively made up of student efforts, project selection is “definitely weighted toward student proposals,” she said.

“Looking at the bigger picture, sustainability is something that UCSB students push, and a lot of these projects wouldn’t have been funded otherwise,” Snavely added. “The students’ role in and commitment to sustainability on this campus really shines through TGIF.”

Applications for the new TGIF funding cycle will be accepted online through 5 p.m. Feb. 5, 2016.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.