

# The Sustainability Advisory Council Student Subcommittee

## Executive Summary Reports

*The Sustainability Advisory Council- Student Subcommittee writes on behalf of the group's priorities, campus academics, engagement, operations, and planning and administration.*

Written by: Katherine Ackley, Frank Adams, Isaac Eskind, Emma Heins, Tyler Katzenberger, Loren Latts, Grace Martin, Catherine McDonald, Marina Minic, Natalie Tinsen, Cecilia Vanden Heuvel, and Michael Williams

## Member

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The Student Subcommittee is composed of 12 students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Katherine Ackley is a senior studying International Studies and Environmental Studies. In addition to her studies and the SAC, she is an Office of Sustainability intern and an International Studies peer advisor. She is also involved in the campus' National Organization for Women, and Caroling Club. When she is not studying, she is probably knitting, cooking or taking care of my plants!



Frank Adams is a First-Year undergraduate student studying Real Estate, Entrepreneurship, and Environmental studies. He is currently working with campus group CLEAN to push for a university-wide commitment to clean energy. On the SAC Subcommittee, Frank is looking to advance issues such as sustainable real estate development, energy use, and food systems on campus.



Isaac Eskind is a senior at UW-Madison. He is majoring in environmental studies and finance. Isaac is a part of WSCAC and in the UW-Divestment Coalition. Isaac hopes to advocate for an increase in many areas on campus, such as electric busses and a more comprehensive recycling infrastructure.



Emma Heins is a graduate student in the La Follette School of Public Affairs, where she is studying environmental policy with a focus in public health outcomes in low income communities. She is also earning a certificate in energy analysis and policy with the Nelson Institute for the Environment. She is a graduate of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, where she earned her Bachelor's of Science in Environmental Studies and Geology.



Tyler Katzenberger is a first-year undergraduate student majoring in Political Science and Economics with certificates in Environmental Studies and Public Policy. As a student representative on the Sustainability Advisory Council Subcommittee, he hopes to promote sustainable and equitable development on campus. Additionally, he is adamant about preserving the natural resources and landscapes on campus, even as the university continues to engage in new infrastructure projects.



Loren Latts is a junior majoring in Neurobiology with certificates in Global Health and Business Fundamentals. After graduation, she plans on pursuing a master's in health administration. She is an undergraduate student on the Student Subcommittee where she focuses on bringing a scientific perspective to discussions. She hopes to achieve sustainability through a mobilization of scientific evidence about climate change that becomes a part of the foundation for informing UW-Madison's environmental choices.





Grace Martin is a junior studying Political Science and Environmental Science. She is the Social Media Director for the ASM Sustainability Committee and the Vice President of the Sierra Student Coalition. She is also actively involved in the Wisconsin Student Climate Action Coalition and uses her position to advocate for environmental justice.



Catie McDonald is a double major in Environmental Studies and Economics with certificates in sustainability and business. She currently is in her second year as an intern at the UW-Madison Office of Sustainability. After graduation she plans to pursue a Master of Science in Environmental Science with policy and planning focuses. As an undergraduate member of the Student Subcommittee she aims to increase social sustainability efforts on campus in more concrete and long-lasting ways.



Marina Minic is a senior studying Chemistry and Environmental Studies with a certificate in East Central European Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. She is currently an intern for the Office of Sustainability and is an executive board member of Campus Leaders for Energy Action Now (CLEAN). Marina hopes to encourage bold climate action goals for the university in order to address inequities on campus and across the state.



Natalie Tinsen is a junior studying Economics and Environmental Studies with certificates in Sustainability, Global Health, and Business Fundamentals. She is the Chair of the ASM Sustainability Committee, and Office of Sustainability Intern, and is the student representative for the Midwest Climate Summit. She hopes to continue to raise awareness for these efforts through the Sustainability Advisory Council by improving environmental literacy and sustainable action.



Cecilia Vanden Heuvel is currently a sophomore double majoring in Environmental Science and Botany. Following the completion of this degree, she plans to pursue a master's in Plant Ecology. She is currently a part of the ASM Sustainability Committee to advance off campus recycling efforts, and is also a member of the Sierra Student Coalition. As a part of the Sustainability Advisory Council Subcommittee, Cecilia hopes to promote ideas leading towards protection of natural resources to further our campus and surrounding



After graduating high school and Information Technology Academy, Michael Williams traveled from the Oneida Reservation to UW–Madison, where he currently studies. Michael is a Psychology major on a Pre-Law track. He works within Native communities to better tribes in education, science, and mental health. While he is interested in law, he still devotes a lot of his time to photography, graphic design, and video editing.

## Executive Summaries

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Throughout the year, the student subcommittee met once a month in order to discuss the upcoming SAC meetings as well as debrief on the previous meeting. These briefs are written to highlight the student perspective throughout the Sustainability Advisory Council and how students view sustainability at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. These summaries are written by members of the student subcommittee and highlight the areas of: subcommittee priorities, academics, engagement, campus operations, and campus planning and administration.

