Project Title: Creating Tree Ambassadors  
Project Team: Mary Arthur, Lynne Rieske-Kinney, Nic Williamson, Amanda Williams, Ellen Crocker, Jerry Hart  
Reporting Period: Final: January 1, 2016-December 31, 2016  
Amount of Award: $32,636  
Amount Spent: $31,288  
Amount Remaining: $1,348

Project summary:  
Urban trees contribute substantially to ecological, economic, and social sustainability. However, at <17% canopy cover, the UK campus has less cover than Lexington (25%) which has much less than Cincinnati (39%). Founded in September 2014 and partially funded by a Sustainability Challenge Grant starting in January 2015, the Urban Forest Initiative has defined its goals generally to amplify the perception, value and function of the urban forest on campus and beyond. We created an interdisciplinary and collaborative working group of on- and off-campus professionals to impact outreach, operations, and academics with relevance to urban trees; developed a website to support urban tree education and outreach; created and piloted an Adopt-a-Tree program for K-college; and developed on-campus curricular linkages to engage students.

With these successes propelling us, in fall 2015 our goals for the 2016 SCG were to conduct two novel pilot projects while enhancing ongoing efforts. First, working with local schools and organizations, we piloted a community-based program of Tree Ambassadors to enhance awareness, appreciation, and, ultimately, the care, of our urban trees. Second, we used the campus tree assessment as a springboard to engage the UK community in documenting tree status, health, and planting/site conditions, providing opportunities for students to make positive contributions to our campus tree canopy. We also created an interactive tree map using the PPD-funded campus tree inventory that allows viewers to obtain detailed information about individual trees and to email a tree. Our project enhanced sustainability by engaging diverse campus and local communities in knowledge about urban trees, tree care, and the value of the urban tree canopy. We measure the success of these Tree Ambassador projects in direct involvement of K-12 and UK students and community members, the collection of urban tree data linked to enhanced tree care, and engagement with various outreach mechanisms.

Objectives:  
Our goal was to develop and cultivate ‘Tree Ambassadors’ within our local community through targeted programs designed to increase the knowledge and involvement necessary to develop and maintain our urban tree canopy. We envisioned this as a novel
and far-reaching urban and community forestry program that we hoped would become embedded in operations, academic, outreach, and research components of the University and larger community, sustainably funded through extramural sources within two years. We had four objectives:

1. **Creating Tree Ambassadors**: We piloted a model for building local capacity for tree care in our community by extending our successful outreach and education program (Adopt-a-Tree plus related curriculum). Our intention was to work within three school/neighborhood communities, linking the curriculum to mapping of campus trees, and ultimately tree care. When we hit road blocks to this approach, we regrouped and took a different tact, detailed below.

2. **Mobilizing tree ambassadors for campus tree health and care status**: We worked closely with UK PPD to further develop the UK campus tree canopy database linked to the 2015 campus tree assessment, engaging experiential learning for UFI interns. We trained three students in conducting tree assessments, assessed 2600 trees of the 5950 trees mapped on campus, and continue to investigate more effective means of engaging and creating citizen scientists. In addition, we created an interactive campus tree map.

3. **Curricular Connections**: We further developed cross-cutting curricular and extra-curricular connections linking urban trees to sustainability on UK campus, increasing student appreciation of, and proficiency in, the relationship between urban trees and the sustainability triple bottom line.

4. **Building local community and urban forestry capacity**: We continued to build local urban forestry capacity within the greater Lexington/Bluegrass regions through outreach to and collaboration with local schools and area colleges, a growing network of urban forest champions and educators in Lexington, and local government. We were also successful in garnering our first extramural support for UFI through a grant from the Kentucky Division of Forestry.

