

Project Certified to Sustain - Progress Report

Email

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Project Manager Name

Esteban Hinojos

Requested Metrics

of people in the core project team involved in planning and execution of the project (breakout by students/staff/faculty).

Students : 2 students, co-project managers

Staff: 1

Faculty: 2, advisors

of estimated cumulative hours spent on this project (break out by students/staff/faculty).

Students : 5 hrs per week

Faculty: 1 hr per week

of partnerships or collaborations developed between the project team and other UArizona administrative units, student groups, community groups, or other groups/organizations (please also list who they are)

GBI: Kate Callahan (guest speaker and donor)

Envision: Leslie Brunell (Education Director), Kevin Thorton (guest speaker)

U of A Engineering: Heather Moore (Academic Advisor)

CAPLA: Sandra Bernal (Professor, presentations)

LEED: Emmery Ledin (Project Manager), Anitra Pickett (Associate Director), Mark Ginsburg (USGBC Senior Fellow)

Project-specific:

of students who showed interested to the program by filling out a form

51

of students who applied to the program

67

of students accepted to the program

46

Sub-Categories

Men: 24 - Women: 22 - Engineering Majors: 23 - Non-Engineering Majors: 23
Class Standing: Freshmen: 8 - Sophomore: 6 - Junior: 17 - Senior: 8 - Graduate 7

Names of certificates:

LEED

Envision Sustainability Professional

Green Globes Emerging Professionals

of certifications assigned/accepted out to each (three different types)

LEED: 16

ENV SP: 14

Green Globes: 11

of certifications if assigned to non-accepted students

LEED:14

ENV SP: 6

Green Globes: 3

of students who completed the certificate (broken into the three different types)

5 thus far

of cumulative hours of training provided

35 hrs thus far

of attendees/ participants at the informational sessions

CAPLA Meeting: 30

First informational session: 46

Onboarding meeting: 26

of presentations or workshops held: 3

of guest speakers involved in events

Guest speakers: 2

of individuals emailed for marketing purposes to be distributed to wider audiences

23

of marketing channels used to promote events

3 Channels

Instagram

Email

Flyers

Project Accomplishments

For the Winter 2024 semester, 51 students expressed interest in environmental sustainability certifications by filling out a form sent via cold email. After the Campus Sustainability Fund approved our proposal, we expanded outreach through a programmed learning activity by Professor Sandra Bernal, reaching 30 CAPLA students. Marketing included a one-slide introduction and a QR code for applications. Key connections were established with USGBC Senior Fellow Mark Ginsburg, linking us to LEED professionals Emmerly Ledin (Project Manager) and Anitra Pickett (Associate Director). This led to the launch of a winter cohort of seven students—five from the Sustainable Solutions team and two project managers—all pursuing at least one certification over winter break and into the Spring Semester. By the end of January, five students had successfully earned certifications. At the start of the Spring 2025 semester, marketing efforts intensified. We contacted 23 key figures—including organization leads, department heads, and University of Arizona affiliates—via email with a pre-written message promoting the program. A short-form video explaining the initiative was also posted on @azengineering and @uarizonasustainability Instagram pages, amassing 7,600 views and 175 likes. This campaign culminated in an informational session attended by 46 individuals, featuring guest speakers GBI Kate Callahan and Kevin Thorton. One week after the session, applications closed with 67 submissions. To ensure fairness, the project managers developed a standardized grading system based on three application questions. Applications were reviewed and scored, leading to the selection of 46 students. These selected participants have since undergone onboarding and are actively working toward their certifications.

Next Steps

As we move forward, the focus will be on ensuring that students participating in the Certified to Sustain initiative are fully prepared to pass their certification exams by April 14th. To support this goal, we will begin by organizing structured study sessions where students can come together to review key concepts, ask questions, and collaborate with peers. These sessions will provide guided instruction, practice questions, and test-taking strategies tailored to each certification. The goal is to create a supportive learning environment that keeps students engaged and accountable throughout the process.

In addition to study sessions, we will implement a progress tracking system to assess students' readiness for their exams. This will involve regular progress reports where students check in on their study efforts, share challenges they may be facing, and receive feedback on areas needing improvement. These reports will allow us to adjust support as needed, ensuring that every participant has the resources and guidance required to succeed.

Following the certification exams, we will conduct a debrief session to reflect on the program's outcomes and discuss the next steps. This session will provide an opportunity for participants to share their experiences, discuss what worked well, and identify areas for improvement. More importantly, we will use this time to strategize ways to make a direct impact on campus through sustainability initiatives. With a group of newly certified students, we can explore opportunities to apply sustainability principles within the university, engage with faculty on related projects, and possibly advocate for integrating sustainability certifications into engineering coursework. Additionally, we will consider expanding the program by offering future certification opportunities and reaching more students interested in sustainability.

Challenges Faced

Throughout the development of the Certified to Sustain initiative, we have encountered several challenges that require adaptability and problem-solving. One of the biggest obstacles is student engagement and participation. While there is strong interest in sustainability certifications, maintaining consistent involvement is difficult due to students' demanding schedules and competing academic priorities. Specifically, 3 students did not sign up for the program after being accepted, and one student dropped out of the program due to external conflicts. To address this, we are implementing structured study sessions with clear scheduling and accountability measures to keep participants on track. Additionally, we are increasing outreach efforts to emphasize the benefits of these certifications for career development, by inviting industry partners to help students see their long-term value.

We are also managing logistical challenges in organizing study resources and exam preparation materials. Since each certification has different requirements, structuring a unified study plan has been difficult. To address this, we have gathered official study materials, exam prep guides, and practice questions, ensuring that students have access to reliable resources. We are also exploring opportunities to bring in guest speakers or mentors who have already earned these certifications to provide firsthand insights and guidance.

Moving forward, we are working to improve early engagement and structured support by encouraging students to start their preparation earlier in the semester. Additionally, we are seeking more faculty involvement to strengthen institutional support and integration with coursework. Despite these challenges, we have made significant progress in building a strong foundation for Certified to Sustain and continue refining the program to maximize its impact.

Project Support

CSF could help this program by writing a short article to submit to Arizona Engineer and for the CAEM website to spread word about the work being done in the program.

CSF could help support his project, most notably speaking to the certified students on applicability and encouragement to apply to more CSF grants at the debrief session.

Photo Link

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