



Charles Sturt
University



Social Impact Project

Environment Sustainability

Innovative Industry-Led Co-design Sprints 2024

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Professor Janelle Wheat
Pro Vice-Chancellor
Division of Learning and Teaching
Charles Sturt University



My name is Janelle Wheat, Pro Vice-Chancellor at Charles Sturt University. I had the pleasure of welcoming students as they commenced the Charles Sturt Social Impact Project.

To create positive and lasting solutions, we must encourage innovation through projects that cultivate creativity and disrupt current ways of thinking and doing. Over the past few years the landscape of tertiary education has changed. While at times this has been extremely challenging, these changes provide opportunities and are key drivers for our students and community and industry partners to collaborate and co-design solutions to key social justice areas that affect our community.

I would like to congratulate and thank our students and our partners on the highly successful virtual Social Impact Project innovation sprint series that has facilitated the translation of creative ideas into actionable solutions in line with our Charles Sturt values and our ethos Yindyamarra Winhanganha which is, *'The wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in'*.

I would also like to thank Dr Faith Valencia-Forrester, the Academic Lead for work-integrated learning and Dr Noelia Roman, the work-integrated learning coordinator, and the WIL Strategy Team for their innovative practices, resilience, and collegiality in visioning these projects and seeing them through to successful completion; this has been a significant and rewarding undertaking.

Lloyd Dolan
Academic Lead, First Nations (Curriculum)
Division of Learning and Teaching
Charles Sturt University



Yuwindhu Lloyd Dolan, gadang, ngarandhuray, maliyan, girawaa

Guwaymbanhadhu nginyalgir nginha ngan.girra

Ngadhu gulbarra ngurumbang.galang-dhi Wiradjuri mayiny

Baladhu yindyamalngidyal birrandhi mayiny maradhalbu, yaalabu, girrabu

Ngianhiguna gulbarra mayinyguwal-bu ngurumbang.galang-bu ngunggilanha winha-ngidyal murunha dhulu-biny.mubang

Ngianhi wirrimbirra wii-gunhal-birra

(Acknowledgment in Wiradjuri language)

Welcome everybody. My name's Lloyd Dolan.

I want to pay my respects to and acknowledge our elders past, present, and also emerging.

I also acknowledge all the different nations and the lands that we may be coming from.

As we come together today to exchange learning and knowledge. One of our challenges is how do we listen to hear, and not listen to respond or answer as part of this process.

Thank you.



Dr Faith Valencia-Forrester

Academic Lead, Work-integrated Learning

Division of Learning and Teaching



Dr Noelia Roman

Academic Coordinator, Social Impact Projects

Division of Learning and Teaching



Dr Faith Valencia-Forrester

Academic Lead



Dr Noelia Roman

WIL Coordinator



Kirsty Munn

Project Officer

Our vision for these projects was to make a positive social change while giving students valuable work experience as they develop employability skills and provide a service to their communities.

These inclusive and equitable projects are defined by collaboration, creativity, flexible agility, solution-focused design and critical thinking. We think we have been able to evidence this through the student interns, Charles Sturt University, and our community partners, collaborating on solutions for positive social change.

In 2024, our student interns were given three key challenges facing policy makers and communities here in Australia across our projects. Homelessness, Environmental Sustainability, Mental Health and Wellbeing, all intersect and interconnect. These are issues that are misunderstood, under-supported and in urgent need of addressing.

These interns are going to graduate with valuable experience, a professional network, and importantly a deeper insight and understanding of complex social issues and the need for change. We are sure the benefits of participating in these internships will last long into the interns professional careers.

The feedback from the students about their experience has been overwhelmingly positive. We attribute the success of these projects to the team of people working on these sprints.

A huge thanks to our community and industry partners as co-designers who have been enthusiastic and supportive, wanting to be involved in these sprints. Their attitude and commitment to supporting the student interns has made all the difference to the success of these projects. They are equally passionate about making positive social change.

We are really proud of what our student interns participating in the Social Impact Projects at Charles Sturt University have achieved. We are proud of how they have engaged with the issues and become so passionate about doing what they can to address these important social justice issues. We know they will continue to work across disciplines towards solutions to these complex social issues.