### **Prioritization**

Written by: Frank Adams, Emma Heins, and Cecilia Vanden Heuvel

Looking at the four focus areas: Academics, Engagement, Operations, and Planning and Administration the SAC subcommittee has prioritized specific actions that they would like to see implemented in the future of advancing sustainability on campus. These actions consist of ideals that they find important when looking at all of the focus areas, rather than just specific points from each one. The top three priorities when reviewing the upcoming focus areas given by the SAC subcommittee are as follows, reflecting the Wisconsin Idea, incorporating social sustainability, and following through with tasks that are not always easily completed. This was a preliminary discussion of the different ways sustainability can be assessed and measured at UW-Madison and how the student group valued each area. Much of it was high level and not tied in specifically to initiatives, but rather overarching goals that the students want

The top three initiatives discussed in this meeting were incorporating the Wisconsin Idea, social sustainability into all aspects of the recommendations, and not defaulting initiatives that are easily completed. The SAC subcommittee recommends that when implementing sustainability initiatives in the future, that the university prioritizes the incorporation of social sustainability. Social sustainability can be further divided into four dimensions that include equity and diversity, quality of life, social cohesion, and democracy and governance. Equity and diversity ensures that there is a reduction in disadvantages of specific groups, as well as covering human rights of minority groups. Quality of life refers to accessibility to employment, affordable housing, food, and safety. Social cohesion creates increasing participation between all groups. Democracy and governance provides adequate budget and resources to follow through. These dimensions include protection of areas focused on equal education, human rights, and equity for all genders, all races, and indigenous groups. The SAC subcommittee is asking for a prioritization of social sustainability into future sustainability initiatives to ensure that the dimensions above are followed through. Looking specifically at the dimension of social cohesion, the subcommittee believes that this dimension will increase advocacy and care for the

environment due to increased student participation in sustainability. This is supported by the subcommittee because it will increase awareness that is often needed to garner support for initiatives led by student groups on campus. Social sustainability is essential when following through with sustainability initiatives per the prioritization by the SAC subcommittee.

Secondly, the SAC Subcommittee advises that the university prioritizes initiatives that reflect the Wisconsin Idea. The Wisconsin Idea is our guiding principle that recognizes our duty as a university to improve the health and lives of all its stakeholders, especially Wisconsin communities. With that as our guiding principle, it only makes sense that the SAC recommends, and that the university implements the sustainability initiatives through which we are able to most effectively improve the quality of life for those who we are to serve. It's important to commit to sustainability initiatives that truly reflect the Wisconsin Idea because we, as a large flagship university, have the privilege to make decisions that affect the lives of so many. We must use that privilege with care by ensuring that our decisions are in the best interest of our stakeholders. Sustainability is at the heart of the Wisconsin Idea. Without a healthy environment, the health of Wisconsin citizens becomes vulnerable. Adopting sustainable practices is especially important for those in charge of these decisions in order for the Wisconsin Idea to remain as our guiding principle.

The third initiative that the student group discussed was tackling the difficult and complex tasks that accompany sustainability. It would be easy for the university to tackle the "low hanging fruit" in terms of efficiency and recycling, but they would be missing the bigger picture of sustainability and not truly addressing the fundamental aspects of the school, and their inefficiencies. . Students value this as a priority because there is value in a university that aims for true physical and social sustainability. Updating conditions like campus infrastructure, operations, expanding sustainability classes offered require an exceeding amount of time and planning but, by making those meaningful changes for the campus community that significantly contribute to campus sustainability, will make a lasting impact on all for decades to come.

For our sustainability efforts to be successful, it is important that we focus on bringing about initiatives that increase student involvement, reflect the Wisconsin Idea, and are high impact, even when that means high difficulty. Initiatives that can garner the strongest student engagement and have an "all hands on board" will not only increase effectiveness and scale of impact, but will also work to increase awareness around values of sustainability. The more students we can get to engage in our sustainable initiatives, the more citizens of the environment there will be. The more exposed to sustainability our students are, the more their behaviors and values will reflect care for the environment. By prioritizing initiatives that reflect the Wisconsin Idea, we are upholding our commitment to the health and life of our Wisconsin communities and beyond. UW-Madison must maintain this commitment because of the power and privilege that the college holds. And by prioritizing initiatives that are highly impactful in terms of sustainability, we are not backing down from the immense challenge that faces us; a challenge which we have a hand in creating: climate change and depletion of natural resources. There is no time to waste. As expressed in our kickoff meeting, this is work that should have been done



yesterday. Because we are behind the curve, our initiatives must be highly impactful, no matter how difficult they may be. It's too late to take baby steps. Large action must be taken. For all this, the SAC Student Subcommittee advances the position that the best sustainability initiatives for the university to undertake will be those that gather the most student engagement, honor the Wisconsin Idea, and are of the highest impact.

