**Project Title:** Travel Toolkits for Carbon Offsetting

**Description:** Develop a carbon offsetting toolkit for student organizations, study abroad, or travel-based courses that rely on air travel to get to their destination.

**Background:** Air travel is a large contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Many environmentally conscious individuals who travel have begun purchasing “carbon offsets” to “counter” the impact of environmental pollution and emissions from their flight(s). There are now dozens of carbon offset services where people can pay for services such as tree planting, forest management, greenhouse gas capture programs, compensating farmers for implementing lower emitting agricultural techniques, etc.

While the most efficient solution might be adopting a different form of transportation, we recognize that this not always feasible, especially for international travel. There are many courses and academic programs at UI that require air travel for this reason. For these programs, we’re interested in developing a carbon offset toolkit for travel planners and environmentally conscious students to examine. Our ideal travel toolkit project will combine the following:

1. An Evaluation of Carbon Offsetting Programs

* Which carbon offsetting programs are reputable? What kinds of projects do these programs involve? Read the Minneapolis Star-Tribune article on “Everything you need to know about carbon offsets” to help guide your evaluation of the program and its legitimacy (link below). If added to the final bill, how much would the offsets add to the cost of travelling abroad/by plane for students? How might this contribute to future goals for the campus to become a net zero or net negative GHG emissions? Have other Universities implemented this in their travelling academic programs? What incentives financially or otherwise do academic programs/the University at large have from making this a policy or regular practice? Which classes, programs, and individual staff will you identify to share these results to?

1. Hands-On Environmental Work in the UI/IC Community (Service Based “Offsetting”)

* What projects in the Iowa City community are available for students to better the environment? For example, are there tree planting, community gardening, prairie restoration, energy efficiency, or other volunteer projects to get involved in? Are there any large organizations in Iowa City that could potentially be “partners” in a carbon offset volunteer program for students? Can you approximate a carbon impact/reduction from the work contributed through volunteer hours? Even though the projects involved may not be considered “additional” or “offsetting,” what is the value/benefit to sustainability in the community of these projects (use the three E’s)?

Your project and its findings could end up as part of, or the official guide for carbon offsetting travel toolkit on the University of Iowa Office of Sustainability and the Environment website.

**Helpful Resources:** “Everything you need to know about carbon offsets,” Minneapolis Star-Tribune: <http://www.startribune.com/everything-you-need-to-know-about-carbon-offsets/564515162/>

“A complete guide to carbon offsetting,” The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/sep/16/carbon-offset-projects-carbon-emissions>

“Offsetting Your Carbon Footprint,” University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign: <https://sustainability.illinois.edu/campus-sustainability/positive-steps-to-offsetting-your-carbon-footprint/>

**Desired Outcomes:** A proposed document (written report) with data visualizations and pictures that could potentially be exported or used on the OSE website. Or, assist the UI Office of Sustainability and the Environment Comms and Website team in designing a page and promotional materials.

**Evaluation:** If you created a guide/written report, does it answer all the questions above? Can it be understood and used by travel coordinators at the University? If you created a page on the OSE website or independent website, does it answer all questions in the background section? Is it aesthetically pleasing, and does it fit in with the rest of the site?

**Relevant Courses/Course Areas:**

* Marketing and Sustainability (MKTG 4250), Intro to Sustainability (GEOG/URP/BUS 2013), Web Design Basics (JMC 3611), Graphic Design, Marketing