To: Marieka Klawitter, Evans School of Public Affairs, and Julie Fisk, Campus Sustainability Fund
From: Justin Hellier and Shannon Qian
Date: 18 October 2010
Re: **Evaluation Proposal for the Campus Sustainability Fund**

Background:

The Campus Sustainability Fund (CSF) is a major, student-led investment in a greener, more sustainable campus. A student-initiated and -funded program, CSF's mission is to reduce the environmental impact of the University of Washington (UW) campus and to develop leadership for sustainability among UW students. CSF is just beginning its first year of operations, and seeks to develop the capacity to evaluate its effectiveness—both to improve its own programs, and to ensure accountability to the student body.

An Outline of Our Proposed Evaluation

We propose an evaluation project that includes an *evaluability assessment* and the development of a *performance monitoring* system, in order to facilitate an *outcome-based evaluation* in future years of the program.

First, the **Evaluability Assessment** will:

- Perform *goals clarification exercises* with key stakeholders—including the two CSF staff members, members of the CSF student Committee, the co-chairs of CSF's major funder, and executives from student government—in order to specify *program theory*.

- Determine the CSF's commitment to and capacity for evaluation, with special attention to *intended use* and the staff time and resources available for evaluation.

Next, based on the findings of the evaluability assessment, the **Performance Monitoring System** will:

- Articulate *program outcomes* and propose measurable *indicators* of those outcomes.

- Develop *benchmarks* for those indicators based on relevant data from student-led sustainability initiatives at other colleges and universities.

- Create the necessary *data collection instruments* to track the proposed indicators at the program and project level.

Finally, this project will outline a process for conducting an **Outcome-Based Evaluation** in future years of the program—focusing on how to use CSF performance data in conjunction with benchmark numbers to assess the project's success.

Conceptual Approaches

We understand that our proposed project includes only some of the critical elements of evaluation. We are not, for instance, creating an evaluation that will render summative judgment on the program. However, in the spirit of *utilization-focused evaluation*, we believe that the elements above are what CSF requires and can use at this early point in its development.

When evaluating new programs, Patton (2008: 238) notes that evaluators frequently encounter the "need for a period of time to work with program staff, administrators, funders, and participants on clarifying program goals—making them realistic, meaningful, agreed on, and evaluable." Therefore, we have highlighted the evaluability assessment as a core component of the project.

Additionally, we believe it is appropriate to approach this evaluation from a *capacity-building* perspective. Therefore, our evaluation emphasizes the *process use* of "consultation and facilitation directed toward developing the capabilities of the participating stakeholders to conduct evaluations on their own [and] to use the results effectively for advocacy and change" (Rossi *et al*. 2004: 51). This approach is reflected in our focus on creating a performance measurement system that will facilitate both evaluative thinking in CSF staff *and* the collection of data for a more summative evaluation in future years.