## **Academics**

Written by: Katherine Ackley, Tyler Katzenberger, and Catie McDonald

Academics is the main focus of any university, and being a leader in educational programs is something that UW-Madison prides itself on. The university is uniquely situated to expand sustainable academic programs, as we have a plethora of resources here on campus to work with. In addition, Wisconsin has a long standing environmental legacy due to many great environmentalists and sustainability activists from the state, one of which is Gaylord Nelson, whom our Nelson Institute of Environmental Studies is named for. UW-Madison already is primed to be a leader in sustainability academics; now is the time to make it happen. The suggestions highlighted below are what the SAC Student Subcommittee believes will advance the university's position in sustainable academic programs and create a hub for sustainability innovation and research.

### ***Sustainability Institute***

A central hub for sustainability on campus would be beneficial to all, as it gives all students and departments easy access to sustainability-related resources, research, classes, and organizations. There are many major and certificate programs across campus which embody the multiple facets of sustainability; examples can be found [here](#). By aligning all these entities under one "roof", the university promotes collaboration among the various schools across campus and integration of sustainability into classes of all different major or certificate programs. "A sustainability institute would centralize all the work that is already being done and expand on that, as well as increase the visibility of sustainability courses, research, and projects open to students on campus," (SAC Student Subcommittee). While the project would be extensive and time consuming, and the lack of space on campus is a drawback, these issues do not make a sustainability institute impossible; the first step is to have the vision. The creation of this institute embodies the tenets of the Wisconsin Idea to advance learning inside and outside of the classroom, as well as supports UW-Madison living up to its sustainable and environmental legacies.

### ***Sustainability Coursework***

As it stands now, UW-Madison is lacking in both quantity and visibility with regards to sustainability coursework. Nowhere is this clearer than in the STARS report; gap analysis in the academics area of the report shows that UW-Madison is the third-lowest of the over 20



universities in its STARS peer group for academics and ranks especially terrible in the academic coursework credit area. To improve their STARS score, the university must start by offering more courses. Accomplishing this goal requires incentives for professors willing to teach sustainability courses as well as implementing a Sustainability Institute; however, all of that work will be left on the sidelines if UW-Madison does not integrate sustainability coursework into majors beyond the Nelson Institute. To increase visibility of sustainable coursework, the university must, at a minimum, offer a “SustainabilityEDU” online onboarding course for incoming freshmen to introduce them to sustainable culture on campus. This will likely have little effect, though, as many students skip through the existing onboarding courses. Therefore, the university ought to go a step further and introduce a new sustainability general education course requirement in order to make sure every student who graduates the university has learned about sustainable practices and sustainability issues for at least a semester. There is precedent for implementing new general education requirements; within the past five years, the university implemented an “Ethnic Studies” requirement for all students to address the growing need for diverse perspectives and histories to be integrated in every student’s education. Now, it is time that UW-Madison does the same for sustainability to recognize the importance of balancing economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection in every field of study.

### ***Sustainability Research***

UW-Madison needs to incentivize, organize, centralize and implement sustainability research on campus. As of right now, there is little incentive for professors to conduct sustainability-related research and no central location for students to find such research. We need a system to make sustainability-related research easily accessible, such as a sustainability checkbox on WISER. This will increase student learning by allowing students to more easily access the research, connect with professors, and participate in research as research assistants. However, arguably more important to students than increasing the amount of and accessibility of sustainability-related research on campus is the implementation of the research to improve campus sustainability. UW-Madison is already home to incredibly talented professors conducting important, groundbreaking research. But the value of research is lost if it isn’t used to make change. UW-Madison should take advantage of the sustainability research already being conducted by professors on campus, as well as research which will be pursued in the future, to make campus more sustainable. UW is already a leading research institution, it’s time to also be a leading institution in sustainability-related research.

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Tangible Outcome</b>	<b>Student Benefits</b>	<b>Drawbacks</b>
Sustainability Institute	A hub for sustainability	Place for classes, research, orgs for sustainability	Centralized hub for students to get involved with	Costly, take years to build, etc.

			sustainability	
Sustainability Coursework	UW-Madison is far behind its peers in STARS goal AC-1 (Academic Coursework). To fix this, the university must facilitate the creation and promotion of sustainability courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incentives for instructors willing to create sustainability courses.</li> <li>- Creation of “SustainabilityED U” onboarding course</li> <li>- Addition of a sixth general education requirement for sustainability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased exposure to sustainable practices in all fields.</li> <li>- Shared campus knowledge on sustainable practices.</li> <li>- More opportunities for sustainable education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incentivizing new courses would be a moderate expense.</li> <li>- Implementing new sustainability education requirements, no matter its importance, will get caught in bureaucratic red tape.</li> </ul>
Sustainability Research	UW-Madison lacks a system to track sustainability-related research, incentives to encourage sustainability-related research and a centralized location to find sustainability-related research. It also lacks a system to implement the research to improve campus sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Incentives for staff to conduct sustainability-related research such as in promotion, tenure, or professorships</li> <li>-a system to track said research, such as a sustainability checkbox in WISER</li> <li>-centralized location to find sustainability research</li> <li>-system or committee to implement research into policy on campus</li> </ul>	Students will be able to easily access and participate in an increased amount of sustainability-related research. The university will also be more sustainable with the implemented research.	Costly to fund research and to implement the research to make the campus more sustainable.

