

2019 Associated Students

Outback Farm

Pending approval of the AS Board of Directors

AS Assessment Process
Final Recommendations



Introduction:

The AS Outback Farm presented to the AS Assessment Coordinator on January 14rd, 2019 these recommendations. The currently approved statement of purpose for the Outback Farm is:

“ The Outback, a joint program of the Associated Students and Fairhaven College, is a 5 acre farm and wetland restoration site. The purpose of the Outback OELP is to coordinate a wide range of opportunities for students to learn about, develop and implement sustainable land use practices. These opportunities include personal and collaborative events and projects involving habitat restoration, organic gardening, green building, academic partnerships, independent study projects (ISPs), workshops, lectures and classes. The OELP also provides job-related skill building and community networking opportunities for students. These include serving on the Outback Governing Council, volunteering, and participating in work-study, AmeriCorps Students in Service, and salaried employment. “

Program/Services Provided:

Workshops:

The Outback organizes multiple educational workshops every quarter, responsive to the season and student interest. By giving students access to leaders and experts in their field, these workshops enhance the educational opportunities Western provides. A small sampling of these workshops include:

- Soil Fertility and Composting
- Botanical Medicine
- Beneficial Insects
- Permaculture Design
- Fruit Tree Pruning
- Garden Planning
- Cob Oven Building
- Mushroom Growing Workshop
- Natural Water Systems Design
- Chicken Care
- Beekeeping

Work Parties

By hosting weekly work parties in various areas of the Outback, the program provides volunteer and experiential learning opportunities for students and community members. The work parties accommodate all areas and levels of interest, making the Outback accessible to the diversity of the student body.

- Lead Work Parties
- General Garden Work Parties
- Harvest Parties
- Herb/Medicinal Work Parties
- Forest Garden Work Parties
- Beekeeping Classes

Community Garden Plots

With over 50 plots, the community garden provides students and community members with free resources and educational opportunities to garden. By providing the necessary resources, we are able to make the opportunity more inclusive.

- Orientation
- Educational Resources
- Physical Resources
- Early Childhood Education Plots

Food Bank Donation Program

The Outback has utilized the Educational Garden to grow enough food to donate over 5,000lbs to the Bellingham Food Bank in the past three years. This program allows us to give back to the community and contribute to food justice. This increases access to healthy food by underserved community members, many of which are students. In addition, the harvest parties and bike delivery program provides other opportunities for students to get involved.

- Harvesting
- Bike Delivery Program

Events

The Outback Farm hosts a variety of events that can utilize the different areas of the Outback, including the Amphitheatre, Forest Garden, Outdoor Classroom, and various garden spaces. Many events are hosted in collaboration with students, community members, and other groups. The events hosted by the Outback aim to contribute to student life on campus by providing an enjoyable space and activity for people to connect.

- Cob Oven Parties

- Potlucks
- Cider Pressing Parties
- Square Dances
- Concerts
- Open Mics
- Campfires
- Movie Screenings

Academic Partnerships

The Outback provides a demonstration site for classes, professors and students to utilize for experiential learning, research, independent studies, and by accommodating classes in the Outback.

- Tours
- Outdoor Classroom Space
- Experiential Learning and Research Opportunities
- Independent Study Projects

Service Learning Opportunities

The Outback accommodates many clubs, organizations, and individuals who need to fulfill service-learning requirements. This strengthens partnerships within the University and Community, and increased the breadth of our Outreach

- Clubs
- Court Order Community Service
- Classroom Service Learning

Employment Opportunities:

The Outback employs students, providing job-related skill building, networking, leadership development, AS involvement and training. This gives students a chance to be involved in the Outback, beyond the privilege of having the time to volunteer.

- Summer Apprenticeships
- Outback Farm Coordinator Position
- Assistant Farm Coordinator Position
- Work-Study Positions

Areas for Improvements/ Recommendations:

The following are the recommendations for strategic goals over the next four years:

1. Increase Outreach and Publicity

The Outback is physically isolated and the program is still unknown to much of the student body. Continued effort for raising awareness and access to services would benefit the program and the student body. Coordinators should use strategies such as increased signage, tabling, an outreach campaign, and more consistent use of publicity tools. Enhanced marketing and partnership with the AS Publicity Center will be key as well. Overall, improved consistency and communication would be beneficial in all aspects of the program. Maintaining work-study positions devoted to outreach and publicity is helpful.

