



Detailed Information for University Faculty and Administrators

Eco Practicum Desk-Free School for Ecological Justice

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Contact:

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Dear Faculty and Administrators,

This packet contains detailed information about Eco Practicum, offering unique environmental leadership programs for undergraduates and recent graduates. This information is being provided in an effort to help applicants from your university secure funding and credit for their active participation.

Eco Practicum's immersive programs consist of hands-on volunteer work, meetings and workshops with experts representing innovative and effective environmental organizations of all scales, and discussions led by skilled educators. Eco Practicum challenges emerging leaders to consider multiple sides of complex issues, while helping them gain practical skills and connections with leading-edge institutional partners. With access to more than 30 such partners, Eco Practicum offers a community of shared purpose that many alumni draw on after graduation.

Reading through this packet should give you a general overview of the subjects of study, educational methodologies, and basic value of the program for participants ages 18-30. If you have any questions, please reach out and call us at (917) 710-8246 or email us at mail@ecopracticum.com.

Please see the attached Program Itinerary (separate documents) for program details, active hours, and list of partner organizations.

Sincerely,

Tal Beery
Co-Founding Executive Director

Eco Practicum Program Goals

Our mission is to grow the next generation of environmental leaders. We aim to:

- Give students experience in the field and practical skills relating to program subject areas
- Facilitate meaningful encounters between college students and environmental experts
- Instill a lasting commitment to environmental stewardship
- Create a cooperative and experiential learning environment
- Foster a strong network of young leaders with shared purpose

Method

Meeting Experts

Every day, participants take a field trip to meet with an expert in the field, representing one of the partner organizations. Participants tour facilities, meet with staff members, and learn about how these organizations function on the ground. These encounters often include a hands-on component and always include a candid conversation with the speaker about the work that they do, relating to both their achievements and challenges.

Farming & Land Stewardship

Participants work on an on-site organic farm, an urban-style farm, and a forest garden. They learn techniques in permaculture, composting, and animal husbandry. In addition to farming, participants manage the water flows, rain catchment systems, and waste outputs, gaining holistic ecosystem and natural resource management experience.

Democratic Education

Through text studies, videos, discussions, and peer-led activities, participants share their knowledge, learn from one another, and analyze the dynamics of the Catskills bioregion. The place-based learner centered educational approach honors the different ways that people learn. Democratic pedagogy ensures a horizontal structure in which students and educators alike express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. This practicum is facilitated by Eugenia Manwelyan and Tal Beery.

Daily Schedule

Our schedule is dynamic and full of activity, so every day at Eco Practicum is a little different. Within the variety of activities and field trips, there is a general routine that helps guide the schedule.

Sunday

12pm Orientation
1:00 Lunch
2:00 Hike & Tour
4:00 Group Activity
7:00 Dinner
8:00 Group Activity

Friday

8am Breakfast
9:00 Peer-led Learning
12:30 Lunch
1:00 Peer-led Learning
6:30 Dinner
8:00 Group Activity

Monday - Thursday

8am Breakfast
9:00 Farm work
12:30 Lunch
1:30 Fieldwork
6:30 Dinner
8:00 Group Activity

Saturday

11am Brunch
11:30 Processing & Group Discussion
2:00 Evaluations
3:00 Departures

Group Activity varies in methodology and setting, depending on the needs of the group. It can take the form of group discussion, text study, film screening, game, personal reflection, art project, debate, charette, hike, free-write, etc.

Peer-led Learning gives participants the opportunity to practice their teaching skills and share their passions with one another. Participants are asked to offer an activity / mini workshop on a topic of their choice, and are given guidance and support by the Eco Practicum facilitators.

Fieldwork takes place on or off site with an expert representing one of our partner organizations.

Practicum Facilitators

Eugenia Manwelyan

eugenia@ecopracticum.com

Eugenia Manwelyan is an artist, ecologist, and educator. She is the co-founder of Eco Practicum, and has taught food planning courses at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation. Eugenia holds a BA in International Development from McGill University and her MS in Urban Planning from Columbia University. She has worked on environmental planning projects in India, Vietnam and Jordan, as well as a peace building arts project in Israel and Palestine. With a passion for democratic education and civic engagement, Eugenia is committed to taking part in the effort to reorient humanity toward sane and respectful coexistence with one another and the environment.

