

# SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND LAND USE

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences (NRES) draws on its strong interdisciplinary base to promote sustainable agricultural and land use practices. The fundamental goal of this initiative is to nourish society without degrading soil, water, biodiversity, and wild places. As the home to the Agroecology and Sustainable Agriculture Program (ASAP), which was founded in 1988 and is the oldest sustainable agriculture program at a university in the United States, the department provides research and educational opportunities for students and the community to address issues in agriculture, surrounding landscapes, and food-systems. The scope of issues addressed by ASAP is relevant from local to international venues. Expansion of ASAP efforts through the addition of endowed scholars and student support will grow this well established, yet underfunded, area and empower the on- and off-campus community working to advance ecologically and socially responsible agricultural production through better stewardship. Through study of local, organic, perennial farming systems, species interactions, and social outcomes, we can improve our ability to create an agriculture that is productive, equitable, and conserving of soil, water, and ecological integrity. By partnering with local community groups and farmers, ASAP has established U of I as an anchor institution that serves its community by engaging current and future farmers and consumers.

## OPPORTUNITY:

Rising demand for food, fiber, and food, coupled with global change, are placing unprecedented demands on our lands and natural resources. Located in the heart of the Midwest and the shadow of Chicago, NRES provides an ideal venue for young learners from farm and urban backgrounds who are interested in agriculture and environmental changes that will truly define the well-being of future generations.

To effectively apply principles of applied ecology and environmental science to agronomic systems, we must hire and endow faculty members in sustainable agriculture, expand research experiences through scholarships and fellowships, add new faculty positions and visiting scholars, and expand both educational and outreach activities. Although several faculty in the Departments of NRES, Crop Sciences, and Agricultural and Biological Engineering have expertise in component disciplines, no one faculty member in the College of ACES is dedicated full time to agricultural sustainability. Given the growing importance of this topic and the region's stature in agriculture, we need to raise its profile. Increased capacity in this discipline will serve as a catalyst to synergize expertise across the College of ACES and the Illinois campus. Collaborative activities with ACES faculty in related disciplines will be supported.

Funding of this campaign priority will support the hiring of additional faculty members and expert visiting scholars to the ASAP program in NRES. An intellectual refuge will be provided for students and faculty interested in exploring transformative approaches to agriculture beyond mainstream agriculture.



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## RESOURCES REQUIRED:

### 1. Graduate Fellowships

A top priority for support is the graduate student scholars program, which supports visionary graduate students, whose research is in underfunded areas (e.g. sustainable agriculture), who seek to propel change in the way food and other agricultural products are produced, prepared, and/or consumed. We propose an annual allocation to sustain support of two or three graduate students each year. Priority for support will be given to students who partner with civic-society groups working toward agriculture and food-system change or that are working in collaboration with projects associated with visiting scholars.

### 2. Visiting Scholars

Our second priority is to engage visiting scholars and provide funds to support activities that can leverage change on campus or in our communities. Scholars will be selected for their expertise and passion for sustainable agriculture with a goal of invigorating and expanding collaborative research and expanding the education of Illinois students.

### 3. ASAP Educational Outreach

Our third priority is to annually allocate funds from this endowment to support educational activities and outreach. These events will address critical (sometimes controversial) topics relating to sustainable agriculture and land use. Activities will be integrated into scholars' activities to engage and involve the sustainable agriculture community to encourage and promote positive action.

### 4. Endowed Professorships

To ensure the growth of this important research area, we seek to support professorships or a chair in sustainable agriculture. An endowed professorship will be instrumental in ensuring continued national prominence and visibility of the program.

*[agroecologyandsustainableagriculture.org](http://agroecologyandsustainableagriculture.org)*



College of Agricultural, Consumer  
and Environmental Sciences