

## B.A.R.K.S Survey

(Behaviors, Attitudes, Resources, and Knowledge of Sustainability)

### **Summary:**

For my SEF experience, I was hired by Dr. Colin Kuehl to work on a yearlong project that involved (but is not limited to) creating a survey that consists of questions relating to people's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of sustainability. This year the aim had been to obtain STARS certification through the Association of the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). A central component of the STARS certification is a campus sustainability survey that will aid in boosting our points under the STARS rating system. The information from the survey will provide the Green Team and other campus stakeholders valuable information about the campus population's views and knowledge of sustainability in order to continue progress on improving campus sustainability. Additionally, the survey results will be available to various campus departments and organizations for future research.

My tasks included daily contact and collaboration with Dr. Kuehl in order to keep steady progress through weekly goals. The process began with brainstorming ideas for what information we wanted to include in the survey and outlining the final report following its future distribution. To aid the survey formation I researched information related to NIU's Green Team, survey conduction, measuring sustainability on college campuses, and various sustainability surveys conducted by other universities. After my initial research, I began a rough draft of the survey through Qualtrics and compiled a master list of possible questions. In conjunction, I went through IRB training and earned the necessary certification. I was also responsible for contacting various departments at NIU such as Registration and Records, Communications Team, Creative Services, Green Team, and Institutional Effectiveness. Through communicating with these

external departments, we were able to pinpoint what options we had in regards of reducing demographic questions, survey distribution, and survey marketing. Creative Services created a logo for us to market and advertise in order to boost survey participation. The Communication Team explained how to go about making the survey live and boosting survey responses and other ways to advertise.

Once we determined a simple timeline for survey distribution and a rough estimate of when it would go live (January), I finished compiling questions and went over the entire list with Melissa Burlingame and Dr. Kuehl. This meeting was vital in prioritizing the questions we wanted to include in the final survey. Additionally, I created an Excel spreadsheet that included all of these questions and configured how many of each type of questions we have for each targeted participant (student, staff, or faculty). For research analysis purposes Dr. Kuehl and I decided on an environmental scale. My final tasks before IRB submission and the initial test-run of the survey on Dr. Kuehl's class involved organizing the survey questions, writing survey instructions, and incorporating logic for specific target audience questions.

### **Discussion:**

The project was incredibly smooth except for a few bureaucratic obstacles. Keeping daily contact with my mentor was important for continuous progression on creating the final survey product. Rigorous research was also an important facet to this project and has helped increase my expertise in research design. Openly communicating with outside resources and departments became an additional key component to putting the survey on the map for eventual distribution. By reaching out to these departments we were able to meet with Andy Pemberton and Sophia Varcados from NIU's Communication Team and Creative Services. They were both extremely

helpful in helping us creatively develop and brainstorming marketing ideas for the B.A.R.K.S Survey. Overall, through this project so far, I have learned about social science research design, survey design and implementation, navigating Qualtrics survey software, increasing response rates, and accurate question wording. The past semester has been productive with a functional and organized survey to show for it.

**Reflection:**

The SEF program has provided an opportunity for me to not only improve my skillset but also apply the relevant knowledge that I have previously learned from my academic experience. I have found this project to be eye opening and engaging, as it is relevant to the field I plan to pursue after college. The main appeal of this opportunity was to be able to have relevant experience to augment and enhance my résumé. I would encourage anyone looking to go into research or looking for a hands on academic experience to consider opportunities provided by the SEF as it has had a positive impact on my academic career. I feel confident in my completed work so far and look forward to continuing this project with Dr. Kuehl.

# B.A.R.K.S Survey

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Start of Block: Introduction

Q1



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Q2 You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to learn what the NIU community thinks about sustainability. If you decide to participate, we will ask you to answer this web-based survey with a series of questions involving your behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge of sustainability. We will not have any way of identifying anyone who completes the survey. This survey should take around 15 minutes. There are no risks in taking this survey. You may refuse to participate and you may change your mind about being in the study and quit after the study has started. If you have any questions about this research project or if you think you may have been injured as a result of your participation, please contact Professor Colin Kuehl, Department of Political Science, Northern Illinois University ([ckuehl@niu.edu](mailto:ckuehl@niu.edu)).

