

# Sustainable Food and Bioenergy Systems: Student Internships Development Plan

## Final Report for FW08-317

Project Type: Farmer/Rancher

Funds awarded in 2008: \$29,983.00

Projected End Date: 12/31/2010

Region: Western

State: Montana

Principal Investigator:

[Dr. William Dyer](#)

Montana State University

## Project Information

### Abstract:

Progress has been made on all objectives. Criteria for appropriate and effective SFBS Program Internships have been developed after extensive and thorough consultation with the SFBS Core Team, Internship Advisory Task Force, individual internship hosts and others. A menu of verified and appropriate internship options for SFBS students has been created that will meet hosts' needs through advancing their production, processing or marketing enterprise agendas through research, demonstration and/or education. Extramural funding from several sources has been obtained to help establish the internship program. A host/intern guidebook that addresses host training needs, student and host expectations, rules, reporting procedures and other topics is almost complete. The first cohort of eight students will carry out their internships in summer 2011.

## Introduction

Montana State University recently initiated a Sustainable Food and Bioenergy Systems (SFBS) B.S. degree involving three departments in two colleges. This grant funded a project to advance students' capacity to achieve Western SARE goals by developing - jointly with sustainable producers, processors and marketers - Internships that meet specific sustainable agriculture and food enterprise needs in Montana. Internships will enhance local food production, processing and distribution, helping to ensure viable rural communities in Montana and quality of life for participating farmers. Projects will engage students' skills and energy to help their hosts meet research, demonstration or education goals.

### Project Objectives:

- a. Develop criteria for appropriate and effective SFBS Program Internships (web-published).
- b. A menu of verified and appropriate Internship options for SFBS students, probably to start in summer 2010 (the program is slated to begin enrolling freshmen and

sophomores in autumn 2008). Internships will be designed to meet hosts' needs, advancing their production, processing or marketing enterprise agendas through research, demonstration and/or education. The team anticipates the need for 10-20 web-published Internship options by summer 2011, and more to follow each year.

c. Grants written for implementation of the Internships designed through this development project.

d. Identification of Internship host training needs for working effectively and productively with students.

## Cooperators

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## Research

### Materials and methods:

In fall 2008, the SFBS Core Team drafted criteria for quality Internships and descriptions, with student input. This was followed by a winter meeting where the Task Force and Core Team met to revise criteria and begin to formulate Internship descriptions. Task Force members also clarified project objectives and Internship descriptions and recruited other Internship hosts. Dr. Bird helped them (via email and telephone) to define fundable objectives and led grant proposal development to support Internship funding. Our website consultant created a framework to attractively display Internship options and outcomes. In summer 2009, Dr. Harmon and Ms. Stein traveled to 20 Internship sites to verify projects and take publicity photos. Drs. Harmon and Dyer subsequently completed and compiled 20 consistent Internship descriptions into a menu of options that will shortly be posted on the SFBS Program website.

### Research results and discussion:

Criteria for off-campus internships within the SFBS Program have been developed through several mechanisms since the beginning of the funding period. These mechanisms and outcomes include:

#### SFBS Core Team Meetings

o The SFBS Core team is comprised of a faculty representative from each of the collaborative departments within the interdisciplinary degree, plus the SFBS Program Coordinator. This team meets approximately monthly to address various needs of the program, including the off-campus internship development. One of the

first objectives of the Core Team was the selection of a well-profiled Internship Advisory Task Force to ensure that internship experiences will encompass diverse aspects of the food and bioenergy systems. This Task Force includes small market garden producers, ranchers, a large grain producer, a beginning farmer, representatives of non-profit organizations, a state agriculture agency representative, small food business entrepreneurs, a community economic development professional and a producer with an agritourism program.

#### Internship Advisory Task Force Meetings

o In February 2009, the Internship Advisory Task Force gathered for a two-day meeting in Bozeman, Montana. The primary objectives of the meeting were:

\*Bring the group up to speed on the SFBS Program.

\*Gather information from task force members on internship criteria, roles of student, internship hosts, SFBS faculty/coordinator, internship protocol (timeline for placement, student evaluation and deliverables).

o Outcomes of the Task Force meeting were:

\*Internship credit requirement will be three credits or 135 hours.

\*Internship hosts may offer compensation and room/board but not necessary.

\*Matching process is critical - both host and students will complete questionnaire to assist with this process.

\*Host sites must allow for SFBS students to interact fully with organization.

\*Initiate matching/application process early in the year (January) to allow for some communication between host and intern prior to internship.

\*Internship is not solely a vocational project - intern must develop a research project and learning goals associated with internship experience.

