

Sustainability Internship Blog

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My journey and education on environmental and sustainability issues started when I began working for the Village of Oak Lawn Public Works Department. This department manages all the streets, sewers, and forestry issues throughout the community that I live in. One of the biggest things that I took away from that first summer was knowledge on the Emerald Ash Borer, an invasive insect species that is killing all of the Ash trees throughout the United States since 2009. Oak Lawn, in particular, has been taking on the challenge of removing upwards of 1,000 ash trees. Oak Lawn borders Chicago in two places, so I was sure that the city was facing very similar issues.

When I arrived on campus for the first time, I noticed a few ash trees and wondered what UIC's plans were to take on the issue of the borer. However, I was busy being a student and I didn't really have time to inquire about the trees as the academic year progressed. In spring of 2014, I took an Honors class about the relationship between culture and the environment. Part of the class was giving a presentation on an environmental issue of your choice. I naturally chose the topic of urban forestry, and why biodiversity in an urban setting is important. I was able to introduce the concept of the EAB and other invasive species to my peers, and I found it to be a very rewarding experience. I also got to learn a lot from my classmates' presentations as well, about topics such as sustainable technologies and sustainable power sources.

This got me really interested when an e-mail popped up in my inbox suggesting that I apply for an internship with the UIC Office of Sustainability. I decided to apply, and now I am currently an intern working on the university's tree care program. I get to go out and measure trees and enter the collection data. After my partner, Hulliams, and I get everything together, we compile all the data that we collect into a software called iTree which will tell us how much carbon our trees are sequestering. I can't wait to see what we find out, which I hope to be able to put into my next blog post! Through this internship experience, I definitely learn something new

about trees and sustainability every day, and I feel like these are lessons that I can use throughout the rest of my life to live more sustainably.