**Methods and Outcomes:**

**Objective 1: Creating Tree Ambassadors**

**Methods:**

We developed partnerships on campus and with FCPS to extend and expand the Adopt-a-tree curriculum to K-12 and college classrooms. Our plans for building local capacity for tree care were modified from the original intention to reach out to three school/neighborhood communities, which proved challenging. The outreach activities conducted, taken together, provided opportunities to people from a range of ages and backgrounds to develop skills and knowledge about multiple facets of urban trees. By partnering with a varied group of organizations and individuals on different events we helped to build a growing community of urban and community tree supporters.
Specific Outcomes:

- **Student and community engagement:**
  - UFI Coordinator Nic Williamson worked with Tresine Logsdon (FCPS) and Bridget Abernathy (Bluegrass Greensource) to incorporate Adopt-a-Tree and associated curriculum into the newly developed FCPS Sustainability Report Card, to which all FCPS teachers have access and will thus be exposed to urban tree curricular ideas.
  - Nic Williamson reached FCPS teachers at the FCPS Sustainability Coordinator Training with a presentation on urban forestry curricular programming that UFI can offer in classrooms. **Total reached: ~40 teachers**
  - Nic Williamson gave urban and community forestry presentations in multiple FCPS classrooms, including Yates Elementary, Bryan Station High School, and Locust Trace AgriScience Center. **Total reached: 110 youth.**
  - Nic Williamson and UFI interns worked with students from the Bluegrass Youth Sustainability Council, presenting urban and community forestry information and collaborating with them to reach more students. **Total reached: 8 students.**
  - Undergraduate student Grace Coy, with funding from the Sustainability Research Fellowship, delivered Urban Tree Health and Care training sessions through neighborhood associations, at the UK Arboretum, in Frankfort, and to middle and high school students through two summer programs for youth. (See Appendix I). **Total reached: 82 adults; 40 youth**
  - Dr. Ellen Crocker organized and facilitated three additional fall workshops, on a range of topics in collaboration with Doug McLaren (retired), Rob Paratley (UK Forestry), and Heather Wilson (LFUCG). **Total reached: 90 adults**
  - UFI summer interns Brianna Damron and Jonathan Gomez (the latter funded by TFISE) organized and implemented a “Trees of Castlewood Park” educational tree walk and service event mulching trees with Seedleaf’s SEEDS program. **Total reached: 11 youth**
  - Interns Brianna Damron and Jonathan Gomez organized the “Castlewood Park Tree Festival” that led to ~50 trees mulched. In addition, they developed a “Castlewood Park Trees” brochure which was handed out at the event. (See Appendix II). **Total reached: ~90 adults and children**
  - During 2016 UFI hosted four speakers who presented public and campus seminars and a film. **Total reached: ~500 people**
  - UFI intern Amanda Williams completed a campus tree walk, linking 50 tagged trees through QR codes to tree information housed on the UKnTrees website. **Total reached: unknown, but we will eventually be able to tally the number of hits to the website accessed through QR codes.**
  - UFI intern Keegan Smith started the Urban Forestry Club, for which Nic Williamson serves as the staff advisor. **Total student involvement: 10**
  - Web analytics used to track indirect contact show that 2016 has been a productive year; over 20,000 page views and over 4,800 users of the UKnTrees website. (See Appendix III for more Web Metrics).
- **Campus as living laboratory:**
  - Mulching events engaged students through campus outreach and social media, extra credit in classes, and through student groups reaching out to UFI requesting to collaborate on a campus event.
  - Working with Jerry Hart and Nic Williamson, UFI interns learned skills for campus tree health assessments.
  - The campus tree walk is a passive approach to using the campus as a living laboratory.

- **New collaborations:**
  - The above activities led to new collaborations with LFUCG Urban Forestry to conduct workshops and a mulching event, Seedleaf, McConnell Springs, UK Arboretum, Keep Frankfort Forested, Lexington Art League, Bluegrass Greensource, North Limestone CDC, and Town Branch Tree Experts.
  - Collaboration with Bluegrass Youth Sustainability Council has led to the establishment of a high school branch of the Urban Forest Initiative, which is currently headed by Gabrielle Peterson of Lafayette High School.
  - In an effort to regionalize UFI collaborations and outreach, Mary Arthur, Lynne Rieske-Kinney, and Nic Williamson met with campus and/or community members in Frankfort, Danville (Centre College) and Richmond (Eastern Kentucky University) to discuss means of creating regional Tree Ambassadors and furthering collaborative urban and community forestry activities.