### **Engagement**

Written by: Issac Eskind, Grace Martin, and Cecilia Vanden Heuvel

Sustainability engagement should be held as a top priority from the University of Wisconsin-Madison because unfortunately, it is something the university continues to grapple with. . The SAC Subcommittee focused on two different categories - what the university is strong in versus what can be improved . Events, advocacy, job and research opportunities, coursework, and communication were all areas which were touched upon during the large and small group discussions. The idea of a Sustainability Hub on campus was also discussed, as this may be advantageous in improving many of the categories discussed.

With the discussion of possible areas for improvement, the SAC Subcommittee prioritized the top three initiatives which they thought would be useful to improve sustainability engagement at UW-Madison.

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Tangible Outcome</b>	<b>Student Benefits</b>	<b>Drawbacks</b>
Sustainability Leadership and Advocacy	Create UW Madison as a nationally recognized university that leads in sustainability efforts. Lead in efforts to use renewable energy. Collaborate with the Big Ten system in regards to sustainability, and advocate for sustainable public policy.	UW Madison will become nationally recognized in sustainability which will garner national recognition. Lead in sustainability. Join climate pacts and advocate for related government policy.	Increase in student numbers due to advocacy as a sustainable campus. Students are morally comforted by going to a school that largely practices sustainability. Moral and physical benefits for students.	Costly for the university.
Continuing Education	Since sustainability is a systemic issue, there are endless perspectives that can have a sustainability piece. Each field of study should	This will ensure that all students will have some background of sustainability in their field.	Students will graduate with an understanding of how sustainability relates to their field, what they can do to promote	This will likely cost the university money because they are offering more classes and might have to pay teachers more or hire new

	have at least one or two sustainability courses		sustainability, and a generic understanding of the most important issue of our time.	teachers to teach these courses.
Sustainable Athletics	Have all university athletic teams and athletic events take sustainable action, whether that be with uniforms, transportation, game day activities, etc. Some athletic events are large waste days, so targeting for zero waste at all events etc.	The most tangible outcome will be a reduction in waste or GHG emissions. However, it will also gain large media attention and push other universities to follow suit. Athletics events garner a large public audience, if game days were promoted as sustainable this would target a large amount of people.	Students athletes will be more informed about the carbon footprint of athletics. Students will become aware or more aware of sustainability during athletic events. Students could also help find solutions for our targets.	This could have some high up front costs for the University.

When asked about these issues, students of the Sustainability Advisory Council subcommittee were quoted on the following. It was evident that the subcommittee wholly agrees that UW Madison must largely increase their sustainability efforts not only for the good of the planet, but to become a leading university on environmental issues. A subcommittee member was quoted saying, “I am disheartened by UW Madison’s sustainable efforts, I believe they should be doing more. Climate change is a very pertinent issue that should be at the forefront of our University’s leadership and decision making.” The subcommittee additionally came to the conclusion that sustainability requirements should be incorporated into every major with classes that tie together the major and sustainability. The following quotes are taken from the subcommittee members: “Because sustainability relates to every field, it is important for all students to learn about it from their major’s perspective” and “Since this is the biggest challenge of our lifetimes, each student must have some understanding of sustainability issues.” The subcommittee found Sustainable athletics to be important to prioritize due to its large impacts. These are the quotes taken from the subcommittee, “because athletics are such a big part of external relations with alumni, other universities, and the public at large, sustainable athletics



would create a large amount of change for the university both directly and indirectly” and “athletic events reach a large public audience. Creating a sustainable game day would link sustainability to our university for students, the public, and alumni.

