

Campus Sustainability Fund  
University of Washington

## Letter of Intent

Submitted by Ken P. Yocom, PhD – Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Washington on behalf of the team.

RE: Camas Meadow at the Burke Museum

I am providing this letter of intent on behalf of the team of students, staff, and faculty who are actively engaged in monitoring and managing the camas meadow at the Burke Museum. This project has been previously funded by the Campus Sustainability Fund (#16-4546). Specific activities include plant community monitoring, active maintenance, organizing public work parties, and communications).

Over the past three years, this project has worked in close collaboration with Burke Museum staff (Miguel Symonds (student) Polly Olsen, Aaron McCanna, and David Giblin), UW Grounds (Steve Kryszko) and the Department of Landscape Architecture (Jocine Velasco, Rhys Coffee, Emily Saeger, and Isabel Lewis (students), Ken Yocom (Faculty)). Though several of the students listed have now graduated, we developed a mentorship and training program to assist in the transition across student workers. The collaborative efforts are highly intentional and managed through collective agreement with all parties involved.

**Sustainable Impact:** The roughly 10,000 ft<sup>2</sup> camas meadow was designed and constructed as part of the new Burke Museum development. A relatively unique (camas are planted at *wəˈtəbʔaltx* and UW farm) landscape type on the UW campus, meadows dominated by camas were once prevalent in the region but have been mostly lost to agriculture and development. Camas (*Camassia* spp.) was and continues to be a highly important source of nutrition with deep social and cultural meaning and importance to indigenous communities. In the region and across the Pacific Northwest. This designed and constructed meadow is part of the Burke's 'living collections and our collaboration has been an opportunity to learn from the meadow and build greater understanding how learning on our campus can extend beyond the walls of the classroom. Also, the site is located adjacent to one of the primary entrances to campus with the recent opening of the light rail station in the University District. It is estimated that 25,000 students and employees pass by the meadow daily.

As a relatively unique landscape type on campus, UW Grounds has expressed a lot of concern over its care and management as it requires a greater level of attention and distinct approaches to their typical duties for care. Our team has developed methods and a strong approach to caring for and maintaining the space, that requires active and ongoing engagement.

**Leadership & Student Involvement:** The staff team of (Polly Olsen, David Giblin, and Ken Yocom) coordinate oversight and team management, while current students take on most

week-to-week activities from data collection and analysis, organizing work parties, and active maintenance as well as coordination with other Burke staff on communication strategies to highlight what is happening in the meadow through signage, social media posts, etc.

**Education, Outreach, & Behavior Change:** The work has been highly focused on education, not only for the students involved, but for the broader UW community as well. Students supported by the CSF grant get first-hand knowledge of project management, data collection and analysis, and volunteer coordination. On average, the team hosts volunteer work parties to help weed and maintain the meadow. This has been quite the feat as the meadow has been overrun with lupine the past several years that while beautiful during flowering, shade out the meadow grasses and other plants including the camas. To date, volunteers (public and other UW students) have spent 100s of hours working in the meadow and learning about this landscape type. The team has also made several local presentations for the Burke patrons, hosts UW classes interested in the meadow, and the project was presented at a national conference. The team has also been invited to provide an article of their work and research on the meadow to the journal *Ecological Restoration*. We are currently in the process of drafting the manuscript.

Lastly, another challenge with the meadow has been grazing by local rabbits. In particular, the rabbits chew the stalks of the camas and for two years have severely limited camas productivity. This weekend (March 4 and 5, 2023) the team has coordinated to invite Yakama Tribal Elder and master weaver Val Calac to join us for a workshop to 'weave' exclusion fences from willow and alder whips collected on campus with approval from UW grounds. These fences will surround marked plots in the meadow to study their effectiveness for keeping the rabbits from grazing on the camas. This past autumn the team, in collaboration with Oxbow Farms, planted hundreds of bulbs in these plots.

**Feasibility & Accountability:** This is a highly collaborative endeavor and active community. Those involved in the work are committed with strong ties to the meadow. This is evident in the lasting engagement of all collaborators on the work. Most previous requests for funds have supported student work and learning with some funds used to purchase supplemental plants in the meadow. Both the Burke Museum and Department of Landscape Architecture have also committed funds to purchase tools, gloves, and food for volunteer events while UW Grounds provides labor and access to trucks and hauling away weeded material.

The Burke Museum is currently in the process of applying for a Mellon Foundation grant through which this work has been written in and will be supported if the grant is funded. However, until that time bridge funding is necessary to keep the students employed and active management occurring on the site.