- **Scholarly products:**
  - Lynne Rieske-Kinney organized and moderated an urban forestry symposium for the 2016 North American Forest Insect Work Conference, June 1, 2016, in Washington, DC titled “Rediscovering our Urban Forests.”
**Long-term impacts:**

UFI’s activities are increasingly visible on the UK campus and throughout the regional community. In creating tree ambassadors who are aware of and educated about urban tree issues, UFI has helped to foster a network of individuals committed to improving our urban forest. We hope that this will have long-term impacts by shifting attitudes regarding urban trees and unifying a base of concerned citizens about the state of our urban forest.

**Objective 2: Mobilizing tree ambassadors for campus tree health and care status**

**Methods:**

Our intention was to pilot a web-based reporting mechanism that we could use in conjunction with campus curricular and extra-curricular activities to collect tree assessment data on mapped campus trees. We envisioned this as a way to engage experiential education, to initiate development of a citizen science project, and to link these activities to an interactive campus map. By and large, we accomplished this objective, though we fell short of fully implementing a citizen science project.

**Specific Outcomes:**

- **Student and community engagement:**
  - Nic Williamson fully implemented an interactive tree map which links the ~6,000 mapped trees on campus to clickable dots which enable the user to read details of the tree (species, diameter) and email the tree if so desired. Notably, the map was used by GEN100 students in their Adopt-a-Tree assignment. **Total reached: ~20 tree emails received; over 750 page views in 2016** (See Appendix IV).
  - The capacity to enter tree health and care status of individual trees via web-based data collection was also achieved, and used to enable UFI interns Keegan Smith, Brianna Damron and Jonathan Gomez to record information on 2600 campus trees.
  - Campus mulching events on April 5th, October 15th, and November 8th resulted in the mulching of ~250 trees around the William T. Young Library and the Main Building front lawn: **Total number of UK students reached: ~170.**
  - UFI interns Amanda Williams and Rachel Cook used social media to post information about campus trees, tree events, and related topics. (See Appendix VI – Web Metrics)

- **Campus as living laboratory:**
  - Engagement with the interactive campus map is facilitated through campus curricular connections (see objective 3).
  - Campus mulching events also engaged students in connecting to campus trees as a component of the campus as a living laboratory.

- **New collaborations:**
  - New collaborations were established with two service organizations on campus, Kappa Alpha Theta and Alpha Phi Omega.
The UK student-initiated and led Urban Forestry Club could also be considered a new collaboration. Borne of student awareness of urban forestry facilitated through UFI activities and programming, this club organized officers and went on a guided tree tour (N. Williamson) of the Lexington Cemetery in fall 2016.

- **Scholarly products:**
  - None.

**Long-term impacts:**

These activities are building momentum on campus among students and student groups. For example, student service organizations now reach out to UFI to plan events. While we fell short of full implementation of our citizen science goal, this was in part due to the clear demand for more information about urban trees and educational programming. With a greater network of trained individuals now available, we are much better positioned to conduct an urban-tree focused citizen science project in the future.

**Objective 3: Curricular Connections**

**Methods:**

We worked with Drs. Ali Rossi and Scott Smith to pilot an urban tree curriculum that was taught by UFI Coordinator Nic Williamson. Outreach to Dr. Josh Adkins at Transylvania University was a secondary approach used to reach additional students. Continued incorporation of urban forestry topics in Forest Ecology and in Forest Entomology increased the number of students exposed to urban forestry while simultaneously continuing to build the tree benefits component of the campus map.

