



**Office of Sustainability**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

**Academic & Research Focus Areas for Review**

At its next four meetings, the Sustainability Advisory Council (SAC) will prioritize focus areas to develop a strategic direction for sustainability at UW-Madison. Here is the schedule:





December 2020	Academic & Research focus areas
January 2020	Engagement focus areas
February 2020	Operations focus areas
March 2020	Planning and Administration focus areas

The focus areas identified (so far) for our December meeting are in Table 1. These were identified through a review of peer best practices, results of UW-Madison’s Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) report, Office of Sustainability staff experience, and feedback from the campus community during public listening sessions.

Additional focus areas may be defined by the SAC members. Before initial prioritization, the SAC will review, discuss, and identify resources that support the implementation of initiatives or challenges that could stall initiative progress.

Source(s) of focus areas are identified by the following:

-  = STARS & Peer Best Practices
-  = Office of Sustainability Experience
-  = Listening Sessions
-  = SAC Members

Focus Area	Issue(s) to Address	Example Initiative(s)	Example Action items
Sustainability Research 	UW-Madison lacks systems to identify and track sustainability-related research.  UW-Madison lacks incentives for faculty/staff to pursue sustainability-related research.	<b>Criteria</b> that define sustainability-related research  <b>Processes</b> to track and report sustainability-related research  <b>Faculty/staff incentives</b> to engage in sustainability-related research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a Sustainability “checkbox” in WISER</li> <li>• Collaborate with Academic Analytics on a methodology for identifying sustainability research</li> <li>• Incorporate sustainability-related research incentives into promotion and/or tenure decisions</li> <li>• Incorporate sustainability-related research incentives into the selection of named professorships</li> <li>• Develop a sustainability research communications strategy</li> <li>• Calls for proposals from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education and WARF that support sustainability projects</li> </ul>
Campus as a Living Lab <sup>1</sup>  	UW-Madison lacks systems for faculty/staff to collaborate with campus operations experts.  UW-Madison lacks incentives for teaching and research faculty/staff to collaborate with campus operations experts.	<b>Processes</b> to identify operations experts and to connect them with faculty/staff with related interests.  <b>Funding opportunities</b> to support faculty/staff use of campus resources in their courses and research.  <b>Professional development funding and dedicated time</b> for campus operations experts to collaborate with faculty/staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an inventory of campus resources and operations experts and processes for facilitating and executing campus as a living lab course work and research</li> <li>• Create funding for research and teaching to use the campus as a living lab</li> <li>• Create training for academic and university staff to participate in campus as a living lab activities</li> <li>• Create resources and funding for supervisors to support campus operations experts in devoting time to campus as a living lab activities</li> <li>• Calls for proposals from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education and WARF that support projects utilizing campus facilities for research/teaching</li> </ul>
Sustainability Faculty 	UW-Madison needs more faculty/staff who focus their research and teaching on sustainability issues.	<b>Hiring and retention programs</b> to support faculty who focus their research and teaching on sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit a cluster hire proposal for three faculty members: one in environmental, one in social, and one in economic sustainability</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Campus as a living lab is the practice of utilizing campus “infrastructure and operations as living environments for multidisciplinary learning and applied research” (STARS Technical Manual, Version 2.2, available here: <https://stars.aashe.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/STARS-2.2-Technical-Manual.pdf>).







Focus Area	Issue(s) to Address	Example Initiative(s)	Example Action items
Sustainability Institute 	UW-Madison lacks an institute for sustainability research, teaching, operations, events, and fundraising.	<b>Sustainability Institute</b> to provide a home for faculty, staff, students, and community members who wish to pursue sustainability-related endeavors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a plan for an institute, seeking consensus from stakeholders and how to align with existing centers and institutes</li> <li>• Find funding for plan, e.g., from granting agencies or from donors</li> </ul>
Sustainability Courses  	UW-Madison faculty/staff are missing opportunities to offer courses that relate to sustainability in degree programs, in certificates, and in courses that fulfil general education requirements.  UW-Madison lacks incentives for faculty/staff to incorporate sustainability issues into their courses.	<b>Incentives</b> to support faculty/staff in incorporating sustainability in new and existing courses that fulfil requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess courses receiving sustainability attribute for achievement of sustainability learning outcomes</li> <li>• Develop and offer training for faculty on how to incorporate sustainability learning outcomes into courses (based upon results of assessment)</li> <li>• Organize mentors and/or a Community of Practice to support faculty/staff in sustainability curriculum development</li> <li>• Incorporate recognition of offering sustainability-related courses into promotion and/or tenure decisions</li> <li>• Incorporate recognition of offering sustainability-related courses into the selection of names professorships</li> <li>• Offer grants to faculty to develop new, or expand existing, courses that include sustainability learning outcomes</li> </ul>
Sustainability Learning Requirement  	UW-Madison students can complete their degree program without participating in a learning activity (i.e., course or co-curricular activity) that incorporates sustainability issues.	<b>Campus-wide requirement</b> that students participate in at least one form of sustainability learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop sustainability-related co-curricular activity inventory and process for confirming student participation</li> <li>• Require all students to participate in a sustainability-related co-curricular activity before graduation</li> </ul>
Honors & Recognition 	UW-Madison misses opportunities to honor and recognize sustainability achievements by students, faculty, and staff.	<b>Chancellor's award</b> for sustainability achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop criteria for selection of, and organize celebration for award recipients (individuals or teams)</li> <li>• Include sustainability as a topic area in the annual teaching and learning symposium</li> </ul>

Table 1. Academic &amp; Research focus areas