Office of Sustainability
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Sustainability Advisory Council (SAC) – Executive Summary
Prioritization Process Meeting, November 17th, 2020
8:30am - 10:00am
Full recording available here

Attendees

Dr. Madhu Khanna	Guest Speaker
Morgan White	Guest Speaker
Steve Ackerman	SAC Member
Mo Bischof	SAC Member
Jacob Dolence	SAC Member
Cheryl Gittens	SAC Member
Mark Guthier	SAC Member
Emma Heins	SAC Member
John Horn	SAC Member
Chris McIntosh	SAC Member
Sarah Schutt	SAC Member
Natalie Tinsen	SAC Member
Giri Venkataramanan	SAC Member
Michael Williams	SAC Member
Tyler Katzenberger	Student Subcommittee Member
Josh Arnold	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff
Alex Frank	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff
Deb Gurke	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff
Nathan Jandl	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff
Cathy Middlecamp	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff
Jake McCulloch	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff
Missy Nergard	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff

Summary Notes

I. **Welcome**
II. **What Happened Last Time**
   a. *Council Timeline*
      ● This is the last meeting focused exclusively on the decision-making process; moving forward we will be evaluating priorities
      ● Last meeting we spent time reflecting on our purpose after hearing from the Lt. Governor and campus leaders
      ● We also identified best practices around the results of our work and the process we will follow
   b. *Listening Session Debrief (recordings available here)*
      ● We hosted three listening sessions since our last meeting and made a survey available for those unable to attend a listening session
      ● During a reflection on the comments received during the listening sessions we noted that:
         o The suggestion that we should have a campus-wide experience for all Badgers was important
         o In the summary document of the comments received at the listening sessions, it might be helpful to know how many voices the bullet points represent
         o Engagement is the linchpin for success in everything else: with successful engagement, sustainability will be seen as a campus priority
         o We need to create a shared sense of responsibility around campus, clearly articulate what the outcomes will be in layman's terms, and distill the great work and intention around this into something that is easily understood and consumable
         o Athletics is our spokesperson around the country and the world; the culture of sustainability needs to be expressed through athletics to go beyond the boundaries of the classroom
         o We should consider informal testing of concepts, ideas and words; we need to package it correctly and focus on meeting people where they are at
         o Socialization and culture is very important; consider how we show those early wins to communicate what the work is and how we're doing
   c. *Student Subcommittee Debrief*
      ● The first meeting was held on October 30th and the objective was to review our role in the SAC and discuss takeaways from the kick-off meeting.
      ● We split into three small groups to discuss how our values align with our decisions. We identified four points.
         o Prioritize student involvement
         o Prioritize social sustainability
         o Prioritize initiatives that reflect the WI idea
         o Pursue the difficult but high-impact initiatives in addition to the quick wins
      ● Please reach out to Natalie, Emma, or Michael with any questions

III. **Our Process**
- We face many challenges to our ability to make decisions
- Focus on evaluating priorities on their impact first
  - Evaluate against the unifying principles to assess impact
- Focus on feasibility & timing (near, mid-, and long-term) after the initial impact evaluation
- The next four meetings will be organized around the STARS Categories
- But we will still focus on systems
  - While priorities will be aligned with STARS categories, initiatives may apply to multiple priorities/ STARS categories

IV. **Planning for Change**
  a. *Dr. Madhu Khanna – University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*
- Illinois has been in this realm for quite some time and is leading the way in sustainability in higher education
- The Institute of Sustainability, Energy, and Environment (ISEE) was founded on a three-fold mission:
  - To foster actionable interdisciplinary research to address fundamental challenges in sustainability, energy, and environment
  - To provide national and international leadership in these areas through interdisciplinary education and outreach activities
  - To develop and implement strategies for a sustainable environment on the University of Illinois campus and beyond
- There are five themes for research as ISEE:
  - Climate solutions
  - Energy transitions
  - Sustainable infrastructure
  - Water and land stewardship
  - Sustainable agriculture
    - SAC members noted that these are very helpful, tangible themes which speak to intended outcomes.
- ISEE includes seed funding initiatives
  - For interdisciplinary interdepartmental teams to develop preliminary research programs as well as research programs related to current campus sustainability initiatives

  b. *Morgan White – University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*
- Campus sustainability has three primary goals
  - Create and implement a sustainable campus that maintains or restores natural ecosystems
  - Infiltrate sustainable thinking through education
  - Create incentive programs that spur sustainable investments
- Illinois Climate Action Plan (iCAP) is a strategic sustainability plan for achieving carbon neutrality, or net-zero GHG emissions, by 2050 if not sooner
  - Contains 56 SMART objectives organized into eight key themes: Energy, Transportation, Land & Water, Zero Waste, Education, Engagement, Resilience, and Implementation
- The iCAP process included:
  - Sustainability Working Advisory Teams (SWAT)

- ▪ Equal numbers of faculty, students, and staff (2-4 each)
  - o ISEE and F&S as co-chairs of iCAP Working Group
  - o Sustainability Council
  - o Roles and Responsibility of campus units for sustainability
  - o Focus on engaging departments and units to ensure feasibility
  - o Open communication remains key
- Questions and answers
  - o Topic: Genesis of program with $2M family donation
    - ▪ Not exactly sure who approached who first but it started as a small environmental change institute that brought together faculty from the law, agriculture, and business schools to form this institute that would be an umbrella for research in the environmental areas
    - ▪ We find a lot more success in using smaller grants
    - ▪ SAC members noted that the UW is missing out on opportunities for external funding from donors that would like to contribute to organizations that match their sustainability values, particularly with private giving
    - ▪ UW is pretty good at transdisciplinary research and there may be additional opportunities given the incoming federal administration's sustainability priorities
  - o Topic: Educational programs
    - ▪ We didn't want to tread on any toes of academic units, we had a preexisting minor in sustainability that was languishing without a driving force.
    - ▪ We re-energized the minor and now there is a capstone class with a project-based class with industry partners to provide projects to students
    - ▪ Sustainability writing course has grown into an entire magazine: https://q.sustainability.illinois.edu/

V.   Unifying Principles & How to Evaluate Priorities
- The Unifying Principles were an attempt to identify what brings all these priorities together but also to allow for differentiation between priorities
  - Example looking at community service:
    - Volunteer opportunities are especially important for graduate preparedness
    - Education impact is captured in the community based learning attribute which includes critical considerations for student reflection
    - Expanding the work helps to leverage our campus and community partnerships
- Small Group Discussions
  - Group wants to ensure that the guiding principles are actionable; is there example language we can include on this?
  - Suggestion to condense the principles; some are a given and we may want to consider removing (fiscal responsibility for example)
  - Lots of support for the principles and their utility to help us work together and make decisions
    - A few semantic and definitional questions
    - Ensure that students are part of all of the unifying principles

VI.   Next Steps
- [Share the survey](#) with your networks and suggest they sign up for [updates on additional surveys](#)
- Next meeting will be focused on academics. Please reach out with any questions or additional resources you may need from the SAC planning team in preparation for that meeting