- I AGREE to participate.
  - I DO NOT AGREE to participate.
-

Q3 Are you 18 years of age or older?

Yes, I am 18 years of age or older

No, I am under the age of 18

End of Block: Introduction

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Start of Block: Demographic

Q4 Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this survey. The answers you provide are essential to the success of our research. You will first answer a few demographic questions followed by the rest of the survey. Your answers are confidential.

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Q5 Are you a student, faculty, or staff member?

If you are a faculty or staff member taking classes, please select "faculty" or "staff" accordingly.

Student

Faculty

Staff

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Q6 What is your gender?

- Male
  - Female
  - Transgender male
  - Transgender female
  - Gender variant/non-conforming
  - Not listed \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prefer not to say
- 

Q7 What is your age group?

▼18-24 years old ... 65+ years old

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Q8 I identify my ethnicity as:  
(check all that apply)

- Caucasian
  - Asian
  - Black or African American
  - American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish
  - Middle Eastern or North African
  - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
  - Prefer not to answer
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q9 How many years have you attended/worked at NIU?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5 or more years

End of Block: Demographic

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Start of Block: Block 8

Q10 What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- Some high school, no diploma
  - High school graduate , diploma, or equivalent (for example: GED)
  - Some college credit, no degree
  - Trade/technical/vocational training
  - Associate's degree
  - Bachelor's degree
  - Master's degree
  - Professional degree
  - Doctorate degree
  - Prefer not to say
- 

Q11 Which category describes your household's current annual income?

- Less than \$30,000
- \$30,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$69,999
- \$70,000-\$89,999
- \$90,000 or more

End of Block: Block 8

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Start of Block: Block 7



Q12 Please select your department.

▼Accountancy ... World Languages and Cultures

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Q13 What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- Some high school, no diploma
  - High school graduate , diploma, or equivalent (for example: GED)
  - Some college credit, no degree
  - Trade/technical/vocational training
  - Associate's degree
  - Bachelor's degree
  - Master's degree
  - Professional degree
  - Doctorate degree
  - Prefer not to say
-

Q14 Which category describes your household's current annual income?

- Less than \$30,000
- \$30,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$69,999
- \$70,000-\$89,999
- \$90,000 or more

End of Block: Block 7

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Start of Block: Block 6

Q15 Are you a first generation college student?

- Yes
  - No
- 

Q16 Please select your major.

▼Accountancy ... Undecided

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Q17 Please select your second major otherwise please skip to the next question.

▼Accountancy ... Undecided

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Q18 If you are pursuing a minor, please select it below.

▼Actuarial Science ... None

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Q19 If you are pursuing a certificate, please select it below.

▼Actuarial Science ... Women's and Gender Studies

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Q20 How many semester hours of credit have you earned?

- 0-29
  - 30-59
  - 60-89
  - 90 or more
- 

Q21 What is your cumulative GPA?

- Below 2.00
  - 2-2.50
  - 2.51-3.00
  - 3.01-3.50
  - 3.51-4.00
-

Q22 Which category describes your family's annual income while you attended high school?

- Less than \$20,000
  - \$20,000-\$39,999
  - \$40,000-\$59,999
  - \$60,000-\$79,999
  - \$80,000-\$99,999
  - \$100,000 or more
- 

Q23 Where do you currently live?

- Residence hall
- Off campus in DeKalb
- Off campus elsewhere (commute)

End of Block: Block 6

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Start of Block: Attitudes

Q24 Thank you again for agreeing to participate, these next few questions will ask you to choose the best answer that best reflects your personal view or opinion.

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Q25 How concerned are you about environmental issues?

- Very concerned
  - Concerned
  - Somewhat concerned
  - Not concerned
- 

Q26 My campus is a leader in sustainable practices among other universities.

- Strongly disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
- 

Q27 How important do you think it is for you to address your own personal impact on the environment?

- Very important
  - Somewhat important
  - Not too important
  - Not important at all
-

Q28 Do you believe the government should be doing more to protect the environment?

Yes

No

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Q29 Do you think environmental issues directly affect your life?

Definitely yes

Probably yes

Probably not

Definitely not

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Q30 Do you consider yourself to be 'environmentally aware'?

