



## **George Mason University**

Fairfax, Virginia

Environmental Outreach

### **SCHOOL**

George Mason University, in Fairfax County, Virginia, is a public four-year research institution. Current enrollment is over 32,000 headcount, with over 22,000 in full-time equivalent.

### **ABSTRACT**

SoA Green is a public student group that is open to Mason students and faculty who are interested in art, gardening, and other green topics (recycling, sustainability, organics). SoA Green is supported by donations of soil, planters, plants, and other garden materials. There is no official funding and the members themselves purchase any materials that are needed. For more information see the following: <http://soagreen.blogspot.com>, <http://www.facebook.com/groups/115344485154258>, [http://twitter.com/#!/SoA\\_Green](http://twitter.com/#!/SoA_Green).

### **GOALS AND OUTCOMES**

#### **Goals**

The SoA Green garden started as an output for students who wanted to bring nature into the industrial School of Art building. The tentative goal was to garden around the SoA building and eventually install small garden projects (green walls, indoor planters) inside the building. After developing our web presence by utilizing social media platforms (Facebook, BlogSpot, Twitter), SoA Green became a hub for "green" news or project ideas. SoA Green was also concerned with creating awareness with waste and recycling within the SoA building.

#### **Accomplishments and Outcomes**

Our first goal was to start a garden around the SoA. Using found pallets; we built planters and grew various vegetables, herbs, and flowers from seed. We made connections with other George Mason University gardening groups, which eventually resulted in the formation of the Mason Campus Garden Consortium. Our goals for the future include becoming an official George Mason University student group, installing more art and garden projects, expanding the garden by potentially creating a bigger Mason community garden, developing a website, and recruiting new members so the group can function after the founding members have graduated.

#### **Challenges and Responses**

We lacked certain resources, such as garden supplies, and had difficulty finding people to help manage the garden. While the entire SoA has been very vocally supportive of the garden, we have yet to reach a point where the garden is sustainable beyond the initial founding members. We responded to these challenges by planting low-maintenance wildflowers or plants. In future projects, we intend to set specific goals and assign project managers to ensure projects are successful and productive.

### **Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint**

SoA Green does not directly address global climate change through its activities, though we do link and post green news regularly on social media platforms. We hope to continue to create awareness about the subject through our blog and Facebook page.

### **Commentary and Reflection**

According to Vina, "Just plant seeds. Hope for the best. Water regularly. Make sure your garden has adequate drainage."

According to Justin, "Most of all, SoA Green focuses back into how we each interact with our environment. For myself personally, SoA Green has been much more than a garden. It has been an area in which I can physically alter the environment around me to produce a healthier system both for myself and for those who participate in that environment. On that level, it has related back to the basic foundations of art making, which for a group founded through a visual arts curriculum, is essential to how the organization is run. What I hope for SoA Green is that it will eventually become much more than a garden, but more a way to teach people how take something that was aesthetically unsound and transform it into something that is functional, that is healthy for the surrounding environs and that is sustainable within itself while achieving those measures."

### **ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

#### **Leaders and Supporters**

SoA Green was founded by Justin Raphael Roykovich and Vina Sananikone. Later members included Liz Edwards and Ashley Pilkerton, who later became officers (secretary and treasurer).

Faculty/staff members: Tom Ashcraft, Ben Ashworth, Danielle Wyman, Lenna Storm, Mark Cooley.

Facebook: 86 members on Facebook group.

#### **Funding and Resources**

Guestimated SoA Green costs were \$400+, which was personally funded by SoA Green members. The money went towards lumber, tools, soil, seeds/seedlings, and various garden tools.

Once the university recognizes the organization, we should be able to get access to funding for student groups.

#### **Education and Community Outreach**

We worked with Office of Sustainability, Mason's Campus Garden Consortium, AIGA, and AgriArt. Though we have not actively reached out to the community, we have received a wealth of support from SoA Green Facebook through photos/comments.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

#### **Contacts**

Vina Sananikone - student, founding member 4858 Langer Lane, Woodbridge, VA 22193, vina.sananikone@gmail.com, 571.643.6890, Spring 2012

Justin Raphael Roykovich, Co-Founder of SoA Green, jrroykovich@gmail.com, 347.878.0053 graduated Spring 2011

**Case study submitted by:** Vina Sananikone and Justin Raphael Roykovich

## **MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL**

### **Campus Sustainability History**

George Mason University faculty, staff, and students formed an Environmental Task Force in the mid 2000s to start a dialogue with the university administration about the need for Mason to take a leadership role in sustainability by demonstrating sustainable operations and by providing sustainability education. From the seeds of this dialogue sprung the desire to sign the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment and to create a formal administrative role to support university sustainability. The Office of Sustainability at George Mason University was formed two years ago, in summer of 2007, with the hiring of the first Sustainability Coordinator. Now, Mason's sustainability efforts spring up, without prompting, across all campuses, and can be seen in projects like the new organic vegetable garden, the first all-native plant demonstration garden, the commitment to building all buildings to the LEED Silver standard, the commitment to sustainable dining practices, and the formation of a Faculty Fellow for Sustainability Curricula out of the Office of the Provost, among many others. Find out more about Mason's programs and activities at <http://green.gmu.edu>.