

# Experiences How to Convince



You will find your way • Some tips and experiences to enlighten the path for you

## Some tips from Fiona for your journey

Fiona has a background in Linguistics and a Master in Sustainable Development Practice. Lately, she has been driving change at the university of Virginia being their Sustainable Labs Project Associate (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/fionaih/>)

## To Be Included in All Your Pitches

In every presentation I do, I try to give an overview of our university's sustainability goals and explain to researchers how much impact they can have on those goals. It's important that folks can visualize themselves as part of the solution, so I want people to know the invaluable role they play by getting engaged with Green Labs.



## Cheer It Up!



I also always try to take time to highlight and celebrate some of the amazing work already being done at our institution. This has several benefits such as 1) making it easier for researchers to learn from each other, 2) incentivizing participation and competition (who doesn't want to be celebrated?), but also 3) builds community! I want our researchers to feel supported by the global Green Labs community and to feel pride and joy for the work they're doing with us.

# Engaging People Efficiently

## Learn from People Who Have Done It

### Understand Your Counterpart



I think a key component to our success has been to center the researcher's experience in any work we do. When I first engage with a lab, I visit the space in person and take time asking questions about the work that they do, their history, the equipment they use, the space they occupy, how they came to Green Labs, and some of the biggest motivators for their interest. I try very hard to practice active listening so that I can get a sense of the unique footprint and culture of that lab. I think that in doing this, it makes it easier to adapt our model to meet the labs where they're at, removing obstacles for participation in our core initiatives while also leaning into the areas of greatest opportunity.

### Be Honest and Strategic

If there's a sustainability initiative that doesn't work for someone, I always want to lean into learning why that might be. Sometimes, there are myths and misunderstandings about how lab spaces work that I'm able to offer clear guidelines about. But more often, there are very real and valid concerns about how changing certain protocols might affect the important work people are doing in our laboratories. In these cases, I try to not act as a salesperson, but rather I try to 1) be very honest about what I do and don't know and 2) highlight relevant resources and peer examples so that they can make the decisions that best work for them.



# Don't Get Disheartened

Whatever You Try, the Attempt Was Worth It

## Fostering Resilience



In the world of sustainability, even the most passionate and dedicated people deal with burnout at various times. I consider it a very natural part of doing work that has so much intrinsic meaning to it where you're also up against huge, systemic barriers. By strengthening and codifying official roles in university departments and graduate student organizations, we're making our program more resilient and engrained so that we can have an effect on the culture of our research community.

## There Is Always a Next

Researchers deserve to know that I hear and respect their concerns and the work they do, so I try to make that care and thought evident in everything our program puts out. If they believe an initiative isn't a good fit, I trust their expertise and we move on to finding other opportunities to have an impact in their lab instead of getting hung up on a single obstacle/initiative.



## You Can Do It Too



As you have seen, Fiona puts lots of effort and time into understanding each and every researcher. That takes time, but it also helps if you feel nervous or insecure. You will get to know these people and feel much more comfortable after you have built a strong fundament!



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