Sabrina Forlin

Partnerships Officer



Rebecca Hambilton

Communications Officer



Leonie Summersby

Finance Liaison



Michelle Apps

Data Systems Officer



Mavis Jenkins

Project Officer

Project Environmental Sustainability



Vision

The vision of the project is to foster a deeper understanding of biodiversity and conservation by engaging the community in a hands-on planting event, and creating an educational resource that highlights the importance of safe mental health spaces in nature. Through collaboration, participant involvement, and innovative outreach tools like a QR code plaque, the initiative aims to inspire ongoing awareness and action for the environment.

Mission

To promote local biodiversity, enhance the ecological integrity of the campus environment, and provide educational opportunities about biodiversity and its positive impact for mental health.

Values

The values of this project include taking care of the environment, building a sense of community, and helping people learn. It encourages everyone to protect nature, work together, and understand how to be more sustainable. The goal is to inspire a lasting love for nature that future generations will also share.

Project Overview

Our project A planting day was held during Biodiversity month at Charles Sturt University, Bathurst Campus on September 18th 2024.

Our project aimed to create and provide an educational experience, highlighting the importance of natural safe spaces. We funded a BBQ for participants, and captured the event through photos, videos, and interviews. Additionally, with the support of Charles Sturt, we developed a QR code plaque to be placed in three locations around campus linking visitors to our educational content that further explores biodiversity and conservation.

Our audience The main audience for this project were the students at the Bathurst campus. Engaging them is key to building a strong sense of care for the environment in and around the campus.

We planned to reach out to students through social media posts and poster advertisements. By creating fun and meaningful opportunities for students to help with planting and conservation, we aim to foster a sense of community and responsibility for nature and the environment, encouraging them to become advocates for sustainability on campus and beyond.

Our goal Engaging in activities like tree planting in the Bathurst campus region, which aims to restore habitats for threatened species, can significantly enhance mental health by fostering a connection to nature, providing a sense of purpose, and promoting physical activity. Restoration efforts like these are vital for regenerating biodiversity and ecological balance, as they support the survival of critically endangered species such as the Regent Honeyeater and the Bathurst Copper Butterfly. By contributing to these projects, individuals not only help preserve unique ecosystems but also experience personal wellbeing through meaningful community engagement and the therapeutic benefits of working with others.



Bathurst Copper Butterfly Credit: [Tessa Barratt](#)



Regent Honeyeater

Growth with Purpose

“ A waterfall starts with a drop of water.
 - Lloyd Dolan, Academic Lead First Nations, Charles Sturt University

Tree planting day: 18 September 2024 at Bathurst Charles Sturt University campus



Educational piece: Growth with Purpose website

csu.edu.au/social-impact/environment/growth-with-purpose

Intern Interview with Meg Cossar

Manager at Wild Mountains Environmental Education Centre

1. What inspired you to become a Manager at Wild Mountains?

My initial inspiration to work in the environmental sector came from a deep love of nature – oceans, waterfalls, trees, grasslands, forests, mangroves and more. Throughout my studies, it became clear that education was the most effective tool to create positive behaviour change in reducing our individual and collective impact on the planet. Therefore, I followed that track. For 10 years, I worked in various settings, including outdoor education centres, schools, universities, national parks and government. All programs were centred on education. It was a natural progression into management. I had improved my program delivery skills over time and am now in a position to lead others to improve their skills and inspire others.

Students wanted to understand Meg's personal motivations and values that drove her commitment to environmental education, as they can provide insight into the passion behind her leadership at Wild Mountains.

2. Can you share an example of a successful initiative implemented by Wild Mountains?

The existence of the Centre itself is a successful initiative. It was built with donations and volunteers. It was not without its challenges, as locals initially objected due to fears about the types of people who might come up the mountain. Thankfully, times have changed, and now Wild Mountains is a valued organisation in the area, supported by the local council.

Wild Mountains Centre is a successful initiative to highlight the tangible impacts and achievements of the organisation illustrating how the organisation effectively contributes to both environmental and community goals.

3. What are the biggest challenges your organisation faces in addressing environmental and social issues?

As a registered charity, like many charities, we are resource poor – in terms of both human and financial resources. Environmental education and conservation doesn't generate much revenue and often costs money. This makes it challenging to increase our reach and remain financially viable.

Many not-for profit environmental organisations encounter many challenges and obstacles, mostly they are resource poor, in terms of human and financial resources.



