

Sustainability Council Meeting 5-12-22

Attendees: Chancellor Jones, Jessica Nicholson, Emily Heaton, Jennifer Fraterrigo, Elizabeth Murphy, Morgan White, Madhu Khanna, Owen Jennings, Jack Reicherts, Susan Martinis, Tony Mancuso, Anya Knecht, Brent Lewis, Meredith Moore, Jeffrey Brawn, Michael DeLorenzo, Paul Redman, Iowa Mwilambwe, Ehab Kamarah, Danita Young, Provost Cangelaris, Venetria Patton, Kevin Hamilton, Kim Kidwell, Barry Benson

Sustainable Land Management Committee (Emily Heaton presented status update on behalf of the committee and Adam Davis – chair of committee)

- At present, fields are not always managed for long-term sustainability or long-term yield
- Fields throughout the state are showing signs of environmental degradation (water logging, erosion, compaction, etc.)
- Priority practice 1: compost manure
 - Compost turning facility
 - Benefits include odor reduction, adding nutrients back to our land, etc.
 - In addition to managing animal waste, future focus will also be on crop yield
- Priority practice 2: cropping system diversification
 - Cover crops – continuous living cover
 - Benefits include reduced loss of soil, improved drainage systems, yield/climate resilience, etc.
- Priority practice 3: agronomy handbook chapter
 - This is now online so can be updated more frequently
 - Request for a postdoc for 3 months
- We plan to continue leading by example and by action; will continue building collaborations with off-campus farmers
- Next steps
 - Update Agronomy Handbook with a new chapter on best management practices for sustainable agriculture
 - Expand acreage planted in cover crops and proceed with cropping system diversification
 - Evaluate costs/logistics of composting animal manure
- As the landlord, what kind of incentives can we provide to farmers for both short and long-term sustainable practices? How can we ensure that those who are leasing our land understand our values and our commitment to sustainability?
 - Through the Agronomy Handbook, we can demonstrate examples of these practices
 - Involve stakeholders to discuss the economic, environmental, and other impacts
 - Sell carbon credits from our land and generate income for the university
- We have the potential of combining food waste and animal waste for compost
- While we currently have Grind2Energy at back-of-house Dining Halls, long-term plan would be to provide public-facing (front-of-house) receptacles/outlets. Another idea would be to use the end product generated from compost on campus to generate energy via anaerobic digester. UI currently pays to remove food waste, which Urbana & Champaign Sanitary District uses to generate energy. Would need pipeline to move gas produce by digestion.

- Kim Kidwell: S2G Ventures helped farmers with their organic management; there is some opportunity in the philanthropic arena
 - South Farms could be a demonstration site
- From the student perspective, there is a lot of interest in composting (educational/engagement opportunity)

Waste Reduction Strategies (Jen Fraterrigo)

- While we have made progress, current approach to recycling plastic is not enough; witnessed inefficiencies in current process
- Existing iCAP Team recommendations about plastic waste reduction and drinking water tendencies
 - Data gathering → why are people making the choice to purchase plastic water bottles?
- Waste reduction strategies
 - 1) Discuss options for reducing plastic waste with Coke representatives
 - Coke has worked with other institutions on sustainability
 - From the recycling commodity side, aluminum recycling sales generates more profit than plastic recycling sales
 - Challenges: demand capacity
 - Met with Coke on 4/28/22 to discuss how to align campus sustainable goals; supportive of sustainability but do not see switching to aluminum as the most viable option
 - 2) Promote consumption of local drinking water
 - Pending results of survey and inventory of bottle filling stations
 - 3) Switch to compostable materials
 - Switching from plastic to compostable materials would reduce plastic use, but we currently send these items to landfill – a solution is needed to reduce landfill waste
 - 4) Prioritize an organic waste solution
- Next steps
 - Promote local drinking water → drinking water survey
 - Work with Coke and their partners Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs) to campus
 - Meet internally to align priorities and discuss sale of recycled PET bottles
- Additional considerations
 - Plastic water bottles are a source of revenue for campus
 - Reusable plastic bottles could be provided to students to encourage use
 - Campus currently gives away water bottles, reusable straws, cutlery to new students during orientation (Danita Young)
 - Reusable bottle exchange for carry out orders

Campus Landscape Master Plan (Brent Lewis)

- CLMP is a step toward iCAP objectives
- Completed stakeholder input sessions
- Recognized common themes
 - The landscape strongly contributes to the economic success of the university

- Campus should be a world leader in resiliency and rainwater management
- Current and prospective students want a campus that places sustainability at the forefront by making it visible
- One focus will be to provide more spaces for interaction and collaboration
- Strong priority to honor heritage and culture
- Chancellor Jones highlighted the desire for an additional water features on Quad that would not interfere with mobility
 - Consideration for taking water from rooftops and transferring to cistern; recycling rainwater into water feature would be the most sustainable solution

Sustainability Gen Ed Requirement (Jessica Nicholson)

- Create a 3-credit hour gen-ed category within Natural Sciences and Technology → sustainability and environmental topics
- Proposal now includes definition of sustainability and list of courses to fulfill requirement
- Next steps
 - Written proposal undergoing further revision with gathered endorsements
 - Gather feedback from Associate Deans
 - Submit proposal to UC Senate committees in AY23 for approval
 - Committees include: Educational Policy, Campus Operations, Senate Executive Committee
 - Introduce final proposal to Senate floor

SSC (Jack Reicherts)

- SSC allocated \$800,000 to 16 projects this semester
- Illinois Green Fund dedicated \$15 million to 316 projects over 20 year period
- In process of coordinating the Reimagine our Future Undergraduate Sustainability Competition
- Potentially funding a new fulltime staff position in the Office of Student Sustainability

SSLC (Owen Jennings)

- Major accomplishments of the past year include:
 - SSLC co-authored letter on the topic of divestment
 - Earth Month (Green Quad Day, co-hosted Sustainability Grammys, Tuesday Talks at Bevier Café, Screening of The Lorax, letter-writing with Citizens Utility Board)

STARS (Madhu Khanna)

- Current version of report earned “gold” status
- Highlighted potential projects to increase score
 - E.g., curriculum, procurement, building-level energy, Food/Dining purchases
- Many of the projects discussed in this meeting would likely help increase our score (waste reduction/composting, engagement, etc.)
- Priority to earn platinum status

List of old business topics – still in discussion

- Green Labs Task Force
- Comprehensive Energy Plan
- Drainage from Vet-Med parking lot