



Office of Sustainability
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Sustainability Advisory Council – Spring 2022 Update

March 23rd, 2022

10:00am – 11:00am

[Full recording available here](#)

Cheryl Gittens	SAC Member
Mark Guthier	SAC Member
Emma Heins	SAC Member
John Horn	SAC Member
Jason King	SAC Member
Dan Mechenich	SAC Member
Sarah Schutt	SAC Member
Natalie Tinsen	SAC Member
Giri Venkataramanan	SAC Member
Nola Walker	SAC Member
Josh Arnold	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff
Alex Frank	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff
Nathan Jandl	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff
Jake McCulloch	Office of Sustainability and Supporting Staff

Summary Notes

I. Welcome & Goals for Today

- We'd like to welcome Dan Mechenich to the SAC. Dan represents Staff Congress from Animal and Dairy Sciences. Thanks for joining us.

II. What Happened Last Time – Review Sponsor Input

- After presenting to sponsors in February, they noted:
 - The definition is good but broad - this means programs and projects need well-defined scopes
 - Large commitments will wait for the new chancellor - there are still opportunities to make progress now

III. What Has Happened Since Last Time

a. Assessing Progress with STARS

- We have increased our total score from 51 to 59, which still lands us in the Silver range.
- We've about reached our peers in the operations section and made some good progress in the academics and engagement section as well.
- Question: What's the score for Gold?
 - Gold requires us to get to 65. Certainly doable next go around as long as we continue to make progress.
- Question: Is there an assessment to compare our progress to our peers? Are they continuing to move in the right direction as well? How hard is it to move these numbers?
 - In general, we see schools get to Gold and somewhat plateau. There's incremental change, but nothing huge. In the Big 10, the majority of schools have Gold.
- Question: Are there particular things on those quick wins and long-term planning that would encourage a big jump in our STARS score?
 - We've aligned our goals in our strategic plan with the STARS categories. Some of the engagement programs we aligned with integrate sustainability (peer educators, training, etc.) and we have a big opportunity in this area. On the academic front, we have an opportunity to create more learning. The new course attribute is going to help us a lot.
- Question: Operations seems to be our biggest gap. What's the biggest thing we could improve there?
 - One is our sustainable facilities and infrastructure approach— thinking about formalizing our process in new building design. We haven't had a formal, documented way of doing that in the past. Tied to that, management and operation of our current facilities could use sustainability maintenance guidelines around resource use and consumption.
 - Response: I'm interested to see how we (SAC) could support those initiatives.

IV. Discussion – What's Next?

a. Preparing for the New Chancellor:

- We wanted to get feedback from the SAC on how best to prepare for new leadership
- What are your teams doing to prepare for our leadership transition?
- What should we be doing to prepare new leadership to embrace this vision for sustainability that we've laid out?

- We should send a “release” letter to the search committee. We need to convey that the committee should consider, in their scoring rubric, sustainability as a priority in the prospective chancellor’s pool.
- There is a Chancellor’s briefing book that is being created out of the Chancellor’s office. Key initiatives and units were asked to provide a few pages in that document and sustainability is one of those asked. It’s incredibly important to communicate the history, the current status, and our vision.
- Anyone from SAC or their team that is meeting with the finalists should consider asking questions around candidates' sustainability priorities
 - Giri’s department chair is on the search committee and he will ask which group meeting with the candidates is most effective to propose questions from us and will report back to Alex.
- When we do have an opportunity with candidates, we need to question their perspectives on the value of sustainability. As the process proceeds and they identify an incumbent, we should try to have an early meeting on sustainability while thinking about how that conversation will be integrated in all of their new meetings with people. Having each candidate respond to the sustainability question gets their perspective and understands that it's a priority of UW as well. It’s not an add-on conversation, it’s a part of all conversations moving forward.
- How do we ensure sustainability is not an add-on but is felt as part of the culture and priority of the university?
- We should invite the new chancellor to one of these SAC meetings as soon as we can and give them the “roadshow” to get to know us and our work and how we can help the chancellor realize the collective vision for campus sustainability.
- As either the Chancellor’s Executive Committee or the new Chancellor starts to come out with their priorities, it might be a worthy exercise to look at the key priorities from the Office of Sustainability (OS) and map those to the existing priorities coming from leadership. Instead of OS priorities as a whole dumped on them, mapping them to coincide provides strength and reinforcement.
- It’s important, while we have priorities, to convey a sense of urgency in a particular area. We have to establish sustainability as a value. Sustainability is so broad, is there one thing we can hang on to as a group and elevate as the main priority?
 - Question from OS: Should the OS be making that argument or the SAC? OS

b. Climate Action and Adaptation Planning

- Framework for Achieving Carbon Goals

- The “Badgerprint” framework includes three approaches to achieve carbon goals:
 - Increasing “handprint,” (positive attributes)
 - Decreasing “footprint,” (negative attributes)
 - Including “aura” (research, learning, innovation.)
 - Question: What about our shorelines? There is no room to deal with rising water levels in Lake Mendota. I'm referring to our central/east campus areas (Memorial Union, Helen C. White, dorms). We are so close to the edge. I'm curious if this is on the table when we look at this framework.
 - When Alumni Park was built in 2017, a great deal of thought and work was put into recontouring the shoreline and attending to its health. As I understand it, since Lake Mendota is the top of the Yahara watershed, much of the lake level is managed by water released down the river to the other lakes.
 - The locks allowing water into the Yahara are the key pinch point. Homeowners on the lake are a key constituency because they want their docks to be in the water (and not on dry land). But with increasing extreme rainfall, that dynamic will get more complicated/challenging.
- c. *Sustainability Strategy “Roadshow”*
- Build grass-root support for our recommendations
 - Provide transparency, champion our great work
 - Identify opportunities to amplify, collaborate, and add value
 - Discussion
 - How do we move from awareness to active engagement?
 - What topics would be important to include in a short overview?
 - Who should we contact for the Roadshow?
 - Your leadership teams?
 - Add your ideas to the chat
 - Administrative Council, Deans Council, ASEC, Central Committee, University Committee, ASM. Student Affairs Council.
 - Governance groups
 - Student Affairs council meeting
 - Liaisons to campus building managers, educate those that are involved in building projects. The 'frontline' staff that work with FP&M .
 - Question: How will you identify the audience for the road show?
 - Those who run different units or departments across campus. Not necessarily upper leadership, but people and their teams who manage and create systems on campus. Not necessarily leadership.
 - A roadshow can serve several purposes. I wonder if you want to curate a roadshow around one initiative and less broad depending on the audience.

We want to be clear on what we want from each audience and adjust messaging accordingly.

- Think about what success looks like from this. You might want to set a goal that it's common practice to share an update at the academic leadership campus climate report that happens twice a year. Wouldn't it be a sign of success that people want to get their stuff in that sustainability update?
- Question: do your campus units have sustainability goals?
 - Library is integrating sustainability in its strategic direction.
 - Alumni: not yet but it's in discussion. The foundation and alumni are creating a more comprehensive and integrated campaign around sustainability.

V. Next Steps

- Kick-off Carbon Neutral & Zero Waste action groups
- Invite the “roadshow” to your team(s)
- Next meeting in early Fall.
 - Could we do some sort of walking tour or other in-person activity?