

state that faculty involvement and care about the garden does greatly influence student involvement. The group was optimistic towards the idea of workshops on composting and basic gardening available for students, faculty, staff, and even community members who would be interested. The workshop would need to have a “no skills necessary” requirement. In regards to the sustainability of the garden, one participant recommended that official titles and positions would help with involvement, and give students an incentive to use their experience professionally.

### *Potential Curriculum*

All student interviewees agreed that the proposed garden and service based learning course would be cohesive within IWU's curriculum and IWU's mission. Different students mentioned that it would be a great way to learn past the books and participate in active learning, and it would be cohesive with the idea of a well-rounded liberal arts student. A few of the student interviewees said that the garden needed more faculty and staff support, and they hope that their professors would mention opportunities for involvement more in their classes. The interviews showed a wide range of expectations in regards the idea of a garden and service based learning course where the Peace Garden would be used as an educational tool for community service and engagement. Overall, students thought the course would be a good idea, and they would enroll in the course dependent on its consistency with their schedules, the department it was managed by, and the educational requirements it would offer. Students suggested that it could be a May Term course or it should provide a general education requirement. Additionally, students agreed that a civic engagement aspect was necessary and should be required for this type of course.

During the focus group, one student stated, “The garden needs to be a part of a class or incorporated into a requirement for volunteering.” When asked about the idea of a garden and service-based learning course the group generally agreed that incorporating more community service and engagement into curriculum would be beneficial for IWU. One student did make a point that burnout would easily occur by having class at the garden more than once a week, and there might not be enough for an entire semester of credit just focusing on the garden. He recommended a community involved and sustainability course that could possibly incorporate a lab at the Peace Garden. One participant did not believe that her previous Environmental Studies courses (she did not state which course) provided her the sustainability education and skills she thinks she would benefit from. In response, she proposed a course idea that was a basic “Sustainability 101” and would teach students about composting, recycling, and other sustainable behaviors. The entire focus group agreed that they would enroll in this type of course. Besides this possible course, members of the group agreed that the Peace Garden needs to incorporate students from business, marketing, art, education, and many more majors. Overall, the participants agreed that the Peace Garden needs to be incorporated into the IWU curriculum through a new course or a general volunteering requirement.

### Findings: Investigations of IWU Peer and Aspirant Institutions

Out of IWU's 12 Peer and Aspirant Institutions, all of these institutions had either an on-campus or off-campus student run garden or farm. In addition to student leadership, all of these institutions' gardens were managed by faculty members or supervised under a specific administrative campus office or coordinator. Based on this, it can be seen that having an on-campus gardens makes the IWU Peace Garden similar in regards to levels of success and there is no significant difference between management models. The only difference found between management systems was that the gardens that were managed under an office or

coordinator were more successful in regards to student involvement. Gardens with this type of management had more positions available for students and were more established within the institution's curriculum. Examples of these institutions are DePauw University, Kenyon College, Knox College, and Lawrence University. DePauw University has a campus farm that is staffed by one administrative staff member and several DePauw students, Sustainable Agriculture Interns, through an Office of Sustainability and it serves over 300 student volunteers a year (DePauw University, 2015). Kenyon College has a student operated 10-acre farm, where students live in a house on the property and manage the care of the animals, as well as the growing and harvesting of field crops (Kenyon College, 2015). Sustainability is incorporated into the curriculum through two course examples. Kenyon's Sustainable Agriculture course has students work 5 hours on a local farm and meet with the instructor on a weekly basis to discuss readings and their farm experience. Additionally, Kenyon's Community course allows students to conduct field research on several aspects of the local region and rural life to cultivate public projects that enhance community sustainability (Kenyon College, 2015). Knox College's campus farm is managed through an Office of Sustainability. Sustainability, food production, and civic engagement are incorporated into the curriculum in a variety of courses offered at Knox College. One examples of this curriculum is the course, Urban Agriculture, which looks at the scientific and experiential analysis of growing fruits and vegetables in an urban environment. Another example is Food Justice, which explores issues of access, equity, and justice in the American food system (Knox College, 2015). Lastly, Lawrence University holds workshops for the local community that teaches about composting and greenhouses. Sustainable Lawrence University's Gardens (SLUG) also has a strong business connection with the school's food service provider, Bon Appetit (Lawrence University, 2015). Overall, the gardens and farms with more curricular inclusion are those that are highly incorporated into the campus community through student, faculty, staff, and administrative association.

## Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to answer the two main research questions. Each of these questions will be evaluated in regards to the findings.

### **What factors influence student, faculty, and staff involvement with the IWU Peace Garden?**

Factors that influence student, faculty, and staff involvement at the IWU Peace Garden were considered through findings from a literature review, interviews with key informants, interviews with student, a focus group, and an investigation of peer and aspirant institutions. A large factor found that influences involvement at the Peace Garden comes from communication and outreach on behalf of the Peace Garden's management. The Peace Garden does have a positive connection with the campus and local community, and there are many opportunities for students to become involved, especially volunteer days. Additionally, the location of the garden in relationship to its distance from campus, and a person's knowledge of the location are factors that influence their involvement. Furthermore, a lack of knowledge in regards to a designated contact within the Peace Garden's management, a person's major or academic department, and general perceptions and interests about the Peace Garden have been major influences on involvement as well. Faculty relationship to the garden, as well as, the current relationship with the Environmental Studies Program plays a role, since both of them play a rare important in gaining student involvement from an academic perspective. Moreover, generally student, faculty, and staff do have time constraints and an incentives/rewards program for volunteers and RSO members would play a large role in the involvement available to the campus

community. Also, having a venue, through the RSO, to meet and discuss Peace Garden issues and determine projects for the future, has increased student involvement within the Fall 2014 to Spring 2015.

**What strategies can be used to improve student involvement with the Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU) Peace Garden?**

Recommendations for strategies that can be used to improve student involvement at the IWU Peace Garden can be separated into short-term and long-term plans. The short term plan recommends that the Peace Garden utilizes its outreach and seek out partnerships with established RSOs, Greek life, service fraternities, etc. on IWU's campus. The focus group recommended holding more activities and events at the garden location. Hence it is suggested that the garden hosts workshops and events that are open to IWU students, faculty, staff, and even Bloomington-Normal community members with an interest in the specific topics of the events offered. Additionally, the Peace Garden needs to capitalize on its successes and work to develop a long-term strategic plan for the Peace Garden's future. Developing this long-term strategic plan would allow the Peace Garden to define its successes and create a definition of a successful garden. The overall goal would be the creation of a distinguished model that can be used by other universities, and allow the Peace Garden to develop its practices so that it can become a model of a successful garden. This plan could also create a succession plan for the Peace Garden's administration. Additionally, this plan would need to determine goals for the garden's future, and create a plan for the long-term sustainability of the garden's management.

The long-term strategies the Peace Garden can undertake to improve student involvement are divided into three main approaches. They are: departmental requirements or encouragement, incentives and rewards system, and garden-based coursework. The first strategy that can be used to improve student involvement at the IWU Peace Garden is having the IWU Environmental Studies Program require or more strongly encourage students in the major to volunteer at the garden within their four years at IWU. Additionally, basic level courses (100-level) within the Environmental Studies curriculum should encourage volunteering or take students to visit the garden. Second, IWU Peace Garden management can create a rewards and incentives program for volunteering and being a member of the RSO. This would help the garden gain more continued support, and even give personal reinforcement for people to expand their interests beyond their own field. This would create a more cohesive community and identity for the garden within the IWU community. Also, this system could reward and give titles for Peace Garden volunteers, people volunteering, and RSO members. Additionally, a Volunteer of the Year or Season award would be beneficial to have students compete and gain hours and recognition.

Through the research findings, there was faculty and student support for a service and garden based course or a course that encompasses the teaching of sustainable practices. Attitudes towards a service and garden based course were ultimately positive, with most students, faculty, and staff believing that it would contribute to a person's liberal arts education. This type of course would need to require a community project and a specific amount of service/volunteer hours, and most interviewees agreed that it would be beneficial as a May Term course. Additionally, the idea of a "Sustainability 101" course could count as a general education course towards IWU's requirements. Either of these courses would have to have a niche within an established department, and it would especially be cohesive with the Environmental Studies Program or ARC's coursework. The course would be useful and relevant to students for both personal and professional aspects of their learning. A course like this would be cohesive with IWU's curriculum and mission, and it is one that could use examples from

IWU's peer and aspirant institutions for guidance. Barriers to this course are faculty management, find a faculty member to support and teach the course, and academic resources from the administration.