These initiatives are important for the student experience at UW-Madison for a multitude of reasons. First, these measures will help promote the importance of sustainability, benefiting the university and its image and our student body. For example, co-curricular learning will push all students to learn about this issue. This will continue to be important in the future as well, as the effects of climate continue to change our world. Additionally, it will help UW-Madison continue our commitment to our future. By taking a lead in making changes to our campus, we can continue to be leaders in the state, the BIG10 and all around the country. And lastly, these initiatives are important because they will improve our campus and create stronger leaders in our university. The specific prioritization of these initiatives would assist in the ideals agreed to be focused on by the subcommittee: reflecting the Wisconsin Idea, incorporating social sustainability, and following through with tasks that are not always easily completed. These initiatives would reflect the Wisconsin Idea by improving the livelihood of students and the Wisconsin public through increased sustainability measures. Social sustainability would be added throughout each of the initiatives, and would be a priority. These initiatives are also asking for larger tasks to be followed through. As a subcommittee, we acknowledge this, but if these initiatives continue completed, there will be drastic, positive impacts for the university, its students, and all of Wisconsin. Finally, we ask that the University uses our recommendations of prioritizing Sustainability Leadership and Advocacy, Continuing Education, and Sustainable Athletics in the Engagement focus area.

## **Operations**

Written by: Frank Adams, Loren Latts, and Marina Minic

Operations is a fundamental aspect of campus sustainability at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. According to the [AASHE STARS report](#), Operations include Air & Climate, Buildings, Energy, Food & Dining, Grounds, Purchasing, Transportation, Waste, Water. This category contains many different campus operations that are essential to consider when working in sustainability, and impacts all three pillars of sustainability (social, environmental, economic). They are also very interconnected, so creating change in one subcategory is sure to garner change in another. UW-Madison received a silver on the STARS report, and received scores in the operations focus topic that are noticeably lower than scores in other focus topics. These low scores emphasize the importance of making bold change in the way our campus operates. Food waste, fossil fuel usage, and inefficient buildings are all large carbon emitters. By focusing on waste standardization, energy procurement, and building design, the UW-Madison campus will see large improvements in sustainability, and large decreases in carbon emissions.

## ***Resource management***

Resource management was uniformly decided by the SAC subcommittee to be of the utmost importance in the operations focus area. One noticeably large on-campus disparity is access to dependable composting and recycling networks. The system for waste management is not uniform throughout campus; specifically, in the dorms and dining halls. As stated by Natalie Tinsen, the chair of the subcommittee, “All students should have access to the best resources; we need to standardize our operations,” in order to ensure equality within accessibility. Therefore, the initiative the SAC Subcommittee would like to prioritize from the operations focus area is waste standardization. According to the STARS report, the university scored a 3.58/8.00 on *Waste Minimization and Diversion*, with an overall score of 5.17/10.00 for the *Waste* category. Evidently, there is room for improvement. Waste standardization provides a foundation to achieve a zero waste plan for campus. Feasible actions that could be taken by the university to work towards the zero waste goal, are consistent signage (about various waste disposal methods) and the same number of prime-quality recycling and compost bins in each dorm and dining hall. The tangible outcomes of these actions would be increased use of recycling and compost bins, reduced amount of waste sent to landfills, and lower garbage-related costs for the school, which would allow for more sustainable opportunities the university could pursue.

Not only will direct campus community members benefit from this initiative, but so would surrounding communities and the broader environment. Effective recycling and composting systems reduce fossil fuel usage, energy use, and greenhouse gas emissions. However, it's imperative to note that there are possible drawbacks to this initiative, such as sunk costs. A waste audit would need to be conducted, sustainable suppliers would need to be recruited, and cost-effective strategies would need to be put in place: which can be expensive for the university. Additionally, another risk associated would be whether waste standardization would be effective in terms of campus members knowing what can and cannot be recycled and composted. Although there are obstacles in order to achieve waste standardization at UW-Madison, with a proper waste standardization process put in place, the benefits would outweigh the possible hurdles, which is why the SAC subcommittee fully believes that waste standardization should be of the utmost priority in order to expand sustainability for all.

### ***Green Energy and Electricity***

Green energy and electricity had unanimous support among the SAC student subcommittee, and often has consistent support among other student organizations as well. Investing in green energy and electricity would result in a high-impact action on campus, and directly improve the lives of those in surrounding communities, which would allow UW-Madison to keep its commitment to the Wisconsin Idea. The initiative the Student Subcommittee would like to prioritize from the Green Energy and Electricity focus area is to procure 100% renewable electricity and source net zero carbon energy. The university received a score of 0.06/4 in the *Clean and Renewable Energy* category, and a 3.40/6 for the *Building Energy Consumption* category. Although both scores are low, it is clear that investment into renewable energy infrastructure both on and off campus is the necessary next step. The MGE

Rider program is attractive for the university because it goes beyond buying renewable energy credits from some far-off solar farm located five states over. Through the Rider program, the University can invest in new renewable energy programs located in surrounding communities. This can directly contribute to encouraging MGE to continue shutting down their coal plants, which in turn benefits our fellow Wisconsin residents. The program also has a tangible outcome, as it would improve UW-Madison's renewable energy portfolio, and bring it closer to 100% renewable energy. Prioritizing the goal of 100% renewable energy would be a benefit to students in many ways. This is something that generations of students have been advocating for, and the accomplishment of this goal would result in immense pride for both current and former students. Implementing infrastructure on campus would also create the opportunity for hands-on learning for students, and would contribute to the idea of making campus a living lab. Renewable energy is a high-cost and high-impact initiative that would put UW-Madison back on the map of academic institutions leading in environmentalism. The upfront cost is large, but the money saved in the long run is even larger<sup>1</sup>. For environmental, social, and economic reasons, prioritizing a goal of rapidly transitioning to 100% renewable electricity and net zero carbon energy is imperative.

