



SUSTAINABILITY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

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Summary

This report documents the process and activities of the "Sustainability Across the Curriculum" task group:

- Sara Mackenzie, School of Public Health
- Karen Litfin, College of Arts and Sciences
- Clare Ryan, College of the Environment

The group was charged by Dean Lisa Graumlich in September 2014 with developing a list of 12-24 people who represent the beginnings of a community that would help move sustainability in the curriculum efforts forward. The Task Group invited faculty, staff, and students to participate in three "World Cafes," along with an "Open Space: Possibility Mapping" event ([Appendix II](#)). More than 75 individuals participated in the events, which generated a broad variety of themes relating to sustainability across the curriculum and in and of itself generated community ([Appendices III-VI](#)).

Our recommendations around curricular sustainability address: continuing to identify and build a sustainability community; establishing faculty and staff leadership positions; and linking efforts with all three UW campuses.

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Process Highlights

- September 23, 2014: met with Dean Graumlich and charged with goal: develop a list of 12-24 people that represent the beginnings of a community of people that will help move sustainability in the curriculum efforts forward.
- October 2014--February 2015: reviewed prior work, met regularly, developed plan to host World Cafes with students, staff and faculty. Session goals were to identify faculty, staff and students who have passion and can be leaders; identify current strengths and areas for growth; and, develop a proposal for moving forward.
- February 19, 2015: hosted World Café for faculty (25 attendees).
- February 24, 2015: hosted World Café for students (19 attendees).
- March 17, 2015: hosted World Café for advisers and staff (23 attendees).
- April 21, 2015: hosted Open Space/Possibility Mapping event for all (33 attendees).
- May 2015--June 2015: analyzed process results, developed recommendations.

REFLECTIONS:

Our charge was fairly limited, and once started, our shared passion, along with the passion of the many students, staff and faculty, propelled our activities well beyond the initial charge. We are inspired by the energy and excitement of faculty, staff and students around the topic of sustainability across the curriculum, and the importance of continued and deeper dialogue across departments, schools and campuses became clear and empowering. There were many who contacted us who wanted to engage in dialogue but who were unable to attend these events due to scheduling conflicts. The time seems right to take advantage of a collective hunger for answers to the questions – what is sustainability? How can we incorporate it systematically into curricula? How can we continue to learn from each other? How can we move the UW forward to become a sustainability leader not just in its operations but also in its curriculum? The recommendations and next steps that follow are merely a beginning.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) Establish a listserv with faculty, staff, student contact information generated from the 2015 events

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- 2) Create a faculty position of “Director of Sustainability Across the Curriculum” reporting to the appointing Deans (see Draft Job Description, [Appendix I](#))
- 3) Designate and fund staff support for academic sustainability across the curriculum
- 4) Establish a tri-campus steering committee with representation from colleges and schools (faculty, staff, students) to advise regarding priorities moving forward; link strongly with the Environmental Stewardship Committee

NEXT STEPS:

- 1) Administrative
 - Develop job description and complete hiring process for Director of Sustainability Across the Curriculum ([Appendix I](#)).
 - Regularly report on “Sustainability across the curriculum” – perhaps quarterly with updates (either to supplement or separate from Operations).
 - Incorporate sustainability as an explicit core value at UW, alongside integrity, diversity, excellence, collaboration, innovation, and respect.
 - Develop and trial ABB models to intentionally incentivize collaboration and interdisciplinary teaching (rather than current ABB model which is commonly viewed as dis-incentivizing cross-disciplinary collaboration).
 - Strengthen tri-campus connections around sustainability education.
- 2) Curricular
 - Refine the inventory of current sustainability-related courses.
 - Clearly identify potential course sequencing or course connections and identify resources to guide students in course selection.
 - Develop process to connect sustainability operations, facilities and academics.
 - Explore options of new interdisciplinary “gateway” courses, integrating sustainability into existing courses.
 - Bring faculty from across colleges and schools together to introduce students to the range of areas involving sustainability.
 - Start consultative process to identify core sustainability competencies for all educated citizens (all students).
 - Consider possibilities of a university-wide “S” requirement or an “S” requirement in every major.
 - Identify career options and competencies as a first step towards designing interdisciplinary degree programs at undergraduate and graduate levels.
- 3) Capacity Building

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- Develop regular (monthly, quarterly) opportunities for shared learning and interdisciplinary dialogue, such as Conversation Cafes or “Meet and Greets.”
- Incorporate education about sustainability into new faculty and student orientations, and orient to other core values.
- Develop tools to educate students, staff and faculty about spectrum of areas linked to sustainability and support connections between courses/perspectives.

