Office of Sustainability
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Sustainability Advisory Council – Fall Listening Session Summary
Listening Session #1A: *October 14th, 2020 12:00pm – 1:00pm*
Listening Session #1B (students only): *October 15th, 2020 7:00pm – 8:00pm*
Listening Session #1C: *October 20th, 2020 7:00pm – 8:00pm*
[Full recordings available here](#)

Listening Session Structure
    Three listening sessions were offered to solicit input from university and community members on the structure of and outcomes from the Sustainability Advisory Council (SAC). Listening sessions included a short introduction outlining the current SAC process and a story illustrating how UW–Madison might take a systems approach to sustainability. The majority of the time was devoted to small group discussions (~5 attendees) reflecting on two questions:

1. Imagine that UW-Madison is doing everything right when it comes to sustainability. Now it is 2035, what is different?
2. In order to achieve the vision we just discussed, what are the most important sustainability priorities for the University to consider?

Facilitators guided the small group discussions and took notes. For stakeholders unable to attend one of the live listening sessions, a survey was made available to collect their response to the same questions.

Below is a summary of listening session discussions and survey responses. Numbers included after each comment indicates the number of times a topic was brought up during a listening session or in a survey response.

Themes and Notes

I. **SAC Process**
   a. *Framing the Work of the SAC*
      - Create a sense of urgency (x4)
      - Setting priorities comes from a limited resource mindset, how do we make progress at all levels? (x2)
         o Acknowledge that priorities may differ by school / college / department
      - Remember that sustainability is tied to ethics (x2)
      - Look to design thinking as a model (x1)
   b. *Context for the Work of the SAC*
      - Highlight our unique natural setting (on an isthmus) as a strength (x3)
      - Recognize that UW–Madison is part of a broader whole (x1)
         o Community; City; State; Natural Systems (e.g., lakes)
   c. *Voices in the Process*
      - Incorporate values and perspectives from other cultures (x8)
         o Don't discard what has been handed down in the name of coming up with new ideas
      - Prioritize student voices (x3)
      - Look to UW–Madison's research experts and incorporate their work into operations (x2)
      - Center impacted communities (x1)

II. **SAC Results**
   a. *Align Incentives*
      - Incentivize community members to be a part of whatever changes are made in the future (x7)
         o Solutions need to build collaboration across units and with regulators and the private sector
         o Can these efforts reduce the hierarchical nature of our institution's culture?
      - Make the sustainable option the preferred option – take the burden of decision away from the end user (x5)
         o But also recognize that increased costs cannot be passed onto the end user without addressing potential equity impacts
   b. *Show Progress*
      - Make sure goals are measurable and public (x7)
         o Show support for the SAC by funding the priorities,
         o Communicate that these costs enable lower total cost in the long run
      - Find quick wins and ways to counter feeling disheartened by the pace of change (x3)
         o Identify practical approaches and things stakeholders can do right now
         o Prioritize solutions that are visible to the community (not just the university community) to foster awareness and perhaps lead to broader behavior changes

III.   Priorities
   a. Academics
- Require all freshmen (and/or degree programs) to include at least one sustainability course (x9)
  - Ensure it is required across all schools
  - Include indigenous history as a part of the course(s)
  - Connect the course content to UW–Madison's local ecosystems
  - Include community members / organizations in the course(s)
- Create new sustainability First Year Interest Groups (x1)
- Establish a center or school for sustainability (x1)
- Develop new cluster hires or seed grants focused on sustainability issues (x1)

   b. Engagement
- Build a culture of sustainability (x9)
  - Provide a more centralized way for students to connect around issues of sustainability
  - Build a collective mindset and find ways to consistently tell our collective story
  - Ultimately make the Office of Sustainability obsolete
- Bring sustainability into athletics and athletics' events (x2)
  - Transition to zero waste athletic events
- Transition all on-campus events to zero waste and refuse unnecessary materials from vendors (x2)
  - Operationalize the Fair Trade resolution
- Extend on-campus collaborations to include all UW System schools (x1)

  c. Operations
- Become zero waste (x18)
  - Focus on refusing materials before reusing or recycling
  - Eliminate plastic waste, particularly single-use plastics (e.g., water bottles)
  - Expand composting across campus
  - Reduce waste from labs
- Net zero carbon for electricity and energy or 100% renewable energy (x17)
- Green buildings and developments (x12)
  - Including: increased tree canopy; return stormwater to native conditions; include community gardens, green roofs, and rooftop solar
  - Work with community stakeholders to enable a holistic approach to sustainable development
- Support sustainable transportation options (x9)
  - Foster electric transportation options and implement supporting infrastructure
  - Track and report on fuel use and emissions from UW–Madison's vehicle fleet
  - Greatly limit or eliminate building new parking lots
  - Expand mass transit and create walkable streets
- Source sustainable food that is healthy, local, and culturally-appropriate (x7)
- Create new and accessible green space (especially outdoor accessible spaces in the shoulder months) (x5)
- Implement sustainable lighting opportunities, including LEDs and occupancy sensors (x2)
- Include sustainability requirements in purchasing contracts (e.g., cradle to cradle) (x2)
- Install new water efficient fixtures (e.g., low flow toilets) (x1)

  d. Planning and Administration
- Create a safe and welcoming environment for BIPOC students and faculty (x7)
- Completely divest from fossil fuels and reinvest in sustainable energy (x4)
- Remove historical markers of racism (e.g., Lincoln Statue, Chamberlin Rock) (x4)
- Support on-going work-from-home opportunities and ensure it is a sustainable alternative (x3)
  - Create opportunities for teams and classes to be together but look at opportunities to reduce office, conference, or classroom space
- Create transparency in the investment portfolio (x1)
- Prioritize wellness in how we build and maintain our physical environment (x1)
- Intentionally provide a more substantial acknowledgement of the Ho-Chunk people (x1)
  - Consider land reparations and scholarships