**Specific Outcomes:**

- **Student and community engagement:**
  - Nic Williamson worked with 5 GEN100 instructors over the course of the spring and fall semesters, giving presentations and campus tree walks to 9 different sections of UK CAFÉ students. **Total reached: ~175 UK students**
  - Urban forestry module included in FOR 340. **Total reached: ~30 UK undergraduates**
  - Urban forestry module included in environmental science class at Transylvania University. **Total reached: ~20 Transy students**

- **Campus as living laboratory:**
  - Nic Williamson led a GEN100 expert speaker series which involved a discussion about urban and community forestry and followed with a tour of the urban forest around AgNorth. **Total reached: ~27 UK undergraduates**
  - Ellen Crocker designed and taught an urban forestry and plant health mini-course for GEAR UP Kentucky high school students in summer 2016, at which Nic Williamson was a guest instructor. **Total reached: ~18**
• **New collaborations:**
  - Dr. Ali Rossi, GEN 100 coordinator, reached out to UFI to request that we provide urban and community forestry content to GEN 100 classes. This led, in part, to her successful SCG to incorporate urban forestry into GEN 100 in 2017.

• **Scholarly products:**
  - None.

**Long-term impacts:**

Through these efforts, UFI has connected to various curricular programs to increase student understanding of and appreciation for urban and community forestry. By involving students at UK, Transylvania, and other programs, we have engaged a large number of young adults and helped to foster connections between conservation-related classroom content and real-world applications in urban forestry.

**Objective 4: Building local community and urban forestry capacity**

**Methods:**

UFI co-leads Mary Arthur and Lynne Rieske-Kinney and UFI Coordinator Nic Williamson have continued to build and enhance connections among diverse groups and resources for increasing urban and community forestry efforts in Lexington and regionally (Appendix V). These efforts have been accomplished through several avenues. First, UFI Working Group meetings have continued to be a vital avenue for engaging the urban forestry community. In 2016 we held 6 UFI WG meetings with average attendance of 15 people representing X organizations. Secondly, we serve variously on the LFUCG-appointed Tree Canopy Committee and on the Executive Committee of this committee, which is working to launch a new non-profit organization, *Trees Lexington!*. In addition, Nic Williamson serves on the board of America in Bloom Lexington. Finally, with a seed grant from the Kentucky Division of Forestry and another proposal pending, we are extending our work regionally to other communities and associated campuses.

**Specific Outcomes:**

Specific outcomes of this component of our work do not fall neatly into the categories requested. Instead, these efforts contribute to the rising groundswell of activity in our region.

**Long-term impacts:**

UFI has provided a focal point for capturing urban and community forestry efforts on the UK campus, in Lexington, and in the Bluegrass Region (Appendix VI). By providing a framework for a multitude of urban forest interests, from education and outreach to volunteerism to research to government and private entities, UFI is serving as a clearinghouse for urban forest activities, generating synergisms and capturing unprecedented momentum.
Reflection:

Insights:
During this year of funding from the SCG the Urban Forest Initiative continued to build on our success in bringing together a group of people from UK, Lexington, and the region, each of whom are passionate about and actively engaged in enhancing the urban forest and seemingly excited to have a working group with which to combine efforts in pursuit of that goal. The energy and excitement generated within the UFI Working Group has continued to extend into other local initiatives, helping to legitimize and support efforts on campus and in Lexington to expand funding and positions for urban tree care and planting. Funding from the SCG has been pivotal in enabling us to accomplish this work and to lay the groundwork for a more permanent role for the Urban Forest Initiative and associated efforts.

Our association with TFISE as an official Working Group continues to be important to our success, particularly to the seminar series and the UFI Working Group meetings, as well as to our efforts to secure extramural funding. Support for an undergraduate intern has also been very helpful to our ability to connect effectively with students.

We have perhaps been most surprised by the incredible traction that UFI has garnered in the past 2-1/2 years. We correctly identified the need for a UK-based presence for urban forestry that could support a diverse group of stakeholders in coalescing around shared work in pursuit of greater awareness and valuing of urban trees in our community. We have been successful in partnering with a varied group of individuals and organizations, and continue to expand our reach through collaboration.

