

WORKING TOWARD a SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY | LIVE GREEN!



Elizabeth Smith
Director of Sustainability
ISU Student Government

What is your year and area(s) of study?

I am a junior studying Environmental Science with a minor in Sustainability!

What are some of your main responsibilities as Student Government Director of Sustainability?

My main responsibilities in this role are facilitating Sustainability Committee meetings and empowering the members of the committee to take on and execute projects that bring about meaningful, tangible change on campus. I am also responsible for overseeing the Green Initiatives Fund, which provides financial support to students and student organizations looking to get a project off the ground. Finally, I strive to use this role as a way to connect students with campus resources- whether that be a faculty or staff member that can answer their sustainability question, connecting them to a student organization that fits their interests, or whatever else I can do to support sustainability at Iowa State.

Why were you interested in this position?

I was an at-large member of this committee last year, and I had a blast with it. I wanted to take on a greater role with this committee because there are so many additional ways to learn more and get involved that come with the additional responsibility. This role is also similar to what I want to do professionally, so it's great practice!

What kind of an impact do you hope to make on campus with this position?

I hope to continue the progress that I saw while serving on the committee last year. We accomplished a lot, and I already have some great ideas in mind for this coming academic year! I also want to make and keep it a priority to take diversity, equity, and inclusion into consideration when planning new projects. We decided to incorporate a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) chair into our committee, which I think is very important given the connection between DE&I and sustainability. I also want to increase campus knowledge of our committee and the work that we do through new/transfer student outreach, partnerships with other organizations, and other avenues as well.

What do you wish students knew about sustainability?

I wish students knew that sustainability doesn't have to include a complete overhaul of your life and possessions. Yes, that can be part of it, but that's not a realistic expectation to have. Sustainability is a process- I know that I certainly am learning as I go. Sustainability is complicated, but breaking it down into smaller steps, utilizing resources (such as the Live Green! blog or newsletter), and networking with a group like the Sustainability Committee or another sustainability student organization on campus can be fantastic initial steps. Those are also great ways to make the transition fun and less daunting. Any little bit helps!

What resources (especially at the Student Government-level) are available to students looking to be more sustainable in their everyday lives?

The Green Initiatives Fund is available to students looking to kick-start a sustainability-centered project but lack the funds to do so. The application process is easy and there is a relatively quick turnaround regarding the final funding decision. Any student is welcome to attend a Student Government meeting, and I've found that this is a great way to learn about different organizations and things happening around campus. Students are also able to voice their opinions at the beginning of each meeting. The last resource I'll recommend is the Live Green! social media. Although not directly connected to Student Government, the blog and newsletter are two particularly useful resources. They are also on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Anything else you'd like me to know?

Applications for the Sustainability Committee of Student Government open on August 16! Interviews begin August 18, the application closes on September 3, and I plan to have my final decisions made by September 8. Also, if you live in an apartment or house in Ames, DO NOT THROW YOUR GLASS IN THE GARBAGE! It damages the (expensive) machinery, and if it makes it to the power plant and is burned, the glass melts. It eventually dries, and the solidified glass can cause problems for the machinery that require time and money to repair. If you'd like to recycle glass, the City of Ames website has an entire list of locations.