### ***Sustainable Planning and Design***

Sustainable Campus Planning and Building Design is another focus area within Operations that the SAC Subcommittee holds as high priority. Sustainable Campus Planning and Building Design means designing indoor and outdoor spaces, buildings, and incorporating energy systems within those places (i.e lighting, heating & cooling) with sustainability as a priority. The SAC Subcommittee holds that incorporating a high level of sustainability within campus planning and building design is an essential task in the goal of becoming an environmentally conscious university. [Knowing that buildings and building construction account for 38% of global greenhouse gas emissions](#) (Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction), increasing sustainable efforts in our Planning and Design processes can be the most impactful strategy in becoming a sustainable campus. The University has made great strides in fighting Climate Change by installing solar panels on the roof of Gordon Dining and Event Center and committing to the purchase of half of the energy produced by Madison Gas and Electric's planned solar generation facility to be built in Fitchburg, WI.

Despite these and other similar initiatives that bring much-needed clean energy into our buildings' operations, the SAC has stated that "UW-Madison does not have a consistent methodology for incorporating sustainability into campus planning and building design"(SAC, 2021). Additionally, the university lacks "comprehensive requirements for incorporating sustainability practices and principles into building operations". This hinders our ability to

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<sup>1</sup> Bolinger, M., & Seel, J. (2019, December 18). *Berkeley Lab's "Utility-Scale Solar" report sees continued growth and falling costs for big solar*. Berkeley Lab's "Utility-Scale Solar" report sees continued growth and falling costs for big solar | Electricity Markets and Policy Group. <https://emp.lbl.gov/news/berkeley-lab-s-utility-scale-solar-report>.

ensure that future designs are environmentally focused. To remedy this, the SAC Subcommittee encourages the university to develop formal sustainability requirements for all future building projects and that infrastructure should be prioritized. Green energy systems and materials, air quality, and water efficiency are among other criteria that should be required. The university should also work towards improving the aforementioned aspects of our current buildings, in order to meet a high standard of sustainability. Besides limiting the amount of pollution produced by buildings, sustainable design will allow for our spaces of learning and collaborating to remain clean and keep our student body healthy.

### **Graphical Analysis**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Tangible Outcome</b>	<b>Student Benefits</b>	<b>Drawbacks</b>
Resource Management	Access to dependable composting and recycling networks on campus.	Waste standardization provides a foundation to achieve a zero waste plan for campus: consistent signage, and the same number of prime-quality recycling and compost bins in each dorm and dining hall.	Effective recycling and composting systems reduce fossil fuel usage, energy use, and greenhouse gas emissions.	Waste audits would need to be conducted, sustainable suppliers would need to be recruited, and cost-effective strategies would need to be put in place and campus members knowing what can and cannot be recycled and composted.
Green Electricity and Energy	Green energy is that which comes from natural sources, such as the sun. renewable energy comes from sources that are	Procure 100% renewable electricity and source net zero carbon energy.	Investing in green energy and electricity would result in a high-impact action on campus, and directly improve the	The upfront cost is large, but the money saved in the long run is even larger <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Bolinger, M., & Seel, J. (2019, December 18). *Berkeley Lab's "Utility-Scale Solar" report sees continued growth and falling costs for big solar*. Berkeley Lab's "Utility-Scale Solar" report sees continued growth and falling costs for big solar | Electricity Markets and Policy Group. <https://emp.lbl.gov/news/berkeley-lab-s-utility-scale-solar-report>.



	constantly being replenished, such as hydropower, wind power or solar energy.		lives of those in surrounding communities, which would allow UW-Madison to keep its commitment to the Wisconsin Idea.	
Sustainable Planning and Design	Designing indoor and outdoor spaces, buildings, and incorporating energy systems within those places (i.e lighting, heating & cooling) with sustainability as a priority.	Develop formal sustainability requirements for all future building projects, green energy systems and materials, air quality, and water efficiency are among other criteria that should be required.	Sustainable design will allow for our spaces of learning and collaborating to remain clean and keep our student body healthy.	“Comprehensive requirements for incorporating sustainability practices and principles into building operations”. This hinders our ability to ensure that future designs are environmentally focused.