The challenges we face going forward relate to three key goals or concerns:

First, building a sustainable funding base that will enable us to persist is at the forefront of our current efforts and concerns. Most of the funding we have applied to thus far focuses on building reginal efforts to grow urban and community forestry efforts.

Second, we are cognizant of the value of the curricular and extra-curricular elements of the UFI presence on the UK campus in raising engagement among the UK community around the tree canopy and don’t want to lose that component of our work as we become increasingly successful in capturing extramural funding. Therefore, finding an avenue for a base level of UFI funding that does not take us off campus will be key, along with finding avenues to continue to build on the training and educational opportunities that expand efforts to conduct urban forest stewardship.

Finally, we continue to find it necessary to define, and redefine, the purview of our work, and to separate the goals and purpose of the UFI Working Group from that of the UFI core group. This is becoming simultaneously both more important to do and more apparent as both develop with time. For example, at times working group members turn to our UFI core group (L. Rieske-Kinney, M. Arthur, N. Williamson) with suggestions for
additional work that we could be doing, rather than seeing the Working Group more accurately as a team of people who share responsibility for various tasks and programming. We tend to see ourselves as an “incubator,” developing new tools and ideas that are then shared with other entities to extend more broadly.

**Next steps:**
Our next steps are three-fold:

i. To accomplish new project-specific efforts through new funding from the Sustainability Challenge Grant program for 2017;

ii. To continue to support and nurture the activities that UFI is engaged in: providing support and collaboration to UK and high school students wanting to work with UFI; maintaining curricular connections on and off UK campus; continuation of the Adopt-a-tree program; maintaining an urban and community forestry social media presence; continuation of the seminar and film series and the Tree Talk articles; continuing to add data to the interactive campus map and engage our community through this online tool, and

iii. To develop a more sustainable funding base. We had a stated goal of becoming sustainably funded in the span of two years. In 2016 we were awarded a grant from the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) for $20K. We also applied through KDF for USFS funding through the Landscape Scale Restoration program (pending). We are currently working on a proposal to the USDA Higher Education Challenge grant program (due in April) to support the development and implementation of an Urban and Community Forestry undergraduate certificate. Funding for 2017 through the SCG is providing much-needed additional bridge funding until we can be financially self-sufficient through these and other mechanisms which we are actively pursuing.

**Feedback:**
Our experience with the Sustainability Challenge Grant Program has been overwhelmingly positive. As mentioned above, there are significant pieces of our success this year that could not have been accomplished without the logistical, intellectual, and monetary support provided by this funding. Logistical support from TFISE is also critical to our success as a working group. The internship program has also been very fruitful for our work, enabling us to get more done while engaging ideas from students who bring tremendous insight, intelligence and energy to the table.

**Budget analysis:**
We were awarded $32,636 through the Sustainability Challenge Grant Program, $31,331 of which was allocated to personnel, including our full-time UFI Coordinator, Nic Williamson ($25,931), summer and school year interns ($5,400), plus travel ($1,305). We spent slightly more on travel than allocated ($1,327), and less on personnel ($29,961 spent compared to $31,331 allocated), leaving $1,348 in funds remaining. The shortfall in our personnel spending comes from interns working less than expected, mostly in the summer. We would like to spend the remaining $1,348 on our current UFI
The intern, Brianna Damron, which would allow her to work 10 hours/week instead of 5 hours/week, or possibly to extend her work with UFI into the summer months.

Creating Tree Ambassadors
Project and actual expenses by quarter

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<td>Remaining balance</td>
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How healthy are your neighborhood trees?
Volunteer to learn more about keeping your trees healthy!

UK’s Urban Forest Initiative is seeking volunteers interested in getting their neighborhoods involved in a brief (2 hours or less) hands-on training and survey session on tree health and care. In each session, participants will:

- Learn about urban tree benefits
- Learn to spot signs of unhealthy trees
- Assess the health of neighborhood trees
- Learn to support tree health
- Complete a survey evaluation of the program

All trainings are FREE. Participants will walk away with a “goody bag” full of tree-related items and educational materials as well as access to an interactive map of your neighborhoods’ street trees.