2. Creating AS Outback Publicity Specialist position

The AS Outback Publicity Specialist will be a new position, who, as the name suggests, will promote the AS Outback Farm and increase awareness. Increasing awareness and publicity will be done primarily through:

- Tabling
- Events
- Coordination with AS Publicity Center
- Other venues as appropriate

They will be budgeted at 10 hours/week, and the estimated cost is about \$4500/year (assuming Fall-Spring). Please see the attached job description for details.

3. Build Bike Rack

The AS Outback is currently a physically isolated program, and is often inaccessible to many students. Students who wish to bike there have no easy way of safely storing their bikes at the Outback Farm. We would like to either

build or transfer a bike rack (pulled from different location on campus) on the Outback Farm to increase the accessibility and safety of the program.

Estimate for this would cost no more than \$500.

4. Establish Food Marketing Taskforce

We would like to look at and identify the best ways for the food from the Outback Farm to reach and feed people. Already the Outback donates food hauls to the food pantry, and we would like to improve on this even more by identifying ways to be more effective. This may include working more with the AS Board of Directors, AS Student Senate, clubs, ect. The taskforce will be selected by the AS Assistant Coordinator, with the approval of the AS Assessment Coordinator. After the taskforce completes their research, the Outback Leadership will be responsible for immediate implementation.

5. Move New Hire Position Entry to mid May

The AS Outback Farm can be complex and overbearing sometimes to new hires. Because we want our program to be as effective as possible, we would like the new hires (new AS Outback Coordinator, new AS Assistant Outback Coordinator, and the new Forest Garden & Native Habitats Assistant Coordinator) to be given every opportunity to learn the job quickly and efficiently. This would allow the new employees to have some experience on the farm during the late planting season, and would better prepare them for the summer growing season. The goal with this shift is to make sure new hires are competent and involved with the watering and planting process at an important time in the growing season.

6. Create Community Mailing List

The Outback Farm has many constituents, most of whom are students but some who are actually members of the general public. Because the AS Outback is a progressive office, we are constantly looking to improve ourselves and enhance the productivity of our program. To better fulfill our mission statement, we are going to develop an email list, and we will send monthly

updates to all of the members of the list. The monthly update will contain new information regarding the Outback, and other information as necessary. The email list will be constantly updated, and there will be an easy way for constituents to suggest new areas of growth for the AS Outback Program. Implementation of this mailing list will be the responsibility of the AS Outback Coordinator, with the input as others as necessary. If the AS Outback Coordinator is unable to meet this obligation, the responsibility falls upon the AS Assistant Outback Coordinator.

7. Move Greenhouse Frame

We would like to move the greenhouse frame to a more productive area. The greenhouse frame in the South Field is not being used, and we would like to move it a more efficient and accessible area.

8. Address Stolen Tools

We are asking for \$250 dollars to be allocated towards general security for the Outback. The money will be used for more sophisticated locks, a lockbox and other simple security measures. There will also be a overall in the policies and procedures surrounding the security, and defined roles to execute the new policies.

9. Assess Impact of Having Grazing Animals

Assessing the impact of grazing animals would likely look at how hooved animals may increase erosion or affect water quality in the riparian zone. It could also look at the total grazing area available at the outback farm and how animals might manage or degrade that environment. Also, containment of grazing animals may be difficult, especially with the farm being open to all students at all times of the day.

10. Hire More Summer Apprentices

Currently, we have two summer apprentices which are responsible for keeping the farm itself productive and to work on various projects. These apprentices do

valuable work. But they are also overworked, and there is simply too few of them to fully satisfy the needs of the Outback and the community in which it serves. We would like to add two more work-study positions for the summer apprentices, and they will work alongside the rest of the Outback to better serve the community.

11. Crop Rotation Map

We will record and create a map for crop rotation and planting schedules. Doing this will help us mitigate pest damage and maintain healthy soil as well as keep a good pace planting crops. The responsibility of this map will be primarily under the AS Outback Assistant Coordinator, with the proper direction of the AS Outback Coordinator, and other personnel as needed.

Summary of Financial Requests:

- *\$250 for anti-theft security*
- *\$4500 for the new AS Outback Publicity Specialist*