

**DATE:** June 3, 2013

**TO:** Ana Mari Cauce, Provost and Executive Vice President  
Lisa Graumlich, Dean, College of the Environment  
Judy Howard, Divisional Dean of Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences

**FROM:** Sustainability in the Curriculum Committee:

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**SUBJECT:** Final Report from Sustainability in the Curriculum Committee

### **Background and Committee Approach**

The Sustainability in the Curriculum Committee was charged on Jan. 2, 2013 with advising the Provost, Dean Lisa Graumlich, and Dean Judy Howard regarding a more formalized and visible sustainability curriculum for undergraduate students at UW. The Committee has met 7 times since then to address the tasks in the charge letter. Subgroups took on different tasks, including consulting with students and other universities. *The time is ripe for UW (all campuses) to make sustainability a campus-wide priority and feature of its curricula (as well as its operations), and this will require investment in a number of areas. We recommend that you convene a follow-on Task Force to assist in implementation of the Committee's recommendations.*

## Defining Sustainability

The Committee discussed a variety of definitions of sustainability, and supports adopting a broad and inclusive definition. The Brundtland Commission report's (1987) definition is one of the most commonly cited: "...sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." A more recent (Griggs et al. 2013) conception identifies elements of sustainability related to thriving lives and livelihoods, sustainable food security, sustainable water security, universal clean energy, healthy and productive ecosystems, and governance for sustainable societies. We also discussed other definitions that included variations on the "3 pillars" of sustainability (environment, society, and economy), and the "triple bottom line" (planet, people, profit). We did not settle on one particular definition of sustainability, but agree that faculties, elected faculty councils and deans of academic units must decide what sustainability means to them (within a broad framework). *Additional work is needed in order to develop a broad framework definition of sustainability (similar to the process that developed the diversity definition).*

## Identifying, Tracking, and Promoting Sustainability Courses

There is an amazing array of sustainability-related courses at UW, and students want to learn about these opportunities early in their time at UW. For example, UW Seattle currently identifies 500+ courses focused on or related to sustainability. These courses are found in nearly every unit that offers an undergraduate degree (**APPENDIX 1**). On the UW Seattle campus, the Environmental Stewardship & Sustainability Office (ES&S) tracks sustainability courses (<http://green.washington.edu/courses>).

Our Committee did not have time to conduct a "ground truthing" of the ES&S list, but the list is an excellent start towards making sustainability courses more visible to students. Students we consulted with were enthusiastic about making sustainability coursework and opportunities more visible at UW (**APPENDIX 2**). Most recently, the ASUW Senate passed a resolution (**APPENDIX 3**) affirming support for UW's efforts to further incorporate sustainability into the UW undergraduate academic curriculum, and supporting the Provost's Sustainability in the Curriculum Committee. *UW students desire information about sustainability courses, and the list of sustainability courses must be examined, refined, and updated regularly.*

## Other Universities – how do they address sustainability?

Many Universities across the US and World address sustainability, and the varied approaches include core courses, majors, minors, and certificates. Organizational structures represent a broad spectrum of designs (**APPENDIX 4**). We consulted with other universities to understand challenges and opportunities in incorporating sustainability into the curriculum (**APPENDIX 5**). On our own campuses, UW Tacoma has recently approved a minor in sustainability (**APPENDIX 6**), and sustainability is one of the 7 elements of UW Bothell's Strategic Plan (**APPENDIX 7**). *While UW has exceptional and highly ranked programs in Arts and Sciences, Business, Built and Natural Environments, and Engineering, it is a bit "behind" other campuses and universities in terms of incorporating sustainability more explicitly into its strategic plan, mission and curricula.*

## **Enhancing and Advancing Sustainability in the Curriculum at UW**

Sustainability, like diversity, is an expression of responsible citizenship and should be a core value at UW. The UW has become a national leader in its sustainable operations, and has the capacity to surpass its peer institutions in sustainability research, teaching and learning--on and off campus. This opportunity to become a leader in sustainability education and practice requires broad efforts that take place across campuses, colleges, and schools. The way to become a recognized leader is to embed sustainability into every aspect of the University. *We challenge UW leadership to adopt sustainability as a core value, and explicitly link it with the UW Vision and Mission statement regarding “responsible global citizens” and commitment to the Climate Action Plan.*

### **Recommendations:**

#### **Identifying Sustainability Opportunities:**

- Convene follow-on task force to continue work on Committee recommendations
- Develop a broad framework definition of sustainability (similar to the diversity definition)
- Designate specific courses as “S” courses (similar to NW, I&S, D)
- Enhance and maintain the existing “sustainability portal” that is prominently featured on UW front page. Through this portal, students and others can quickly and easily identify courses, curricula, internship opportunities, study abroad opportunities, and research and job opportunities.
- Refine and maintain existing sustainability course list developed by ES&S
- Provide opportunities for faculty and academic units to identify and promote courses focused on sustainability
- Create support for faculty development of sustainability courses, reinventing curriculum efforts, minors, majors, certificates, etc.

#### **Developing Sustainability Opportunities:**

- Create and provide opportunities for faculty and academic units to identify and promote courses focused on sustainability
- Encourage and support development of an interdisciplinary, team-taught “Introduction to Sustainability” course
- Encourage interdisciplinary, cross-unit curriculum collaborations
- Create and provide mechanisms for students to participate in developing sustainability opportunities
- Use existing resources and approaches to develop and promote sustainability opportunities. These include:
  - o Existing Centers and Institutes (e.g. Environmental Institute, Northwest Center for Livable Communities, Buerk Center for Entrepreneurship, etc.)
  - o Undergraduate Academic Affairs (Faculty Fellows, Center for Teaching and Learning, FiGs, Carlson Center, etc.)
  - o Prominent lectureships (Walker Ames, Danz)
  - o ADVANCE model
  - o UW Libraries
  - o Graduate School

- Encourage and support development of sustainability courses, reinventing curriculum efforts, minors, majors, certificates, etc. Encourage units to explore and develop partnerships (e.g. Microsoft, REI, Boeing)
  - o Create and provide opportunities for students to work in internships and hands-on projects that contribute to sustainability on UW campus and elsewhere (Campus Sustainability Fund, F2 Internships, etc.)
- Pursue opportunities with upcoming UW Campaign to insert sustainability curriculum efforts explicitly into the campaign

**Appendices: located at this link:** <https://f2.washington.edu/ess/content/sustainability-curriculum>

1. Existing sustainability coursework and connections between units
2. Student survey summary
3. ASUW Senate Resolution
4. Selected programs at other universities
5. Austin Blevins PoE Capstone Project abstract
6. UW Tacoma Minor in Sustainability
7. UW Bothell:
  - The 21st Century Campus Initiative
  - UWB environmental sustainability web page addressing curriculum, facilities, and research
  - UW Bothell Sustainability Task Force report