GES + ISEN Research Report: Forwarding GES's Sustainability

ISEN's generous support of the Global Engagement Summit (GES) this year allowed us to enhance not only our education and programming on sustainability, energy, and the environment, but our own sustainability as an organization as well. At this year's Summit, we were able to bring in Weslynne Ashton, Assistant Professor of Environmental Management and Sustainability at the Illinois Institute of Technology's Stuart School of Business, to lead a workshop entitled "Introduction to Environmental Sustainability," in which delegates critically evaluated how they could reasonably employ green strategies in their projects and what their stake is in ensuring the sustainability of their project. This workshop highlighted the importance of incorporating green technology into any project, focusing on specific methods that are vital to sustainable development.

We also featured G. Gordon Davis, lecturer and consultant in international environmental policy, at the Summit this year, as the facilitator of our "Making Yourself Obsolete" workshop. New to the Summit curriculum this year, this workshop brought delegates through an analysis of their own impact and the life cycle of their projects, allowing them to develop individual strategies for making their project sustainable beyond when delegates leave the field. Funding from ISEN made these two workshops possible, allowing us to integrate a critical segment of our curriculum - environmental impact and sustainability - into the Summit. ISEN's generous support allowed us to facilitate the transportation and living arrangements for Ashton, as well as facilitated the
background research necessary to create these two high caliber workshops - fully
designed by our GES undergraduate staff - for our delegates, making up almost 10% of
our workshops this year.

ISEN's support also allowed us to partner with multiple student groups and
continue to bridge cross-campus divides throughout the year. We co-sponsored a
screening of "The Apple Pushers" on May 2nd, with NU Sustainable Food Talks and the
Northwestern Community Development Corps (NCDC), two of ISEN's other
undergraduate student group affiliates. We also co-led discussion during Fall Quarter
with NCDC on local vs. global sustainability, an incredibly successful event that allowed
us to bridge two distinct communities on campus. Through ISEN's network, we were able
to partner with organizations that we have not often partnered with in the past (this was
GES's first event with NU Sustainable Food Talks), ones with very similar goals and
visions as GES, which facilitated the achievement of our goal of melding communities
and facilitating critical dialogue campus-wide.

To forward our own sustainability as an organization, we initiated discussions
with Engineers for a Sustainable World to develop a strategy for reducing GES's carbon
footprint. Through ESW's consultation, we will be able to reduce our footprint created by
transportation (mostly by air) of our delegates and facilitators, by using locally-grown
food and reusing all that we can, as well as making all of our products and materials used
at the Summit as environmentally friendly as possible. This is a conversation that will
continue next year, resulting in a comprehensive strategy as to how to make GES as
environmentally responsible and sustainable as possible, and would not be possible
without ISEN's support. Part of the funding from ISEN will go into reducing our carbon footprint and using more environmentally sustainable products.