Sustainability Fellowship
Enhancing Sustainability in NH Public Schools
Oyster River Cooperative School District
Durham, New Hampshire

About the Sustainability Fellows Program:
UNH Sustainability Fellowships pair exceptional students from across the U.S. with municipal, educational, corporate, and non-profit partners in New England to work on transformative sustainability initiatives each summer. Sustainability Fellows undertake challenging projects that are designed to create an immediate impact, offer a quality learning experience, and foster meaningful collaboration. Fellows work on-site with their mentors at partner organizations during the summer, supported by a network of Fellows, partners, alumni, and the UNH Team. Graduate students, exceptional undergraduate students, and recent graduates from any accredited college or university are eligible to apply.

A detailed description of one Fellowship follows. To learn more about the other Fellowships offered this year, and for application instructions, see: www.sustainableunh.unh.edu/sustainability-fellows.

About the Host Organization:
Oyster River School District (ORCSD) is a cooperative public-school system with 4 campuses serving the three contiguous communities of – Durham, Lee and Madbury, New Hampshire. It has been rated as one of the best school districts in the state. The district serves 2,173 students - two elementary schools (K-4), one middle school (5-8), one high school (9-12), employs 428 employees FTE, and is administered independently from the local governments of the three towns. The District’s funding comes primarily from local property taxes. In 2013 taxpayers from the three towns voted to fund a sustainability coordinator to assist in the implementation of the District’s sustainability policy and procedures. Over the past 6 years, ORCSD has continued to build its culture of sustainability as evidenced through its commitment to include sustainability into its 2019-2024 strategic plan. This 5-year plan outlines the district’s intention to build sustainability into curriculum through the leadership of dedicated teachers and with an operational coordinator to assist managers overseeing transportation, food service, IT and facilities to reach sustainability outcomes.

About the Fellowship:
In 2013, the ORCSD School Board adopted an environmental sustainability policy and procedure which outlines the District’s commitment both operationally and educationally to the practices and principles of sustainability. An ecological footprint assessment done
in the same year, benchmarked data from the following sectors: solid waste, recycling, transportation, water consumption, energy, electricity and paper consumption. The report’s purpose was to document the District’s commitment to implement sustainable practices that would improve environmental efficiencies and reduce ecological impact at each school building. Data-based recommendations were made for future improvements.

There are two primary goals to this project with a third goal to be achieved if time permits. The first goal is to establish a methodology for and update the ORCSD ecological footprint report. The second goal is to capture both the roadblocks and opportunities around efficiently updating and effectively utilizing the data on a regular basis. The data used in producing this report crosses between four operational units within the District, each of which utilizes different data collection tools. This places a constraint on aggregating the data to be an effective decision making and reporting tool for the ORCSD administration as it looks to continue its commitment to make informed decision making around energy, food and transportation cost issues. The Sustainability Fellow will research existing tools and make recommendations to the ORCSD administration on the best strategy for implementing a reporting tool to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the ecological footprint report.

The third and final goal is the exploration into the potential and feasibility of whether the ORCSD sustainability study can be replicated as a model for other school districts within New Hampshire. Information sharing and cross district discussions between and among school business managers and operations directors could be enhanced with a comprehensive reporting tool. As fiscal pressures continue to effect school districts, this tool has the potential for districts to be more resource efficient allowing for more resources to be dedicated to instruction rather than operational costs.

Outcomes:
A written report and presentation to the ORCSD School Board at its mid-August board meeting. Presentation to include update of ORCSD Ecological Footprint Report including an evaluation of the 2013 recommendations and new recommendations for each operational sector.

Feasibility report with recommendations for a central reporting tool to operational managers and Superintendent to be presented at District’s leadership meeting in August (specific date: TBA)

Impact:
Through this fellowship, a student will gain the following skills and experience:

- Familiarization with sustainability data from diverse sources, as it pertains to public school districts
- Expertise in aggregating data from different sources and in different formats
- Dialogue and communication skills about sustainability results with public school’s business / operations managers to effect school-wide sustainability goals
- Public speaking on continued implementation of sustainability goals, based on data analysis, to pertinent stakeholders
This project has the potential to affect how ORCSD can set specific operational goals to more fully incorporate and integrate sustainability as vital aspect of its financial planning, therefore deepening the district’s commitment of sustainability. The project could also provide a replicable model and tool to assist other New Hampshire school districts to more efficiently and effectively make informed decision making around energy, food and transportation cost issues.

**Desired Qualifications:**
- Excellent research and analytical skills with demonstrated proficiency in data management and analysis, and in quickly becoming proficient with new programs
- Ability to think critically and to find creative solutions as necessary
- Ability to work well independently and as part of a decentralized team
- Advanced Excel skills, and proficiency with other Microsoft Office programs
- Ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing, and elicit the cooperation of others, as needed
- Public speaking skills
- Access to a vehicle for occasional travel to District office sites helpful

**Work Location:** Oyster River Cooperative School District SAU administrative office 36 Coe Drive, Durham, NH 03824

**Mentors:** Maggie Morrison, ORCSD Sustainability Coordinator

**Compensation:** $6500 (taxable and distributed on a two-week payroll cycle over the course of the fellowship)

**Expectations:**
Fellows are expected to be primarily dedicated to their assigned projects throughout the summer, and also participate in a variety of networking activities, professional development opportunities, and presentations coordinated by UNHSI. Specifically, Fellows are expected to:
- Attend a mandatory orientation at UNH prior to the start of the fellowship term, **May 26-28, 2020.** (Travel scholarships may be available for students traveling from outside New England.)
- Work full-time on-site at the partner organization, **June 1 - August 14, 2020**
- Complete 400 hours of work, including work at host site as well as UNHSI activities, between May 26 – August 14, 2020.
- Complete a fellowship project according to the work plan (with adjustments as necessary).
- Participate in weekly webinars or advisory group meetings.
- Present work at mid-term and final poster sessions at UNH on **July 10** and **August 7.** (Travel support available.)
• Engage in additional professional development, networking, and advisory activities as offered.
• Provide and receive feedback at the end of the fellowship.

Apply by February 10 at www.sustainableunh.unh.edu/sustainability-fellows.

Questions may be addressed to megan.carney@unh.edu.