Work with UA Departments and Staff

When working on a project, you will need to think about your project from the perspective of University faculty and staff. Doing so will help you see potential barriers and plan a project that will be able to overcome those barriers while gaining crucial University support.

You should talk to administrators only when you have the project fully planned, because administrators have the least amount of time to spend on any given thing, but also the most power to give you permission to do your project.

When you are planning your project, think of yourself in the faculty, staff and/or administrator’s position and think about what they may have to consider when working with you:

- **Time Limitations** - Helping students with sustainability projects may not be in their job descriptions; their time is limited and valuable—respect that.

- **Time Perspective** - Faculty and staff have the long-term success of the University in mind. Meanwhile, students tend to focus on the short term, wanting their projects to be completed before they graduate. Learning how to balance your short-term needs with the long-term needs of the University is important.

- **Politics** - Universities are political organizations. Resources and efforts can only be afforded to so many projects at one time and they are more likely to be awarded to projects that have a strong demand. To find out if your project is politically feasible, talk to faculty and staff who may be able to help guide you through the process. You will also want to create a demand for the project by showing the benefits to the University and getting students involved as much as possible.
• **Bureaucracy and Processes** - Large organizations need systems that allow them to monitor money flow, work progress, and priorities. Working within these hierarchies and systems that are already established will make your project much easier for faculty and staff—and you. To learn about the UA’s processes, ask university staff. Staff or student workers at the Office of Sustainability and the Associated Students of the University of Arizona (ASUA) are a great place to start.

• **Priorities** - Some faculty, staff and/or administrators manage large departments with goals that only tangentially relate to sustainability; their priorities or goals are not necessarily to be environmentally aware. They may often want to help the University become more sustainable, but sustainability is not their focus. When you propose a project, keep their priorities in mind. For example, when pitching an athletics-recycling program to UA Athletics, you may want to talk about how other schools are going green through athletics and how your program would keep UA competitive with other universities.

• **Staff Management** - Many of the departments you will work with are big, with many different staff organizations. Be aware that these people manage many different projects and many different types of personnel.

Meeting with Faculty and Staff

Before going into any meeting with faculty or staff, be sure you have a [Project Plan](#). Know what impact the project will have on the people in the meeting and how you think the project can be implemented; make your project as easy and cost-efficient as possible for them. You should be doing most, if not all, of the work for the project. Faculty and staff should only be providing feedback and minimal assistance to make sure you can gain access to what you need to in order to be successful. See [Meet with Decision Makers](#) for more tips about how to run your meeting.

Do not present a project as a final product that cannot be changed. Contributors may have reasons to alter a project or its timeframe. Being flexible with your project will make it more likely to be successful in the long run. Take feedback, make modifications when needed, and do not be abrasive.

Think of all of the questions an administrator might ask and come up with solutions to address those questions. Some examples are as follows:

- **Budgeting** - Will you apply for grants? Will you have a department sponsor the project? Will you need to fundraise? For more information on how to develop a budget click [here](#).
• **Sustainability of the Project** - When you graduate how will the project be maintained/sustained?

• **Stakeholder Input** - Do you have everyone that needs to be part of the conversation at the table? For example, if you want to create a garden, you will need: access to land, approval to use that land, Facility Management’s help (for irrigation installation, digging the garden beds, etc...), Risk Management’s confirmation that the project does not leave the University liable, and, potentially, a neighborhood association’s involvement so your project is accepted by the community surrounding it. Here is a list of departments you may want to contact.

• **Contracting** - The University has contracts with private entities, for amenities such as waste removal, beverage services, energy providers, office supplies, etc. If you want to change the way things are purchased or processed, you would need to research the contracts that are already in place.

• **Building Trust** - How will you make sure the project will be done? Traditionally, students come in very excited to do projects, but after a few months or a year their excitement dwindles because of school, jobs, social lives or other responsibilities. This leaves faculty and staff stuck with an unfinished project. How will you make sure your project is successful?

• **Background Research** - How do you know the project will work? What will the impacts be? Have other schools done it? What materials and technical knowledge do you need to be successful? Make sure you have a general idea of how your project will work so that it has the impacts you want. Sometimes sustainability projects can be technical; it is important to find experts that can help you, as well as learn how others have done similar projects. See Background Research for more information.

By arriving for your meeting on time, being professional, and being prepared to answer questions, you will make a positive impact on faculty and staff, and have a greater likelihood of success.