Tal Beery

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Tal Beery is a New York-based artist and educator. He is co-founder of Eco Practicum and founding faculty at School of Apocalypse, examining the connections between creative practice and survival. Beery is a core member of Occupy Museums, a collective fighting economic & social injustices propagated by arts institutions. His curatorial research considers the relationships between art and epochal change. Beery's works have been exhibited in museums and galleries in the US and Europe, including the 2012 Berlin Biennale, Brooklyn Museum, and the 2017 Whitney Biennial.

Alumni Testimonials

Eco Practicum changed my outlook on my life and my future greatly. I've known for a long time that I want to get involved in environmental action on some level, but never pinpointed exactly what facet of the subject I wanted to pursue. Now this program has ignited my full interest in sustainable agriculture, food practices and food distribution. I learned so much this week through hands on experience on the farm (more than I feel I have learned in any classroom). This fact ties into the educational approach, which I really appreciated. Our discussions were open and centered on the work and experiments we undertook on the farm – this was very important to me.

- Rachelle K., New York University

The amount I learned surprised me in itself. All the subjects that the program encompassed were interdisciplinary and gave me a broad perspective on farming (as a science, business, etc.). I also did not expect to learn so much about the issues in the larger Catskill region – this component makes me want to come back to the area next summer for an internship: something I never expected in coming here.

- Elizabeth H., Skidmore College

Eco Practicum provided me with amazing opportunities, experiences, and information that I could have never obtained on my own. I furthered my learning in all of the areas I was interested in and gained knowledge that I only could have gained here. We spoke to professionals and different organizations involved in today's most controversial environmental issues and to people who were directly impacted by them. We helped out in farms and gardens and had the ability to connect with our food, animals and our planet. This experience is one you'll never experience anywhere else. Eco Practicum is a one-of-a-kind program and your experience will be one of the greatest things to ever happen to you and your education in environmental studies.

- Carly W., Fordham University

I was truly inspired by this program, not only by all the experts, farmers, and scientists, but also by my peers, who are going to be my partners in the effort to better our practices and systems. Everyone who takes the time to do this program will come out with a better understanding of our world.

- Michele K., Hamilton College

The trips are amazing. It was great to get an array of perspectives from people actually working in the field on some of the most important issues facing humanity today. The surrounding mountains are beautiful and the region-specific study is very interesting. The small group discussions are great and the democratic learning experience was very effective. I would really recommend that as many people as possible try this program and get a new perspective on the way that people are living today.

-Irene D., Rutgers University

Eco Practicum has inspired our alumni to...

“Further explore the environmental and social implications of sustainable agriculture. In particular, I hope to find opportunities that allow me to investigate agricultural biodiversity as well as gender dynamics of global agricultural systems.”

- Bridget J., Rutgers University

“Investigate sustainable agriculture as a potential career path. Next summer I plan on further pursuing my passion for environmental science by returning to New York State to get an internship in urban agriculture or marine biology.”

- Elizabeth H., Skidmore College

“Be more conscious of the daily decisions I make with food. I am now inspired to consider a potential career in environmental law so that I can create change in US agriculture policy.”

- Priya M., New York University

“Become more active in educating peers at Fordham University and in New York City about current environmental issues, particularly hydraulic fracturing. The program has helped me fully comprehend how crucial environmental education is in the fight for a more sustainable future.”

- Carly W., Fordham University

“Become more aware of my personal impact on my environment. I feel a passion to conserve the earth’s natural resources through a career in either water resource engineering or sustainability.”

- Jacob C., SUNY Buffalo

“Continue my path as a health coach. I would like to take a holistic approach to nutrition, centered on eating sustainable foods that nourish our bodies, minds, and spirits.”

- Andrea D., Brown University