The three focus areas discussed above—Resource Management, Green Energy and Electricity, and Sustainable Campus Planning and Building design— and their respective initiatives are all essential areas of prioritization when it comes to furthering sustainability on campus operations. Waste management efforts such as providing easily accessible recycling and compost bins to *all* dorms and dining halls and increasing awareness regarding signage about waste management can have a huge impact on student waste behavior, and will stride towards creating a much more environmentally conscious student body. Investing in local clean energy will decrease our ecological footprint, a concern consistently raised by our student body. Additionally, our divestment from coal-powered energy will encourage companies such as Madison Gas and Electric to reduce coal operations, which would greatly benefit many Wisconsin communities suffering from coal pollution—an impact that would support our university’s guiding principle, the Wisconsin Idea. Finally, putting in place formal sustainability requirements for all campus planning projects and buildings will help ensure that our students’ learning environments are clean and healthy. It will also curb the negative impact that the number one carbon polluter on campus—buildings—has on the environment. Ultimately, it is in the best interest of the environment, UW-Madison, the Wisconsin community and beyond that the administration in charge of operations focuses on improving sustainability efforts in resource management, green energy, and campus planning and building design.

## **Campus Planning and Administration**

Written by: Loren Latts, Tyler Katzenberger, and Catie McDonald

Planning and Administration at the university is highly involved in how UW-Madison will progress in terms of sustainability as this area creates most of the opportunities for sustainable growth on campus. It also lends a hand in forming campus culture and what UW-Madison is known for. Therefore, Planning and Administration decisions and policies – from funding and investment decisions to social support and campus culture – play a major role in the university’s advancement of sustainable practices. The Wisconsin Idea already leads to innovative sustainability efforts on campus, but Planning and Administration can focus on the suggested initiatives below to fully put these efforts into action and expand integration of sustainable practices at all levels of the university.

### ***Sustainable Investments***

The UW Foundation claims on its website to have an endowment over \$3.3 billion and that the investment team, “endeavors to achieve the best possible long-term returns with the least amount of risk.” As of 2018, the Foundation had ~3.8% of its endowment, or \$124,785,961, invested in fossil fuels. “The Wisconsin Foundation & Alumni Association portfolio must be transparent; we want to put our money where our mouth is and have very clear divestment targets”(SAC Subcommittee, 2021) The fossil fuel industry has become a very risky investment as of late, as over fifty coal companies have declared bankruptcy since 2012, and natural gas and oil markets are quite volatile and elastic, or sensitive to price changes.

It has been found that divestment from fossil fuels and reinvestment in renewables can actually increase the risk-adjusted performance of an investment, meaning higher returns. Reinvestment into renewable resources, such as wind, solar, or hydro, would make UW-Madison a leader in sustainability, as well as alleviate the environmental burdens BIPOC communities have endured. Reinvestment, however, should not be solely directed toward renewable energy markets. Investment decisions should be made to support the students and the Madison community by providing equitable resources for socioeconomic growth and to employ practices of justice and revitalization. Examples of this include investing in smaller, diverse, local industries, as well as public sector infrastructure, both of which help to create people-centered sustainable communities. Reinvestment also can be directed toward places that prioritize the rights and wellbeing of the community by addressing social inequities based on race, class, gender, immigrant status, and other forms of oppression. “There’s always been reasons not to divest, arguments that there aren’t the resources or funding to do so... but funding has been used an argument for many different things, such as why slavery should not be abolished.”(SAC Subcommittee, 2021) Fossil fuel divestment *and* sustainable reinvestment would not only address climate change, but also the socioeconomic issues that have resulted due to climate change.

### ***Social Sustainability***

Within Planning and Administration, social sustainability had unanimous support among the SAC Student Subcommittee as a focus area. Generally, sustainability is only thought of in terms of how to cultivate a viable environment: however, this only scratches the surface of its definition. We need to redesign the narrative of sustainability, it is not just cleaner energy, but it also includes creating inclusive spaces. Failure to acknowledge the intersectionality between sustainability and social factors such as race, wealth, education, etc. is a blatant mistake. Therefore, the initiative the Student Subcommittee would like to prioritize from the Social Sustainability focus area is that there needs to be processes put in place to ensure equity, inclusivity, and justice are core to all programs that advance sustainability and resilience. In other words, social sustainability should not be a separate entity, but interwoven into every recommended initiative, and as Michael Williams, a member of the SAC Student Subcommittee said, “Social Sustainability should be the tenet in all decision making.”

