Office of Sustainability
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Sustainability Advisory Council (SAC) – Executive Summary
Engagement Meeting, January 15th, 2021
11:00am - 12:30pm
Full recording available here

Mo Bischof	SAC Member
Cheryl Gittens	SAC Member
Mark Guthier	SAC Member
Emma Heins	SAC Member
Chris McIntosh	SAC Member
Alex Peirce	SAC Member Alternate (VCFA)
Sarah Schutt	SAC Member
Jake Smith	SAC Member Alternate (Academic Staff)
Natalie Tinsen	SAC Member
Giri Venkataramanan	SAC Member
Michael Williams	SAC Member
Alex Frank	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff
Deb Gurke	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff
Andrea Hicks	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff
Nathan Jandl	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 & Goals for Today**
    a. *Academic & Research Initial Prioritization Results*
    ● Sustainability Institute, Sustainability Research, and Sustainability Courses had the highest average priority in the initial survey of SAC members
    ● We won't dive into the results of the survey today, but will discuss them in the spring when we discuss the focus areas as a whole
    ● We also sent out a short "pulse" survey to those campus and community members that attended the listening session to solicit feedback on the academic focus areas
        o The survey asked participants to identify what focus areas should be prioritized, a small sample size of seven participants identified Sustainability Courses, Sustainability Research, and a Sustainability Learning Requirement

II. **Context for Our Discussion**

    b. Considerations for Sustainability Engagement (Mark Guthier)

- We think about student engagement on three levels: students that want to be involved in programming, students that lead and participate in programming, and students involved in policy, strategic planning, and creating programming
- We like to ask ourselves, "how are students authentically involved in the decision-making process?"
- These are the students doing the street work, running the programs and events, and finding financial support for ideas
  - These students have several sustainability initiatives they want to pursue, including hiring a full time sustainability coordinator at the Unions
- Speaking more broadly, not every student wants to be in a governance role, or engaged in programming, but we want them to show up at events, be active
- The two most engaged groups of students I mentioned can do all the planning and governance they want, but it won't be successful unless it speaks to that larger broader student body

    c. Considerations for Sustainability Engagement (Chris McIntosh)

- UW has approximately 750 student athletes that belong to one of at least 23 sports programs and our mission is to provide opportunity access to higher education through sport
  - Results of that effort is the ability to reach diverse groups on all fronts, race, socioeconomic status, etc., all benefiting from access to sports
  - UW graduates 90% of student athletes, with a 100% success of placing graduates in meaningful careers
- Athletics' External Engagement team makes community service opportunities available, hundreds of which take place in a normal year
- In a normal year, we produce 144 sporting programs which equates to 1.2 million campus visitors; football alone was 500,000, Basketball 300,000, and Hockey 200,000; WIAA programming attracts over 150,000 visitors each year
- We host tailgates, career fairs, family fun days, NFL pro days, diversity kickoff luncheons, student org fairs, job fairs, all of which adds up to 653 total events with over 1.5 million coming though our facilities
  - Incredible opportunity here; prior to the pandemic we had a $610 million impact benefit to the state, $300 million to the city of Madison
  - Becomes sobering to think about that in a year like the last one we've had

    d. Considerations for Sustainability Engagement (Sarah Schutt)

- Alumni relations primary constituency includes alumni, donors, and their families, the scope and reach of our audience database is around 450-500,000 people; how can we leverage that network and vice versa?
- Our team does a series of events each year, totaling around 400; virtual has shown to be a great benefit for reaching audiences, reaching somewhere in the neighborhood of 60,000 alumni, and the emergence of virtual has allowed us to triple if not quadruple our engagement
- Engagement is our primary purpose as we drive to secure support for the university and pride in the institution, our main objective is simple: build affinity and secure support

- o How we do that? By keeping alumni and donors informed and providing resources to make them feel connected to the university
- o How can we help build a sense of affinity to sustainability and how can we help people feel connected to the outcomes? Can sustainability be a point of affinity for alumni? What is going to add value, be relevant, and meaningful?
- o We want to make sure we're acknowledging how are we meeting them where they are, how are we meeting their lives?
- We think about different degrees of audiences, the people who are engaged in the process and the people that are engaged in the product, I see an intersection with alumni constituency with how we engage them with what we're doing and grow affinity for this cause, I see a great opportunity to practice engaging alumni and donors in sustainability.

  e. *Student Subcommittee Debrief (Natalie Tinsen)*
    - We all come from different backgrounds and experiences engaging in sustainability, biggest driver is lack of visibility and awareness of sustainability opportunities; need more streamlined communication
    - It's hard to be involved when you don't have a basic foundation of sustainability involvement on campus; a lot of students have never heard about this [SAC] opportunity and we're hoping that simply increasing visibility and awareness alone can increase engagement
    - We'd like to see more staff support for student-led sustainability programming, which will present more opportunities
    - We see a need for improving coordinated communication between sustainability clubs, groups, efforts, etc., we're often missing each other; we need a centralized hub for all

  f. *Student Subcommittee Debrief (Emma Heins)*
    - You have those tiers of engagement, we're losing the least engaged tier
    - One of the solutions is consolidating resources as much as possible, find everything in one place--building off sustainability institute idea, researchers on sustainability, student orgs, internships, etc., all in one central area
    - Maybe on the Office of Sustainability website?

2. **Focus Area Overview**
    - Reminder that focus areas came from listening sessions, our staff experience, and from the STARS gap analysis that compares UW–Madison results to peer school results (similar schools and Big 10)
      - o Helped us identify specific areas we had gaps (by credit)
      - o Looked at credits where we had particularly large gaps

3. **Group Discussions**
    - Following our discussion, what is one thing that stood out to you during this conversation?
      - o While we are still in uncertain times, sustainability sometimes feels like an add-on, we have the opportunity to incrementally build sustainability into the core of what we are, use it as a fundamental guiding principle

- o Need to prioritize our audience/ initiatives, build some early wins that build traction and attract others
- o Increasing communication for student and sustainability opportunities.
- o Sustainability is a value that can cut across political beliefs, etc., it's a part of our lives and that should be the great unifier; it's something about which we have to listen, listen, listen, it's not going to be invented by us
- o Paying attention to it and making it a part of our lives, this is a responsibility that we have that we need to survive.
- o I'm noticing opportunities and possibilities, it's always exciting to see all the ideas, opportunities to shift and change behaviors, culture shift, are we on culture shift overload? Can we afford not to be? Takes a long journey; associate sustainability with breathing
- o Have we considered how we include sustainability language in the Wisconsin Experience and describe its different pillars?
- o The notion of sustainability being ingrained as a value for campus, understanding that our priorities as advocates for sustainability will change over time and we need to be open to that as an institution, it's also not just checking a box
- o Viewing how we incorporate our campus processes now, nothing is the same as it was 12 months ago, it's obvious we can pivot and rebuild systems and operations and policies.

4. **Next Steps**
   a. Please complete survey before next meeting
   b. Look for draft operations focus areas in early February
   c. We will sending out an email update to our sponsors and will copy all SAC members