Students Emerging Cardinal, Gold and Green
At Iowa State University, the spirit of innovation and community engagement thrives through the emergence of new and growing student organizations. As the campus community continues to grow, enhance and evolve, so do the interests and passions of a diverse student body.

Through the lens of growth and new explorations, this month’s SLCGG highlights two new and upcoming student organizations: The Controlled Environments Club and Fashion and Justice, embarking on their journeys to enrich and grow the campus experience and leaving an environmental, economic and social sustainability legacy for generations of Cyclones.

Growing Food Security through Controlled Environment Agriculture
The Controlled Environments Club (CE) was officially enlisted as a student organization in November 2022 and has been making a lasting impact since. Representing students from a wide range of majors, CE unites to design controlled environment implementations (vertical farms, hydroponics, etc.) while also educating members on the basic properties of horticulture, engineering and design. With a primary emphasis on integrating sustainability into their cultivation methods, CE aims to address the challenge of cultivating fresh produce in regions unsuitable for conventional outdoor farming, such as urban areas and food desert regions.

By combining these principles, CE creates small-scale controlled environment implementations designed entirely by students. Additionally, with changing climates, less land is available for food production, leading the Controlled Environments Club to grow in exploration and awareness building about indoor farming opportunities.

Since the club’s launch in 2022, CE has successfully utilized a small-scale hydroponic system, allowing members to grow plants without soil, using nutrient-rich water instead. The team used a growth chamber to meticulously control the light cycle and temperature, ensuring optimal conditions. Simultaneously, they diligently monitored the pH levels of the water, maintaining a precise balance crucial for plant growth.

Through their dedicated effort, the team achieved a significant milestone - successfully cultivating basil using their innovative system. They continue to experiment with different hydroponic setups and crops, including oyster mushrooms.

This achievement awarded the club honorable mention and $5,000 in the 2023 Wilbur-Ellis Innovation Award competition. An event challenging teams of college students throughout the U.S. and Canada to devise innovative ideas to provide food for the world’s growing population.

Looking ahead, the Controlled Environments Club is especially excited about establishing a container farm, allowing them to grow fresh produce year-round, even in the harsh Iowa winters. They also plan to use the container farm as a research tool for studying plant growth and environmental control. The container farm will be housed in a 20-foot shipping container, modified to create an optimal growing environment for plants.
Growing Advocacy Efforts through Fashion and Justice

The Fashion and Justice student organization was founded by Dorthy Vernon, a graduate student in Apparel, Merchandising and Design, in the fall of 2022 and has been advocating for justice issues related to fashion, dress, style, and the fashion industry since their launch. Fashion and Justice places a strong emphasis on human rights and advocating for social, environmental and economic sustainable change within the fashion industry.

Fashion and Justice also fosters awareness and understanding by educating students about a wide range of socially sustainable issues related to historically marginalized identities within fashion and the fashion industry. These include race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, nation and body size. Additionally, the student organization promotes sustainable aspects including safe working conditions and fair wages, using eco-friendly materials and minimizing carbon emissions.

Fashion and Justice has taken such a dedicated role toward ensuring justice and diversity through their mission and initiatives, they received the 2023 Outstanding Commitment to Diversity Award presented by Iowa State University Student Engagement. This award is given to an organization that has programmed events or activities that align with Iowa State University’s Principles of Community, especially richness of diversity, respect, and freedom from discrimination, has utilized accessibility and inclusivity within programming, and supported students in their awareness of diverse identities and perspectives and challenged them to move toward broader understanding of complex and diverse environments.

Since the organization’s establishment, Fashion and Justice has engaged in educational activities including field trips, readings and interactive group discussions and watching documentaries related to fashion identities and the history of clothing products. The student organization also invites guest speakers to share their perspectives on the fashion industry to membership meetings.
Students interested in the social, environmental and economic sustainable issues related to fashion are encouraged to reach out and become part of Fashion and Justice. Contact president, Jessica Kuennen (kuennen1@iastate.edu) or vice president, Sophia Strathearn (sostr25@iastate.edu) and visit the Iowa State University Student Organization Database for more information and to get involved. Additionally, follow the Fashion and Justice Instagram for organization meeting information.

Infinite Possibilities to Grow Cardinal, Gold and Green

Iowa State University has many emerging organizations dedicated to growing sustainable efforts and initiatives and catalyzing positive change.

By fostering a culture of community engagement among a diverse student body, The Controlled Environments Club