## **Conclusions**

On-campus gardens are a growing trend throughout colleges and universities worldwide. They seek to answer the crisis that is food security and they aim to connect people to the community, food, and the environment while being a tool for educational learning. The literature review for this research study found that on-campus gardens can be cohesive within a curriculum at the level of higher education. Campus gardens need a strong support system in order to be sustained over long periods of time, and this system can be found upon its integration into higher education. In order for the Illinois Wesleyan University Peace Garden to maintain its sustainability, there is a need for the garden to maintain and gain more student involvement and faculty and staff support within IWU's curriculum.

The research results showed that the IWU Peace Garden is a key component to IWU campus sustainability and embodies the mission of IWU. General attitudes towards the Peace Garden were supportive. Many different factors influence student, faculty, and staff involvement at the IWU Peace Garden. A few recommendations have been offered for strategies that can be implemented to gain student involvement at the IWU Peace Garden. These recommendations will improve the Peace Garden's presence both socially and academically, while allowing it to become a venue for environmental education. Overall, the IWU Peace Garden needs to capitalize on its successes and create a strategic long-term plan that will aid in ensuring student involvement and a sustainable management system for the future.

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## **Appendices:**

**Appendix A: Informed Consent Form**

**Appendix B: Research Timeline**

**Appendix C: Key Informant Interview Question Guides**

**Appendix D: Student Interview Question Guide**

**Appendix E: Focus Group Question Guide**

**Appendix F: Literature Review References**

## Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Illinois Wesleyan University  
Environmental Studies 480: Senior Seminar--Creating a Sustainable Society  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to be a participant in a research study about environmental issues in our community. The study is being conducted by fourth-year college students at Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU), who are majoring in Environmental Studies and enrolled in the Environmental Studies 480 senior seminar. Please read this document and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be in the study.

The purpose of this study is to provide students an opportunity to engage in real-life work aimed at advancing environmental and social improvement in our community. The potential benefit associated with your participation in this research is to have an opportunity to provide your input regarding environmental issues of relevance to our community and to work with a student who is sincerely interested in working to improve the community of which you are a member. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this research, other than that you are giving of your time.

The student with whom you work will keep all notes taken during interviews and focus groups with you confidential. They will be used in preparation for the student's research paper, which the student will submit to the course instructor for evaluation at the end of the semester and to the community organization that has served as a partner in the student's research. The student will turn in all field notes with the final paper, and the instructor will destroy them within approximately one year.

With your permission (via your signature below), the student may refer to you by name in her/his final research paper and presentation. Without name consent, the information you provide will be referenced anonymously.

Your decision whether or not to participate in this research will not affect your current or future relations with Illinois Wesleyan University or any of its representatives. If you decide to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting those relationships.

If you have any questions about the research or your rights as a participant in the study, you may contact Dr. Laurine Brown the faculty for the course in which the student researcher is enrolled, in her office at IWU at 309- 556-1067 or lbrown@iwu.edu. You may also contact the Chair of the IWU Institutional Review Board, Dr. Leah Nillas, with any questions about your rights as a participant in this research at his office at IWU at 309-556-3437 or lnillas@iwu.edu.

Statement of Consent: You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records, if requested.

*The procedures of this study have been explained to me and my questions have been addressed. The information that I provide is confidential and will be used for research purposes only. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw anytime without penalty. I also confirm that I am 18 years or older. If I have any concerns about my experience in this study (e.g., that I was treated unfairly or felt unnecessarily threatened), I may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board or Director of the sponsoring Program of this research regarding my concerns.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date  
\_\_\_\_\_ Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date

OPTIONAL CONSENT FOR NAME: I hereby allow my NAME to be used in the student researcher's field notes and the final research paper and presentation described above.

\_\_\_\_\_ Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date

If AUDIO RECORDINGS ARE USED: I hereby allow the student researcher to obtain audio recordings of our interview in order to accurately capture the details. I understand this recording will only be used for the purposes of preparing the students final research paper, and will be destroyed at the completion of the research. No recording will be made in any group setting without the consent of all group members.

\_\_\_\_\_ Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date

If PHOTOGRAPHY IS USED: I hereby allow the student researcher to take photographs of me and/or my work projects or facilities for use in their research project, including possible inclusion in their final research report or community briefing presentation.

\_\_\_\_\_ Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date

If VIDEO RECORDING IS USED: I hereby allow the student researcher to take video recordings of me and/or my work projects or facilities (e.g. garden, wind farm, golf course) for use in their research project, including for use in their final research report or community briefing presentation.

\_\_\_\_\_ Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date