4. How do you measure the impact of your projects?

After programs are completed, we ask participants to fill out evaluations. Their responses give us an insight into how the program has inspired them. It can be difficult to quantify these things sometimes, as an experience like a transformational program can sit in someone's heart for years and then blossom under the right conditions and at the right time. We have had people contact us years later to say they changed careers or that their experience at Wild Mountains shifted their worldview for the better.

Accountability and continuous improvement are key principles in environmental education.

5. What advice would you give to new advocates looking to make a difference in the community?

Start where you are. Start small. Start with what you've got. Do it with others when possible, to build that sense of energy and support. I think this quote by Margaret Mead sums it up beautifully:

“*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*”
– Margaret Mead

Students looked to Meg for actionable insights for aspiring advocates, seeking inspiration on how individuals can effectively initiate change and foster a sense of community and collaboration in their efforts.

Community and Industry Partners



Julie Fairley
IBM

Client Innovation Centre Leader

IBM

An experienced IBM Project Executive with more than 30 years of proven track record in solving complex business challenges and delivering business transformation across the manufacturing, professional services, government, media, airline, international banking, and telecommunications industries, in Australia, New Zealand, and Asia.

In 2021 Julie was appointed to establish and lead IBM's Client Innovation Centre in Bathurst and build a regional talent pipeline, in collaboration with Charles Sturt University, offering internships to produce industry ready graduates.



James Sherley
IBM

User Experience Consultant

IBM

James focuses on customer and user journey's prioritising empathy in the enterprise design process. With a passion for environmentally sustainable growth and projects, James is constantly striving to include this into any design process. He was excited for the opportunity to collaborate with the Charles Sturt staff and students on this project and is extremely delighted by the outcome.



Howard Neilsen
green street

Founder

Green Street

Howard and his wife live in Samford and enjoy family life with three children and five grandchildren. His early years professional life included working as a teacher, principal, tertiary lecturer, community facilitator, environmental educator and leadership consultant. In his current business and community work he is founder of the Green Street project on household and business sustainability and also convenes the Sustainable Startup Hub and the Samford Sustainable Business Network.



Dr Matthew J Muir
lyka

Co-founder and Chief Veterinarian

Lyka Pet Food

Dr Matthew graduated from Charles Sturt University in 2010 with a double degree in Veterinary Science and Veterinary Biology with first class honours. He has worked in a clinical capacity since this time in addition to co-founding and developing products for Lyka Pet Food, a industry leading fresh food dog food company which is a certified B corp company and winner of the 2024 Telstra Sustainable Business of the Year.



Corey Won
lyka

Business Operations Associate

Lyka Pet Food

Corey has worked at Lyka since 2021, leading a number of their sustainability initiatives within the Business Operations division. During his tenure, he has modelled Lyka's carbon and waste emissions, developed carbon reduction strategies, and oversaw the B Corp certification process for the company.



Meg Cossar
WILD MOUNTAINS

Centre Manager

Wild Mountains Environmental Education Centre

Meg has worked in education including national parks and schools for over 10 years.

“As a Charles Sturt alumnus myself, I spent 6 years living on, in and around the campus at Wagga Wagga. Wiradjuri Country. So It's very personal to me. And I'm very proud of all of you and for what you have all done to really look at increasing the social impact to everyone there. So it makes me very proud.

- Matthew Muir, Lyka Pet Food

Brianna and Edward – Charles Sturt has a strong mission to increase biodiversity across our campus footprint, I loved how you have strengthened this commitment through your link to mindfulness and wellbeing. Your website presents a wonderful opportunity for student engagement, the photos that you took are beautiful and the interactivity with the map works well, wonderful work.

– Zoe Rodwell, Sustainability at Charles Sturt University



Zoe Rodwell



Partnerships Coordinator

Sustainability Charles Sturt

Zoe is a Charles Sturt graduate with qualifications in Communication, Cultural Event Management and Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. Zoe has over fifteen years experience working with Charles Sturt students in community events and innovative education projects. Zoe works closely with our cross-campus team of Student Sustainability Advisers and is passionate about engaging Charles Sturt students with sustainable practice, developing creative communication content, and working with staff to embed sustainability into learning & teaching and student facing initiatives.



