Introduction:

Working as the OES’s Finance Metrics Intern during the 2015/2016 academic year was a fantastic learning experience, in which I was able to garner a much deeper understanding of how many diverse stakeholders in, enthusiasts for and barriers there are to sustainability initiatives on campus. The position, as conceived, was to help develop sustainability oriented metrics to be used by both the OES and the Office of Finance, to help inform and expedite sustainability oriented initiatives on campus.

Accomplishments:

During the first semester, I attempted to quantify a Social-Cost of Carbon rate to be used in all of Oberlin’s standardized financial metrics moving forward. This rate was determined through internal research, and research conducted by other Higher-Ed, Governmental and Private Sector Institutions. The final rate I evaluated was $187 per metric ton of carbon. With the help of the EPA’s carbon footprint calendar, I was then able to build a conversion calculator, which for Oberlin’s Zip-Code, can evaluate the cost of Oberlin’s utility flows in respect to Carbon. This project culminated in a presentation to Oberlin’s VP of Finance, Mike Frandsen, in which I was encouraged to convert this cost into a distributive range. After researching this process extensively, I determined that a quartile range would be most useful, which materialized as the following distribution - “$58.20 - $90.4 - $122.6 - $154.8 - $187.”

My project for second semester was to help evaluate how Oberlin may utilize conventional Life-Cycle Cost Analyses for its future financial/capital planning ventures. My first step towards this end was attempted to fully familiarize myself with the aims and mechanics of this, admittedly complicated, forecast oriented metric. I then developed a presentation with recommendations for the development of Life Cycle Cost metrics at Oberlin for Mike Frandsen, which was presented on 05/03/2016. After the presentation it was determined that the future of this internship would involve helping establish a LCCA process to be utilized for future capital projects.

Challenges:

My personal favorite aspect of this role was that it required me to research and familiarize myself with topics that I, and I doubt many other 18-22 year old undergrad liberal arts students, have had much exposure to. That being said, at times this position required me to do rudimentary research on the fundamental nature of particular institutional finance practices and trends. While this perspective often-times afforded me the opportunity to approach every project with enthusiastic and fresh eyes, I at times felt unprepared and overwhelmed by my lack of familiarity with certain issues. Another challenge of the position is that it, in a sense, required a full reimagining of Oberlin. I had to learn about the institutional operations and mechanics of this campus in a manner I had never quite considered before. All and all, holding position was incredibly informative, but did not come without a fairly steep learning curve.
Key Stakeholders:

The primary stakeholders for this position were OES Staff and Mike Frandsen's Office. That being said, this position allowed me to meet and talk to some great people on campus - including but not limited to Brad Burrer and Catherine Hoyle. As this position is very project oriented, I’d imagine it's stakeholders will continue to evolve with each new undertaking, and hopefully the information and metrics developed and aggregated under this position can have grow in reach and helpfulness on campus.

Deliverables:
* Oberlin College - Cost of Carbon (Prezi Presentation) - February 2016
* https://prezi.com/sdci-1zbociy/oberlin-college/

Recommendations:

The only concrete recommendation is to present and develop the future of this internship with long-term personnel aims. The aforementioned steep learning curve, while one of the most engaging aspects of my experience, definitely resulted in a lack of efficiency in the early stages of my work this academic year. When and if another Finance Metrics Intern is hired, I would recommend that this person be an 2nd year or younger, with the intention to commit to the position for at least two years.

Suggestions and Insider Info:

Remember that everyone you will interact with at Oberlin, almost without fail, is incredibly nice and eager to be helpful. Don’t be scared to ask questions.

Conclusion:

My experience with the position has been fantastic and I can only hope that the metrics and recommendations I developed over the year contribute to initiative and projects that have a long-term positive impact on sustainability and student life at Oberlin.