Definitely yes

Probably yes

Probably not

Definitely not

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Q31 I believe that our economy is based on practices that will have negative consequences on the world's future generations of people.

- Strongly disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly agree
- 

Q32 Which of the three definitions of sustainability below best resonates with you?

Sustainability means:

- "Creating an economic system that provides for quality of life while renewing the environment and its resources."
  - "Living within the resources of the planet without damaging the environment now or in the future."
  - "Taking the long-term view of how our actions affect future generations and making sure we don't deplete resources or cause pollution at rates faster than the earth is able to renew them."
-

Q33 Listed below are statements about the relationship between humans and the environment. for each one, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with it.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
We are approaching the limit of the number of people the earth can support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Humans have the right to modify the natural environment to suit their needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Humans are severely abusing the environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The balance of nature is strong enough to cope with the impacts of modern industrial nations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Despite our special abilities humans are still subject to the laws of nature.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



The so-called "ecological crisis" facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated.

Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature.

The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset.

If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe.

End of Block: Attitudes

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Start of Block: Behaviors

Q34 These next few questions will ask you about your actions and behaviors. Please answer as accurately as possible.

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Q35 How willing are you to participate in sustainability activities on campus?

- Very willing
  - Willing
  - Somewhat willing
  - Not willing
- 

Q36 Have you previously or are you currently taking a course that addresses environmental issues this semester?

- Yes
  - No
  - I don't know
- 

Q37 Would you be willing to participate in sustainability activities at NIU if you could save money in your department, on campus, or personally?

- Very willing
  - Willing
  - Somewhat willing
  - Not willing
-

Q38 Are you a member of a campus, local, state, or national environmental club or organization?

Yes

No

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Q39 Which of the following choices or activities describe your current lifestyle? (check all that apply)

- Take public transit
- Carpool
- Bike/walk
- Buy locally grown, seasonal products
- Eat lower on the food chain (less meat)
- Purchase recycled or bulk products
- Participate in student organizations
- Vote
- Volunteer with nonprofit organizations
- Turn off lights when not in use
- Turn the heat down when not at home
- Wash clothes in cold or warm water (instead of hot)
- Take short showers (5 minutes or less)
- Drink tap water instead of bottled
- Use a reusable water bottle
- Reduce/Reuse/Recycle
- Double-side copies and print jobs
- Use green cleaning products
- None of these

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Q40 What activities at NIU have YOU been active in that promote or involve sustainability? (Check all that apply)

- Taken one or multiple courses
- Joined a club or group
- Attended a lecture or seminar
- Attended an event hosted by an environmental group
- Volunteered
- Participated in research
- None of the above

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Q41 Have you used the VeoRide Bike sharing system on campus?

- Yes
- No

End of Block: Behaviors

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Start of Block: Knowledge

Q42 For these last few questions please choose the answer you think is correct.

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Q43 To the best of you knowledge, please indicate whether or not the following statements are true or false.

	True	False
1. In order for a society to be sustainable, it should be able to meet the needs of the present generation without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Climate often changes from year to year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Nitrogen in the atmosphere trap heat from the Earth's surface.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Wood is a renewable natural resource.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Natural gas is a renewable energy source.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Wind is a renewable energy source.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. The "Tragedy of the Commons" can be potentially overcome through privatization or imposing government authority.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q44 Climate change disproportionately impacts people earning a low income because

- Infrastructure in developing countries can be less resilient to storms.
  - People earning a low income have fewer resources to rebuild or relocate after flooding.
  - People earning a low income are more likely to live in areas threatened by flooding, water scarcity, and or/vector-borne disease.
  - All of the above
- 

Q45 A policy that would encourage people to purchase more goods in order to build up the economy would make a community

- more sustainable.
  - less sustainable.
  - make no difference one way or the other.
- 

Q46 A policy that would encourage people to use incandescent light bulbs in their homes, rather than compact fluorescent (CFL) or LED bulbs would make a community

- more sustainable.
  - less sustainable.
  - make no difference one way or the other.
-

Q47 An ecosystem's "carrying capacity" refers to

- The amount of land currently in agricultural production.
  - The number of living things the system can sustain indefinitely.
  - The minimum number of species an ecosystem needs to survive.
  - The amount of nutrients in water a certain temperature can hold.
- 

Q48 Which one of the following causes ocean acidification?