Benjamin Heard

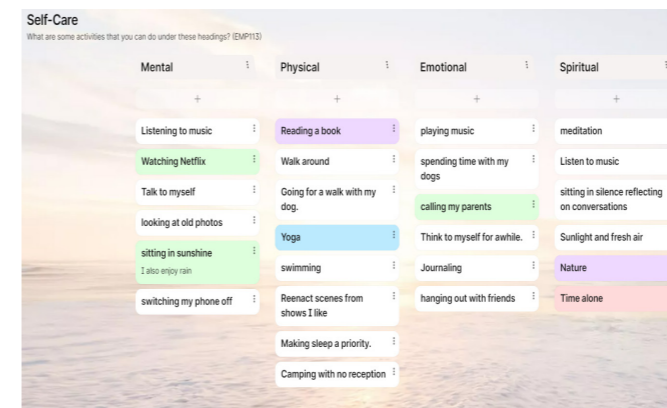


Project Officer

Sustainability Charles Sturt

Ben Heard is part of the Sustainability at Charles Sturt Team, advocating for sustainable best practice across multiple facets of the university, as well as leading a number of biodiversity and resource waste projects for the university. Ben is a Charles Sturt graduate with qualifications in Environmental Science and is currently working towards postgraduate qualifications in Sustainability and Environmental Management. Ben has also held roles within the conservation and ecotourism industry working in some iconic locations across Australia. Through these experiences Ben has developed a flair for connecting people with the environment, and creating awareness and engagement in sustainable practices.

To enhance the delivery of the Social Impact Project Internships, we aimed to integrate sustainable and healthy work practices throughout the program. Interns were consistently encouraged to take breaks, stretch, stay hydrated, and reflect on their progress. Each sprint featured dedicated time for morning check-ins and afternoon mindfulness sessions. These sessions provided an opportunity to pause, learn about mental health literacy, and practice various self-care routines. Creating a safe space for student interns to reflect on the complex issues discussed during the sprints and reminding them of the available support services was crucial to the project's success.



Afternoon Check In



Leaf observation

- Texture
- Colour
- Feel
- Patterns
- Other detail



“As a psychotherapist and environmental educator, I have shared mindfulness techniques with students and clients over the years, and many have reported feeling more relaxed, creative, and open after these sessions. Offering this kind of emotional space, particularly at the end of a student’s day spent in online learning, allows time for synthesis and processing. This time is essential not only for memory retention but also for fostering imagination and new ideas.

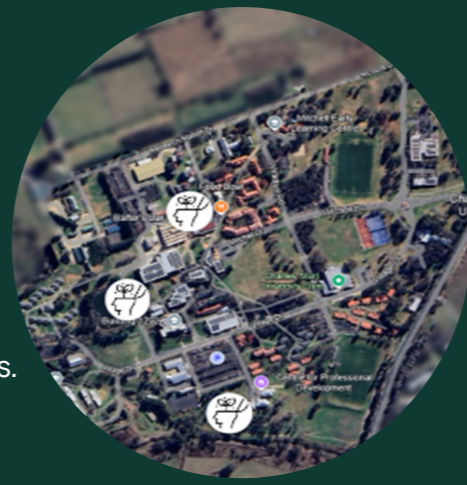
After sessions in which students were invited to participate in a gentle, self-guided framework, I received positive feedback, with many expressing that they genuinely enjoyed the experience. One student, part of a group I worked with more than once, shared that the sessions not only improved her wellbeing but also motivated her to commit to taking positive actions outside of the sessions for her mental health.

I’m thrilled to have supported our future leaders in developing essential self-care and wellbeing tools”.

– Lizz Hills, Trek2Reconnect

Interactive Map

As part of the project, students developed an interactive map which lists the various mindfulness areas on the Bathurst campus. csu.edu.au/social-impact/environment/growth-with-purpose



Pollinator Garden Check in

The purpose of pollination and mindfulness: Pollination allows our plants to provide us our food and help build up our ecosystem. Being mindful of what the environment around you is like can affect your mental state. So by having

This simple exercise can help you manage anxiety and improve your focus. The biodiverse plants in this space may connect you in different ways compared to other spaces. Try this technique in other garden spaces, in your room or next time you are feeling anxious.