Mary Stein and Alison Harmon visited members of the Internship Development Taskforce and others for a total of 15 potential internship hosts during the summer of 2009, including:

\*AERO, Helena MT, Jonda Crosby

\*BBar Ranch, Big Timber MT, Wes Henthorne

\*MT Dept of AG, Helena MT, Nancy Matheson and Perry Walborn

\*Quinn Farm, Big Sandy MT, Bob Quinn

\*Farm to Table, Glendive MT, Bruce Smith

\*Geyser Farm, Livingston MT, Mark Rehder

\*Graham Ranch, Conrad MT, Lisa Schmidt

\*Mission Mountain Market, Ronan MT, Jan Tusick

\*MT Foodbank Network, Missoula MT, Peggy Grimes

\*North Frontier Farms Inc., Lewistown MT, Ole Norgaard

\*Prairie Heritage Farm, Conrad MT, Jacob Cowgill

\*Purple Frog Farm, Whitefish MT, Pam Gerwe

\*Rocky Creek Farm, Bozeman MT, Pete Fay

\*Timeless Seeds, Conrad MT, David Oien

Other internship-related activities are:

\*An SFBS internship orientation was held on April 27, 2009. Approximately five faculty, two graduate assistants and fifteen students attended.

\*An SFBS Open House was held October 23, 2009 in conjunction with the Montana Food Systems Council annual meeting. Approximately six students and four internship hosts attended, as well as MSU faculty, staff and administrators.

\*Internship information sheets, application forms, agreement forms, student

expectation forms and pre- and post-internship survey forms have been developed (attached) and used for HDFN/LRES/PSPP 298, SFBS Sophomore Internship.

\*Six SFBS 298 student internships were carried out in summer 2009 at the Towne's Harvest Garden. All students successfully completed the requirements for academic credit.

\*Twenty SFBS student internships (HDFN 246: Towne's Harvest Practicum) were carried out in summer 2010 at the Towne's Harvest Garden. All students successfully completed the requirements for academic credit.

\*We have developed a glossy brochure that provides information on the overall degree program, details about each option, career information, faculty and advising, student recruitment and Towne's Harvest Garden (including a link to a documentary about this project; see <http://sfbs.montana.edu/index.htm> for more information.

\*A second SFBS internship orientation was held on November 10, 2010. Six junior and senior SFBS majors who will be carrying out their upper division internship in summer 2011 attended and met with three faculty and two SFBS staff.

\*Off-campus Internship hosts were interviewed to identify internship criteria and host research and/or production needs (attached). Summaries of site-visit notes and information gathered through the Internship Criteria and Host Questionnaire forms were also developed (attached). This information will be posted on the SFBS website to assist students in their internship application process.

\*Since the off-campus internship is intended to take place near the end of the SFBS student's curriculum, the first round of SFBS students will be seeking off-campus internship placement during the summer of 2011.

As noted above, this information was gathered from the questionnaire completed by prospective internship hosts during the site visits in summer 2009. Input gathered included:

\*Some would like an introduction on "How To" mentor an intern. (TRAINING FOR HOSTS)

\*Need clarification on how much labor vs. unique project student intern should be taking part in.

\*Really need to understand competencies that the SFBS program hopes to attain through this internship.

## **Participation Summary**

## Educational & Outreach Activities

### **PARTICIPATION SUMMARY:**

Education/outreach description:

A handbook for internship hosts and students is being completed. This guide will contain information on host training needs, student and host expectations, rules, reporting procedures, academic requirements and other topics.

# Project Outcomes

Project outcomes:

A second Task Force Meeting was held in February 2010 with the following objectives:

- Provide update on SFBS program and overview of summer 2009 internship site visits
- Provide update on SFBS Website, focusing on off-campus internship section
- Group Work/Conversation, "The Four Things That Have to Happen in the Next 12 Months"
- Develop Internship Application
- Identify and Provide Host Training Needs
- Develop Intern/Host Handbook
- Develop the Program Capstone Course - Integrate with Internship
- Summer Field Trip Sites for 2010 (with 200 Level Interns from Towne's Harvest Garden)
- Discuss prospective internship host site visits in 2010

The SFBS Program has partnered on two grants with prospective internship site hosts in order to provide funding to assist SFBS interns:

- Specialty Crops Block Grant - Partner organization: Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO). Funding in the amount of \$2800 received by AERO from the Montana Department of Agriculture.
- One Montana - Partner Organization: The Rural Landscape Institute (Bozeman, MT) and Farms for Families (Glendive, Montana). Grant has been submitted to Montana State University Administration for possible internal funding (pending).

Additional funding has been obtained to support the development of Towne's Harvest Garden and the SFBS curriculum and internship program:

- A \$12,000 grant from the MT Dept of Agriculture has supported infrastructure development and outreach for Towne's Harvest Garden.
- A private resident of Montana has bequeathed a generous gift to the MSU College of Agriculture in support of the SFBS program.
- The SFBS Curriculum Development Team has sought additional infrastructure development funds from USDA/AFRI (not funded), USDA HEC (pending) and Western SARE (not funded) and through a federal initiative (submitted).

- [Internship Info PowerPoint](#)
- [Host descriptions](#)
- [Questionnaire](#)
- [pre survey](#)
- [Criteria](#)

Recommendations:

## Future Recommendations

Better assessment and quantification tools for student learning, achievements and skill acquisition are needed for experiential learning projects like the internships discussed here. This is the focus of a USDA/Higher Education Challenge Grant we just submitted.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or SARE.



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