According to the AASHE STARS report, the university scored a 1.92/3.00 on *Support for Underrepresented Groups* and a 1.33/2.00 for *Diversity and Equity Coordination*. Evidently, there is needed improvement. Feasible actions that could be taken by the university to ensure equity, inclusivity, and justice are core to all sustainability programs are prioritizing identity-based student organizations, funding land reparations for Ho-Chunk and other indigenous communities, and incorporating a Just Transition framework into climate action. Social sustainability efforts are incomplete without tangible goals for the inclusion of BIPOC voices and land recognition for the Ho-Chunk Nation (SAC subcommittee, 2021). Tangible outcomes of these actions include creating inclusive environments, working towards environmental justice, and ensuring students from identity-based student organizations and/or backgrounds are heard. These outcomes would have many student benefits such as increasing students’ involvement with sustainability, reducing inequalities, and fostering equitable social development. It is also important to recognize that there may be challenges in order to achieve this goal, such as leaders’ unwillingness to listen or care enough about social sustainability to make it a priority in all university decisions. As Emma Heins, one of the members of the SAC Student Subcommittee states, “ [...] there’s a need for key leadership focused on sustainability.” As presented, it is imperative to prioritize social sustainability because UW-Madison cannot advance sustainability and resilience priorities without advancing social justice and equity.

### ***Sustainability Integration***

“Sustainability should not only be kept at the forefront of decision-making, but implications after the fact ought to be considered as well.”(SAC Subcommittee, 2021) Before we can begin to integrate sustainability throughout campus, we have to recognize that sustainability is a UW-Madison core value. Sustainability must be understood in the same context as academic excellence, innovative research, and the Wisconsin Idea - in other words, as an integral part of who we are as a university. It then follows that the recommendations of groups promoting

sustainability, such as the SAC, must be recognized as legitimate concerns for the university to address. Voices matter, and to ensure sustainability advocates' voices are heard, there must be an institutional framework for sustainable advancement that allows SAC reports to travel quickly and directly to the highest level of administrative staff. Existing administrators must also be working towards sustainability goals; however, they need to go beyond top-down, overarching edicts. To effectively change campus culture and processes, administration needs to enact policies and create educational opportunities which attack specific issues and grow a student body capable of innovative sustainability solutions.

Campus administrators must also horizontally integrate sustainability into all facets of campus planning. The best way to ensure sustainable interests are heard is by including sustainability experts in all aspects of decision-making on campus. Whenever a decision is made, whether it be a change in the campus supply chain, development of a new public space, planning for an event, or development of new employee onboarding procedures, administration must ensure that sustainability experts are recognized as a stakeholder and offered a seat at the decision-making table. Furthermore, sustainability needs to be prioritized in departmental budgets. While the Green Revolving Fund offers capital for innovative projects, its current status as a primary funding beyond for sustainable projects, is limiting opportunities for innovation and project funding within departments. "The Green Revolving Fund reduces initiative for departments to incorporate sustainability in their budgets and building"(SAC Subcommittee, 2021) To decrease reliance on the Green Revolving Fund, administration must mandate budgeting within departments for sustainable solutions. Finally, the best thing our campus leaders can do to foster sustainability is to think of sustainability as more than just energy, but as a part of our campus identity.

Initiative	Description	Tangible Outcome	Student Benefits	Drawbacks
Sustainable Investments	The removal of your investment capital from stocks, bonds or funds. Asking institutions to move their money out of oil, coal and gas companies.	The WFAA divest their investments from fossil fuel industries.	Provide an environment for students that demonstrates UW's commitment to sustainability and support for BIPOC communities.	The WFAA is their own governing board and divestment is still being researched on the benefits/drawbacks in the long term.
Social Sustainability	Social sustainability needs to be the tenet in all university decision making and	Creating inclusive environments, working towards environmental	Increasing students' involvement with sustainability,	Leaders' unwillingness to listen or care enough about



	interwoven into every proposed initiative, not treated as a separate entity	justice, and ensuring students from identity-based student organizations and/or backgrounds are heard.	reducing inequalities, and fostering equitable social development	social sustainability to make it a priority in all university decisions
Sustainability Integration	Recognizing sustainability as a core value on campus and integrating sustainable voice in campus decision-making	Formalization of SAC priorities within campus planning; inclusion of sustainability in department budgets	More funding and visibility for sustainable projects; clearer channel for voicing sustainability concerns	Changing campus culture is a long process that requires patience and determination

Three focus areas within Planning/Administration: Sustainable Investments, Social Sustainability, and Sustainability Integration, and their respective initiatives, were uniformly decided by the Student SAC Subcommittee to be top priorities in order to further sustainability on campus. Firstly, sustainable investments need to be a priority in order to foster UW's commitment to sustainability and support of BIPOC communities. Secondly, social sustainability needs to be the tenet in all university decision making and interwoven into every proposed initiative. Prioritizing social sustainability will have positive student benefits such as increasing students' involvement with sustainability, reducing inequalities, and fostering equitable social development. Finally, sustainability integration is required in order to implement sustainability as a core value on campus. Achieving sustainability integration would formalize SAC priorities by integrating sustainable voices in on-campus decision making, result in more funding and visibility for sustainable projects, and provide a clearer channel for voicing sustainability concerns. Evidently, it is in the best interest of UW-Madison's faculty, students, and community to prioritize initiatives in Sustainable Investments, Social Sustainability, and Sustainability Integration to advance sustainability efforts and the WI idea.