Bathurst Dam Mindfulness: Dadirri Method

What does Dadirri mean:

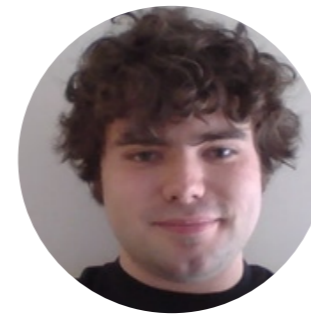
Intern Team

“What a brilliant project! It's such a lot of work to conceptualise and run something like that. Great job, Brianna and Eddie!”
- Emma Rush, Course Director, Charles Sturt University



Brianna Winner

Hello! I'm Brianna, an online student pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree while working as a graphic designer. I'm excited to be part of an environmental sustainability project that allows me to leverage my design skills to create engaging visual content aimed at educating my fellow Charles Sturt University students. This project has not only enabled me to blend my passion for nature with practical experience but has also deepened my understanding of the challenges and opportunities surrounding sustainability.



Edward Pratt

Hi, I'm Edward. I am studying a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Philosophy & Ethics. I joined the environmental social impact subject because I had to choose one of three similar subjects, and it was the one that interested me the most. At first, I was very nervous about the content, but I've come to enjoy it over time. I like the practical nature of the subject; a lot of time is spent planning the project, deciding what it will be, and determining what needs to be done to make it happen.



Sprint 1

Exploring diverse perspectives

Sprint 1 was a busy day. In the morning session, we focused on understanding and navigating OneNote and Brightspace technology. We introduced ourselves and discussed the agenda for the day, covering essential requirements to prepare for what lay ahead.

After that, we attended the panel discussion with industry partners who addressed the important topic of Environmental Sustainability.

Our panel included:

- Meg Cossar, Centre Manager at Wild Mountains
- Julie Fairley, Global Women Breakthrough Leader, Project Executive at IBM, Design Thinking Champion IBM
- Howard Neilson, Consulting Director at NACC Sustainability Team and Founder of Green Street

Following the panel session, our team collaboratively addressed the key issues and articulated initial concepts for our project, including the technological components we will implement in the upcoming sprints. At the end of the day, we engaged in a mindfulness exercise to assess our wellbeing and identify strategies for grounding ourselves, ensuring we could effectively refocus after a challenging day of work.

Sprint 2

Working with complexity, embracing diversity

During the morning session, after our morning check-in, we explored the design frameworks utilised in developing our sprints, specifically discussing the, in relation to best practices, First Nations knowledge sharing methods, and Universal Design principals. We also examined the Cynefin Framework and the Breath Method, emphasising the co-design process.

Our guest speaker, Dr. Hugh Breakey, Senior Research Fellow in Moral Philosophy at Griffith University's Institute for Ethics, Governance & Law, enriched our discussions with insights on ethical considerations pertinent to our project. We concluded the morning with a reflective session to contemplate the application of the concepts covered.

In the afternoon, we performed an appreciative inquiry, discussing multiple issues and how our projects could address them. These ranged from what we knew to be working well to what could be done to explore and address these issues. We came up with some project issues to present to our partners in Sprint 3. During our afternoon mindfulness session we went outside to our respective gardens and were asked to find a leaf. We did an observation session, describing what we saw, felt, and smelled. We ended the day remembering that it is good to stop and observe the small things in life.

Sprint 3

Co-design in action

This week, we had a morning check-in and finalised the project details before presenting and consulting with industry partners. Interns presented their ideas and spoke about some of the challenges they had faced. Our partners from Wild Mountains and IBM spoke to the interns about refocusing the project and possibly adjusting the scope. James Sherley, Experience Consultant at IBM, offered to support any IT initiatives the interns may have.

After the partner consultation, we had a debrief and refocused the project before breaking for lunch.

In the afternoon, the project needed a little realignment. We spent some time talking alignment strategies before meeting with our internal partners.

We met with Zoe Rodwell from Sustainability at Charles Sturt, who offered new opportunities for the project, leading to some positive outcomes.

Before finishing for the day, we had a break and a focused mindfulness session, preparing for the upcoming changes.

It was impressive how you started with such a very large idea, and through co-design sprints, you distilled this down to an achievable project.

