**Sustainability Council**

Spring 2025

**Date:** April 30, 2025

**Time:** 1-2pm CDT

**Location:** OVCDEI, 3080

**Attendees:** Elizabeth Murphy, Madhu Khanna, John Coleman, Gabi DalSanto, Katherine Bruce, Claire Keating, Susan Martinis, Morgan White, Rob Roman, Sylvia McIvor, Tony Spurlock, Brian Bundren, Tim Knox, Jim Hintz, Miriam Keep, German Bollero, Danita Brown Young, Eunice Santos

**Agenda:**

1. iCAP 2025: Objectives for DIA
   1. Tim: Jen and I have talked through these objectives, have a pretty good plan for how to move this forward. Will be increasing messaging, etc. Hands tied somewhat by contract with Coke. We have moved the needle on some of these. Know that we can do more, especially with tailgating. There is support from DIA leadership, but need to be incremental in implementation.
   2. Jen: We have looked at athletic sustainability plans from various plans. The features I pulled out are very common across the schools listed here.
   3. Susan: This indicates these goals are achievable. Coming from the grants world, “incremental” is a killer. I wonder if there is something we can do that would make a splash, like providing an incentive for collecting bottles.
   4. Tim: We have also re-engaged the Green Sports Alliance. We do need to lean on our peers to see what works best. Have struggled to get volunteers to help in tailgate lots.
   5. Jen: I think in many cases the challenge is education and communication, getting the message out that we are not doing the same old thing.
   6. Gabi: Want to know more about challenges with dealing with Coca Cola.
      1. Tim: We’ve been asking for aluminum bottles for years, but our bottler does not have the capacity.
   7. Claire: I have seen student interest. At basketball games, stadium is enclosed. Tailgating area much bigger. Wonder if we need innovative strategies to collect tailgating waste, like golf cart.
   8. Tim: Our fans are very stuck in their ways. We spent a lot of money on paired trash and recycling bins, but people just throw things away in the same bins.
   9. Susan: Want to think about motivating students, like competitions with prizes like signed footballs.
2. iCAP 2025: Updating energy targets
   1. Madhu: Want to make sure a sustainability representative is included in the master planning process to work with colleges as they set their goals.
   2. Brian: We will put a steering committee together, and we can have a sustainability representative to help each college formulate a plan. 2017 plan had many goals and targets related to sustainability, makes sense to include these.
   3. John: How do we explain the differences in total energy consumption across colleges?
      1. Jen: These do not account for changes in square footage, FTE or heating/cooling days. Need to have an analyst who can do more work with this data. Increases in space, deferred maintenance, and fewer sustainable design features all factor in.
      2. Jim: Our population is also increasing, and there is more demand for air conditioning. We are trying to increase summer conference revenue, which requires keeping more buildings operational. Overall consumption is not a good measurement.
   4. Madhu: Question is how to go about setting targets. In the past they were just set across campus, without consideration for unique factors affecting different colleges.
      1. John: It is important to set targets that are achievable, without settling for less than we could do. We want people to aspire to stretch goals. Maybe set minimum acceptable standards along with stretch goals.
   5. Susan: Also important to think about different types of buildings. Important to think in tiers. Need different type of plan for energy guzzlers.
   6. Madhu: Part of incentivizing behavior could come down to budget modeling, with more incentives to keep utilities costs down so units who are keeping energy costs down receive the benefits from that.
      1. German: The budget model does show the benefits of keeping energy costs down, and this was an incentive for ACES to keep energy consumption down.
   7. Claire: Attitudes are often the biggest barriers to creating sustainable change.
3. Student perspectives
   1. Claire: $1.2 million allocated by SSC, large portions to infrastructure and transportation. Continue to want to prioritize student-led projects. Want to be a partner in larger projects, not just hand out funds. Also want to ensure the university makes a financial commitment to sustainable infrastructure.
   2. Katherine: representing SSLC, which aims to be the hub for sustainability RSOs across campus.
      1. Collected feedback from students during multiple events. Two biggest pieces of feedback are that students want to see composting on campus and want to see more native plants.
         1. Composting: Have learned about some of the barriers from iSEE, but think there is an opportunity for U of I to be a leader in composting. Want to put together a working group to work on this. Other Illinois universities have a composting program while we do not.
            1. Jim: We will use the same composting company at the next Welcome Lunch. Dining has committed to using compostable dining ware. We will also have water stations, and Coke has committed to using only aluminum bottles. We will not have any plastic bottles at the event.
         2. Native plants: Students want to see this in main area of campus where students spend the most time, and to make sure these are easily visible so students know what they are.
            1. Morgan: We need a civil service worker called a grounds gardener. Grounds workers’ job classification don’t allow them to care for native plantings and garden areas, so right now these all have to be managed by volunteers. This will be one of our future requests to the Provost. We are also prioritizing taking care of the trees. First request was right amount of tree care, but I think there are ways we can make sure there are more native plantings in the quads.

Katherine: Making sure the information about what is going on is easily accessible to students is also important.

* 1. Gabi: ISC wants to see more specialized recycling on campus, to prioritize a low-waste campus culture. ISC is looking into potential vendors and strategies to move this forward. ISC also continues to prioritize divestments. All 12 LAS representatives ran with divestment in their campaigns. Latest referendum shows 72% of students support divestment. We know that the university cannot decide how the System invests. We know that while divestment was in the iCAP 2020, it will not be in the iCAP 2025, and many students are upset about that.

1. Energy Performance Contract for ACES
   1. Susan: Last number for deferred maintenance I saw was about $600 million. Why did this number go up so much?
      1. That number was an estimate based on an assessment completed about 15 years ago.
   2. Susan: How does number compare to our peers?
      1. Morgan: Not sure.
   3. John: Are we seeing the progress over the past twenty years that we expected from energy service contracting?
      1. Tony: We have exceeded our expectations.
      2. Sylvia: The energy service company has to provide annual reports, which we monitor.
      3. Rob: The important thing is that if the company does not meet the goals, they have to pay, which takes the risk off us.
   4. Madhu: What are the challenges with the externally funded scenario?
      1. Rob: The university has generally not had the appetite to seek third party funding. But, if we can cover the cost in energy savings, it is allowable.
      2. John: Financing would have to run through Board of Trustees.
   5. Morgan: Is there agreement that we should pursue the third, maximum scenario that addresses deferred maintenance?
      1. Susan: Think you should have next meeting with provost’s office to discuss the financial modeling first.