- Absorption of carbon dioxide by the ocean
  - Chemical spills in the ocean
  - Warmer ocean temperatures
  - Natural seepages of oil and other chemicals
- 

Q49 A cap-and-trade system limits carbon emissions by:

- Placing a limit on how much each factory can pollute.
  - Placing a limit on the total amount of emissions.
  - Placing a set price on the emission of each unit of carbon
  - Placing a limit on the number of new factories that can be built.
-



Q50 A group of fishing boat owners share equal access to a common fishing area and are dependent upon it for their livelihoods. For the GROUP, it is economically rational to:

- Limit the number of fish he or she catches to ensure there will be fish to catch in the future.
  - Catch all the fish he or she can to maximize profit.
  - Limit the number of fish he or she catches to ensure there everyone gets an equal share.
  - Catch all fish he or she can to eliminate competition.
- 

Q51 A group of fishing boat owners share equal access to a common fishing area and are dependent upon it for their livelihoods. For each INDIVIDUAL, it is economically rational to:

- Limit the number of fish he or she catches to ensure there will be fish to catch in the future.
  - Catch all the fish he or she can to maximize profit.
  - Limit the number of fish he or she catches to ensure there everyone gets an equal share.
  - Catch all fish he or she can to eliminate competition.
- 

Q52 Which uses the most energy in an average American home each year?

- Lights
  - Heating water
  - Heating and cooling rooms
  - Refrigeration
-

Q53 Fragmentation and destruction of habitats threatens the survival of thousands of plant and animals species worldwide. Which of the following contributes most to habitat loss?

- Overhunting/harvesting
  - Human developments (farmland, cities, etc.)
  - Mining
  - Forestry
- 

Q54 "Sustainability" with regard to natural resources means:

- Using natural resources as slowly as possible.
  - Only using as much as is replaced by natural processes.
  - Not introducing new technology too quickly.
  - Discovering new resources to allow maximum economic growth.
- 

Q55 Current global climate change is:

- Caused mostly by human activities.
- Caused equally by both human activities and natural changes.
- Caused mostly by natural changes in the environment.
- None of the above because global climate change isn't happening.

End of Block: Knowledge

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Start of Block: Demographic Continued

Q56 You are near the end of the survey. These last few questions ask for more demographic data. We appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey. At the end, a separate form will be available to provide your contact information in order to be eligible for being entered into winning one of ten \$20 cash prizes.

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Q57 Which category describes your household's current annual income?

- Less than \$30,000
  - \$30,000-\$49,999
  - \$50,000-\$69,999
  - \$70,000-\$89,999
  - \$90,000 or more
- 

Q58 Which area best describes where you grew up?

- Chicago
  - Chicago suburbs
  - Urban areas outside of Chicago metropolitan area
  - Rural Illinois
  - Out of state \_\_\_\_\_
  - Outside of the United States \_\_\_\_\_
-

Q59 Which political ideology do you identify the most with?

- Conservative
  - Moderate
  - Liberal
  - Independent
  - Prefer not to say
- 

Q60 Which political party do you identify the most with?

- Democratic
- Republican
- Libertarian
- Green
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

End of Block: Demographic Continued

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Start of Block: Block 9

Q109 Thank you for responses. The questions below are optional. If you'd like, please respond below. Otherwise, continue to be taken to sign-up for the raffle.

- Like a great deal
  - Like a moderate amount
  - Like a little
  - Neither like nor dislike
  - Dislike a little
  - Dislike a moderate amount
  - Dislike a great deal
- 

Q61 What do YOU want to see NIU do to be more sustainable?

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End of Block: Block 9

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Start of Block: Block 10

Q110 Thank you for completing the NIU B.A.R.K.S. Survey. Your help is greatly appreciated. The goal of this project is to better understand what members of the campus community know, think, and do regarding sustainability. Your participation will help NIU continue to become a leader in sustainability. If you have questions about this research or would like to learn more about ongoing sustainability efforts at NIU please contact Assistant Professor Colin Kuehl at [ckuehl@niu.edu](mailto:ckuehl@niu.edu). You will now be redirected to the raffle entry.

End of Block: Block 10

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