

Please submit this completed application and any relevant supporting documentation by the deadline listed on the SSC website to [Sustainability-Committee@Illinois.edu](mailto:Sustainability-Committee@Illinois.edu). The Working Group Chairs will be in contact with you regarding any questions about the application. If you have any questions about the application process, please contact the SSC at [Sustainability-Committee@Illinois.edu](mailto:Sustainability-Committee@Illinois.edu).

## General Information

**Project Name:** FIBER by Fresh Press: Growing, Renewing, and Improving the Campus Circular Economy

**Total Amount Requested from SSC:** \$36,010

**Project Topic Area(s):**     Energy     Education     Food & Waste  
                                   Land             Water             Transportation

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## Contact Information

Applicant Name: Eric Benson  
Unit/Department: Graphic Design / Art + Design  
Email Address: ebenson@illinois.edu  
Phone Number: 512.538.4211

### Project Team

Name	Department	Email
Matt Turino	Crop Sciences	<a href="mailto:turino@illinois.edu">turino@illinois.edu</a>

## Project Information

**Please provide a brief background of the project, the goals, and the desired outcomes:**

Fresh Press (FP) began officially in 2012 at the University of Illinois through a gracious 2011 grant from the SSC. The award from SSC provided us papermaking and farm equipment and also student labor – an integral part to a sustainable economy (fair wages for all). Eric Benson and Steve Kostell in collaboration with Zack Grant (formerly of the Sustainable Student Farm – SSF) conceived of the idea of closing the loop on farming waste on campus by using corn stover, soybean stalks, prairie grasses, and other vegetable/grass-based agricultural waste fibers to make into paper for campus use. FP and SSF have been successful at developing and implementing interdisciplinary collaborations with a strong focus on student involvement and sustainable awareness. This relationship has utilized student volunteers from SSF and undergraduate and graduate students from all over campus. It provides cross-disciplinary pathways for students/faculty/staff to enrich the educational/research/service experiences that exemplifies the mission of a land grant institution.



In 2016, Fresh Press received another grant from the SSC to start a CSA (community supported agriculture) program (with paper) on campus to help create a circular economy. We used responsible and organic agricultural practices that promote

soil and human health combined with re-using harvest waste for paper production, SSF and FP together began to create a sustainable circular economy on campus where students and faculty are not only consumers but producers. Students on campus were able to purchase the paper they helped grow, harvest, and



manufacture through our circular economy model. In every step of the way, the food and paper are more sustainable than their larger commercial counterparts and since they are on campus, have a much smaller carbon footprint. Also embedded in every action is conversation and awareness about sustainability. The print/digital material we plan to continue to produce through our student labor and coordinator positions for SSF and FP, will explain and visually demonstrate the sustainability of the endeavor and food/product choices the students and faculty are making with their dollars.

As this project grew, so did the desire to move towards an even more sustainable and circular system design of manufacture. From production to consumption, we have identified two sustainability targets (land and water) to minimize environmental impact of the studio and CSA.

This 2017 proposal asks the SSC for funding to continue to support and grow the CSA project. The first need is to conduct a lifecycle analysis (LCA) of Fresh Press, SSF, and the CSA circular economy project. We believe agricultural residue is a more sustainable source for paper products than tree fiber. In a recent lifecycle study by Step Forward Paper, wheat straw residue

paper was shown to have less than half of the negative impact on the environment in comparison to 100% virgin tree fiber paper. However, as Step Forward uses 80% tree fiber and 20% wheat straw, we feel our 100% agricultural fiber papers have a significantly smaller footprint than theirs. However without a detailed LCA, we can not say for sure that this belief is accurate. Finding this out will be new knowledge for the world and make the Fresh Press project even more important and stand out amongst all US universities.

We also have renegotiated with the SSF about including produce in the CSA and have come to a tentative agreement on how much to include and when we will offer shares to ensure the freshest produce. This will greatly enhance the economic viability of our CSA shares over the first round. We plan on increasing our successful partnership with the SSF by joining them consistently on the market on the Quad to not only sell CSA shares but conduct sustainable papermaking workshops (with a new small portable beater) every Thursday from late spring to end of Fall. We plan biking from Fresh Press towing our supplies in a bike trailer (to reduce our carbon footprint).



We also need funding to help fund: additional wages for students, RA for project coordination with farm, bike from The Bike Project, a bike trailer, buying produce from the SSF for our CSA shares, a UV water filter, offset our carbon footprint, new boards and blotters for our drybox, and a suitcase sized beater for Quad and market demos (to increase outreach beyond campus). Each of these purchases will contribute to our eventual goal of achieving small-scale financial independence.

**Please provide a brief summary of how students will be involved in the project:**

Students are the heart and soul of Fresh Press and it's project "Fiber." In the past, students have either volunteers, were Research Assistants, or were paid hourly for their contributions to the initiatives. They are in charge of the strategic planning of the project, marketing, sales, campus education, and product development. There are currently six art and design



undergraduate students who will continue developing the next exciting installment of “Fiber”. The upcoming 2017 Fall Fiber CSA shares will include packs of paper containing 10 sheets of either recycled student artwork (cotton) or Miscanthus fiber. Each share will also include a thank you postcard (made from recycled cotton and student artwork) with printed artwork from Illinois Art + Design students. With our request for funds in this grant proposal, we are asking for funds to continue to pay for student labor for developing Fiber.

**Please provide a brief summary of the project timeline:**

*Our proposed project timeline is as follows:*

**Spring 2018:** Begin LCA, increase our advertising on campus for the new Spring CSA shares, buy requested equipment, and find wholesale paper opportunities in community and beyond.

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**Summer 2018:** Sales of spring CSA continue (if necessary) at SSF Farmer’s Market, evaluate revenue and CSA marketing, offerings, and staff hours to increase profitability.

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**Fall 2018:** Increase our advertising (including new LCA results) on campus and community for the new Fall CSA shares, evaluate our economic self-sufficiency and make changes, and grow wholesale paper opportunities in community and beyond.

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**Spring 2019:** Increase our advertising (including new LCA results) on campus for the new Spring CSA share, grow wholesale paper opportunities in community and beyond, evaluate our economic self-sufficiency, and receive / review LCA results from LCA Consultants <https://lca-net.com/services-and-solutions/>.

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**Summer 2019:** We hope to be self-sufficient by end of summer 2019 term.