

# Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

## Real-World Application With Business Sustainability Plan

### Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

Engaging students in real-world scenarios allows students to apply concepts they learn in the classroom while connecting with community partners. In this course, students work together to develop a sustainability plan that may help business owners improve efficiency for their building. The instructor spends approximately two-thirds of the semester covering various sustainability concepts then works with the class to brainstorm and discuss ideas. After exploring potential businesses with the class, the instructor contacts a local business owner to coordinate a partnership. Once the instructor establishes a partnership, students move through a multi-step process requiring both individual and group work to create the comprehensive sustainability plan.

The first phase of the project involves research. Because of the small class size, the entire class works together as a team to gather research on the building they have chosen. Research may include any background information on the building that would help students determine appropriate strategies. Each student then selects a specific area of focus such as water management, energy, or equipment. Part of the research includes determining what measures, if any, have already been implemented. To aid in developing research, the instructor schedules a site visit during class time and coordinates transportation to ensure that students can attend. Students may coordinate follow-up visits individually if they need to gather more information for their specific focus area. As part of the research process, the instructor coordinates with the business owner to get existing cost information. Students use this cost information as a starting point to determine potential savings. To keep track of this information, the instructor creates a shared spreadsheet where students take turns entering the information.

After the research is gathered, students create individual reports about their specific focus areas. The report must include an analysis of environmental load, existing expenses, implementation cost, and potential savings. The instructor reviews each report and grades for accuracy of the calculations and savings estimates. Finally, the class works together to combine all of the information into a single, comprehensive report. The instructor presents the final sustainability plan to the business owner and students must answer questions about their specific focus area.