To secure your spot, use the survey URL below:

[tinyurl.com/treetraining](https://tinyurl.com/treetraining)

Schedule a day for the month of June — we will come to you but dates are going fast! Each day has options for morning, afternoon, or evening.

- Thursday, June 2nd
- Tuesday, June 7th
- Thursday, June 9th
- Tuesday, June 14th
- Thursday, June 16th
- Tuesday, June 21st
- Thursday, June 23rd
- Tuesday, June 28th
- Thursday, June 30th

Want to learn more? Email Grace Coy at [grace.coy@uky.edu](mailto:grace.coy@uky.edu) with any comments or questions.
Tell me a little bit about yourself.
Sure! My name is Papa. I'm a bur oak. That means I've got some pretty tough bark and unique acorns. I won't be able to tell you how old I am — I lost track after 200 years. I've put on some growth recently, so I'm about 561 cm (221 inches) around my trunk. The bigger I get, the more benefits I provide! Right now, I'm doing some pretty great stuff, like contributing to cleaner air and water. I also reduce atmospheric carbon by 1,560 pounds, and intercept 15,416 gallons of storm water every year. Not to brag.

Do you have any family here?
Yes! There are several other kinds of oaks in Castlewood. We bur oaks are some of the oldest trees in the park; I'd like to think of us as the park's guardians. We've seen trees come and go, and know it's difficult to grow and maintain healthy urban trees. With all the recent projects in the park, I can tell that folks really care about us.
Appendix III: Web Metrics


Above: Greater web usage is seen during the spring and fall semesters in 2016, attributed to outreach efforts such as the seminar series and K-12 and GEN100 education. Red dots outline 2016.

Facebook Insights - post reach (2016)

Above: Social media metrics are useful in tracking post effectiveness. The two top performing posts of 2016 were cross-posted on multiple pages, leading in one instance to over 1,000 people reached.
Appendix IV: UK Interactive Tree Map

UK Interactive Tree Map

These are the 3 layers which can be turned on and off using the icon in the upper right corner of the map:

1. **Tree Locator** - find basic information (species, size) or send an email to a UK Campus tree
2. **Adopted UK Trees** - UK Campus trees that have been adopted
3. **Tree Benefits to UK Campus Buildings** - ecosystem services provided to UK buildings by surrounding trees

Do you have a favorite tree on campus? Participating in the *Adopt-a-Tree* program is your chance to highlight a tree that is important to you.

Send an email to any of the trees on the map with the "Send Tree Email" function. "Why email a tree?" you might ask...

- Trees are cool!!!
- Interested in knowing more about a particular tree?
- See a concern with a tree that UK Facilities should know about?
- Because sometimes trees just understand things better than people...

Map live at this link: https://ukntrees.ca.uky.edu/treemap
# Appendix V: UFI Working Group Participants in 2016

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Email contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridget Abernathy</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Cook</td>
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<td>Brianna Damron</td>
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<td>Greg Doyle</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Paratley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bryan Radcliffe</td>
<td>Sayre Upper School educator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bjrdrcl0953@twc.com">bjrdrcl0953@twc.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynne Rieske-Kinney</td>
<td>UK Professor - Forest Entomology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Todd Rounsaville</td>
<td>UK Arboretum Native Plant Curator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:todd.rounsaville@uky.edu">todd.rounsaville@uky.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
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Appendix VI: UFI Photos in 2016


Left: Summer tree health workshops coordinated by Sustainability Research Fellow Grace Coy.

Right: Campus tree signage created and installed for a 50-tree walk by UFI Sustainability Intern Amanda Williams.

Left: Over 100 volunteers from Kappa Alpha Theta mulched trees around W.T. Young as part of Tree Campus USA 2016.