

Appendix VII: Proposed Behavioral Science Graduate Student Position Draft

Behavioral Science Graduate Assistance Position

Purpose

Over the past few years, organizations have recognized that effective programs to change individual and community decisions about electricity use; material purchasing, use and disposal; transportation and other topics under the “operations” umbrella incorporate social and behavioral science approaches. Although there is a substantial body of knowledge in this scholarship area, the insights from this literature are difficult for programmatic managers in OPP, Food Service, Housing and Transportation Departments to access and deploy due to limited exposure and time restrictions. This shortchanges the potential impacts of their efforts and programmatic funds.

Especially as the University launches the WSTF recommendations, it is proposed that the Sustainability Institute hire a behavioral science graduate student for three years to provide advice to Finance and Business units on ways for behavior change tools to be integrated into their programs, as well as designing pilots that classes could conduct to test program improvements. It is hoped that by the end of the three-year term, the program managers in many F&B departments will have gained knowledge and skills and be able to apply these concepts to their program independently.

Examples for the year 1 projects:

- Knowing the convenience is the greatest predictor of recycling, this position will provide advice to OPP in selecting new bins and designing new signage for recycling stations, balancing ease of access with regulatory, labor and economic considerations.
- Improving the Green to Go and other reuse programs have the potential of driving down Penn State’s solid waste. This position will work with UP and Commonwealth campus classes to design pilots to improve participation in the program using Community Based Social Marketing approaches.

Subsequent year projects:

- Science buildings use four times the energy resource of other academic and administrative facilities on a University campus. Harvard and other tier 1 research institutions have successfully mounted “Shut the Sash” campaigns in labs to reduce energy use. Harvard reported saving between \$200,000 and \$250,000 annually from this campaign. This position could assist OPP and the Environmental Health & Safety Department in designing such a campaign for Penn State’s UP campus.
- A sustainable purchasing policy could allow Penn State to use its buying power to increase the sustainability of its suppliers. However, Penn State has a distributed

purchasing system in place. This position could educate and market the benefits of the sustainable purchasing policy to increase its adoption.

Position Summary

Important duties:

- Position would report to the Sustainability Institute's Director of Operations and Partnerships and work in cooperation with the Sustainable Operations Council, OPP and F&B's Change Management office.
- The position would offer 20 hours per week of assistance to Finance and Business units, learning their operational challenges and advising them on how behavioral science tools could increase participation and impact of their programs.
- It is expected that this person will work closely with the Sustainable Communities Collaborative to help create Living Lab projects that will not only benefit operations units with improved programs, but simultaneously engage students in applied learning.
- This position will offer a one-hour seminar each semester for F&B staff on behavioral science tools and applications using examples from Penn State.
- In the first year, this graduate student will help implement the WSTF recommendations. For example, the graduate student could help vendors implement reusable cup programs with the appropriate behavior change tools so they are more successful as well as educate on appropriate compostable material, depending on the recommendations that are implemented from the WSTF report.

The position will be funded with \$75,000 per year for three years. Note that this funding would include tuition expenses for a graduate student. Alternatively, this could be a post-doc position in which tuition would not be needed and the funds could be used to hire a recent graduate student with work in this area at the appropriate post-doc salary.