AC 4: Applied Learning

Rationale

This credit recognizes institutions that provide students with solutions-focused applied learning experiences that address sustainability challenges. Applied learning or living laboratory projects and programs are both a powerful way for students to learn about sustainability and an important driver for advancing sustainability on campus and beyond.

Applicability

Applicable to all institutions.

Points available

A maximum of 4 points are available for this credit.

Criteria

4.1 Applied learning for sustainability program

An institution earns 4 points when it makes available solutions-focused **applied learning** or living laboratory experiences for students that address **sustainability challenges** and meets all of the additional criteria listed below. Partial points are available and earned as outlined in Table I.

Table I. Points earned for indicator 4.1

Criterion	Points available	Points earned
A. The institution makes available solutions-focused applied learning or living laboratory experiences for students that address sustainability challenges.	1	
B. Three or more institutional departments or units are currently supporting solutions-focused applied learning or living laboratory experiences for students.	1*	
C. There are processes or tools in place to assess the success of the applied learning projects.	1*	
D. There is an online portal or equivalent vehicle that documents completed, current, and/or prospective applied learning projects.	1*	
Total points earned →		

* Criterion A must be met to earn any further points for this indicator.

Measurement

Report on the current status of the institution's applied learning and living laboratory initiatives.

To qualify, the experience and/or projects must involve substantive work (e.g., class projects, thesis projects, term papers, and published work) and facilitate active and experiential student learning. Supervised student internships, immersive experiences, and non-credit work may qualify as long as the work has a formal learning component (i.e., there are opportunities to document and assess what students are learning).

Documentation

Report the following information in the online Reporting Tool.

- Does the institution make available solutions-focused applied learning or living laboratory experiences for students that address sustainability challenges? (required)

  If Yes, the following five fields are also required:

  - List or sample of currently active/available applied learning or living laboratory experiences for students that address sustainability challenges

  - Are three or more institutional departments or units currently supporting solutions-focused applied learning or living laboratory experiences for students?

  - Are there processes or tools in place to assess the success of the applied learning projects?

    If Yes, the following field is also required:

    - Description of the processes or tools used to assess the success of the applied learning projects

  - Is there an online portal or equivalent vehicle that documents completed, current, and/or prospective applied learning projects?

    If Yes, the following field is also required:

    - Description of and/or website URL for the online portal or equivalent vehicle that documents completed, current, and/or prospective applied learning projects

Glossary

Applied learning – An educational approach whereby students learn by engaging in direct application of skills, theories and models. In applied learning, students apply knowledge and skills gained from traditional classroom learning to hands-on and/or real-world settings, creative projects or independent or directed research, and in turn apply what is gained from the applied experience to academic learning. [Adapted from the definition used by the National Society for Experiential Education and the State University of New York (SUNY).]

Sustainability challenge – An issue or situation that threatens or undermines ecological integrity, racial equity and social justice, or the ability of future generations to meet their needs (e.g., biodiversity loss, poverty and inequality, and climate change), OR a goal or objective that contributes to the resolution of such an issue or situation (e.g., ecosystem health, universal human rights, and renewable energy generation). To identify sustainability challenges, it may be helpful to reference the [targets embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)](), the principles outlined in the [Earth Charter](), and/or the [Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries]().