- Julie Fairley, IBM

Sprint 4

Co-design in action

In Sprint 4, our team focused on enhancing the website layout for our project. We actively engaged with our partners, Julie Fairley, Client Innovation Centre Leader at IBM Australia, Meg Cossar, Manager at Wild Mountains and Corey Won, Business Operations Associate at Lyka Pet Food. Corey presented his panel talk to us informing us of how Lyka meets their environmental sustainability targets and how the business is built around these practices. We then presented our project updates and the partners provided valuable feedback on our presentation. This collaborative effort helped us refine our approach and alignment with our partners' perspectives.

A significant milestone was our meeting with Therese King, the Manager of the Charles Sturt Campus Facility in Bathurst, during which we confirmed the necessary signage requirements and obtained approval for our project. Following these discussions, we dedicated time to refine the website's content, aiming to create an informative and engaging platform that effectively represents our project's goals and sustainability initiatives.

With this critical input and approval, our team then shifted focus to refining the education content, ensuring it was clear concise, and compelling enough to articulate the importance of our project and its sustainability objectives, ultimately laying a solid foundation for future outreach and engagement efforts. This comprehensive approach allowed us to create a website that is not only informative but also a true reflection of our commitment to sustainability and collaboration.



Thank you

Sprint 5

Ready for impact

In Sprint 5, we confirmed and finalised the finer aspects of our project. This included determining where the plaques with the QR code would be located on the Bathurst campus, how our budget would be spent, and how we would present the project to external partners. Our team worked with Rebecca Hambilton, who integrated our content into a website to ensure we were satisfied with the final layout.

As a team, we made final edits to the text that would be featured on the website and Noelia Roman created the interactive map showcasing the Bathurst campus hotspots with the mindfulness information we provided. We then worked on the presentation for our industry partners. We practised reading through a PowerPoint presentation, demonstrating our website, now live, and elaborated further on our project.

We presented to Julie Fairley, Client Innovation Centre Leader at IBM Australia, Meg Cossar, Manager at Wild Mountains, both of whom were pleased with our project and presentation. Some adjustments needed to be made, so we prepared them before our next partner joined us. We then spent some time with Howard Neilson, Consulting Director at NACC Sustainability Team and Founder of Green Street, who spoke to us about ways to encourage students to continue being ambassadors for environmental sustainability at Charles Sturt.

We finished the day discussing mindfulness and preparing to implement the project on our planting day.

Project outcomes

The project successfully engaged participants in environmental activities, resulting in increased community awareness and stronger individual commitments to sustainability practices. Twenty-three people registered to attend the event, with several more showing up. Participants included students, university staff and community partners. A total of 170 trees were planted 20 each of Blakely's Eucalyptus, Yellow Box, Hedge Wattle, Hopbush, 40 Acacia Dealbata, 10 each of Hardenbergia, Dianella, Poa Tussock and 20 Lomandra.

The project website, Growth with Purpose csu.edu.au/social-impact/environment/growth-with-purpose, has received over 54 views since it was launched on October 1, 2024. We hope that the number of views increases once the three plaques are set up across the Bathurst Campus.

Project impact

The project fostered a stronger sense of community, enhanced local biodiversity, and educated participants on environmental responsibility, ultimately inspiring continued efforts to protect the environment.

Project recommendations

Future initiatives should focus on expanding community involvement, providing additional educational resources, and creating follow-up programs to maintain engagement and assess long-term sustainability impacts.

As spaces on the Bathurst campus are developed, it is important to update the mindfulness map accordingly.

Thank you to the following staff from Charles Sturt for their assistance throughout the project.



Rachel Cavallaro

Student Wellbeing Advisor
Division of Safety, Security and Wellbeing



Matthew Olsen

Digital Media Technologist
Division of Learning and Teaching



Simon Fraser

Digital Media Technologist
Division of Learning and Teaching

Thank you to our guest lecturer, Dr. Hugh Breakey.



Senior Research Fellow in Moral Philosophy

Griffith University's Institute for Ethics, Governance, and Law

Hugh is Deputy Director and Senior Research Fellow in moral philosophy at Griffith University's Institute for Ethics, Governance and Law. He has extensive experience in the application of ethical, legal, and political philosophy to a wide array of challenging practical fields.

A final thank you to all the partners who participated and supported the student interns throughout the Social Impact Project: Environmental Sustainability.





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