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Appendix I: Director of Sustainability Across the Curriculum

PRELIMINARY JOB DESCRIPTION:

We are looking for a creative and enthusiastic leader who is passionate about sustainability in higher education. The Director is responsible for overall tri-campus leadership on sustainability across the curriculum efforts and will coordinate with Deans, directors, chairs, faculty, students, and staff. The position will involve listening, coordinating, networking, and leading/empowering integration of sustainability into all aspects of UW curriculum. Among other things, this person will organize trainings for faculty and staff; engage with existing UW programs (FIGS, TRIGS, DAWG Daze, Whole U); work to integrate sustainability operations and curriculum, and chair a to-be-named steering committee.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- A strong commitment to interdisciplinary sustainability education
- Demonstrated leadership experience and an ability to work with faculty, students, administrators, students and donors
- Exemplary communication skills (both written and oral)
- Ability to multi-task, display excellent time and project management skills
- Ability to both work independently and be an excellent collaborator and team player
- Knowledge of UW structure, budgeting, and planning is helpful (but not required)
- Process: competitive application process; competitive 2 year position with at least 50% release of duties to focus on Director position

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Appendix II: World Café process

We hired consultant Susan Partnow of Partnow Communications to assist in initial development of questions and to facilitate the first World Café, as well as train faculty and UW Organization Development personnel to facilitate the subsequent Cafés.

The goal of the identification and invitation process was to reach a broad range of students, staff and faculty with interests in sustainability.

- Faculty: we reviewed the list of previously-identified 550 sustainability courses and generated a list of faculty who had taught the course within the past 2 years. We reviewed prior reports and added names of faculty who have previously engaged with sustainability efforts but who were not identified through the course search. The invitations were sent to this group with a request to forward to any other faculty in their department or across the UW Seattle, Bothell or Tacoma campuses who shared an interest in sustainability.
- Students: we contacted the leads of identified registered student organizations (RSOs) that self-identify as sustainability-themed, as well as representatives from ASUW; these students directly received the invitation and were encouraged to forward on to other relevant students. We also asked program advisors from schools and colleges to forward to their student listservs.
- Staff: we identified program managers and advisers in schools and colleges with identified sustainability content, as well as the general advisers and career counselors at Mary Gates Hall. Upon reflection, we also reached out to the university's Environmental Stewardship Committee and other staff involved in the sustainability of campus operations. These staff were asked to share the invitation with other staff with an interest in sustainability.

The goal of the World Café questions was to ask open-ended questions that would generate visionary discussion:

- Faculty:
 - a. What does learning for sustainability mean to you and why is it important?
 - b. What is your fantasy vision for this at the UW in five years?
 - c. What could you do to make this happen?

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- Students:
 - a. What does sustainability education mean to you and why is it important?
 - b. Either building upon or departing from your experience here, what is your fantasy vision for sustainability education at the UW?
 - c. What knowledge and capacities should students have when they graduate from the UW?
- Staff/advisors:
 - a. What does sustainability education mean to you and why is it important?
 - b. Given your knowledge and experience working with students, what is your fantasy vision for sustainability education at UW?
 - c. How do we help students “get” sustainability education at the UW?

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Appendix III: Themes from Faculty World Café

THEME: VALUES

Discussion:

Should sustainability be a core value? Should all students have knowledge about sustainability regardless of area of study? What would sustainability competencies look like?

Themes:

- Create an inventory of current competencies from current sustainability courses
- How would we make sustainability an identified core value at UW?
- Start consultative process to identify core sustainability competency for all educated citizens (all students) and how to assess

THEME: COLLABORATION

Discussion:

This is currently a University core value but our systems do not offer incentives for collaboration across schools and colleges and programs; in fact, the new ABB system creates disincentives for collaboration. The cultural complexity of the UW creates challenges for working across silos. There is a lack of communication between faculty and yet amazing work being done. Faculty need to be more informed about what already exists and have opportunities for exchange of information. Sustainability should be included in the introduction to the University.

Themes:

- Sustainability could serve as model for collaboration; consider ABB modeling to incentivize collaboration and interdisciplinary teaching
- Identify faculty champions and ways to enhance communication, collaboration, information exchange
- Incorporate education about sustainability into new faculty orientation (and orient to other core values such as integrity, diversity, excellence, collaboration, innovation, respect)

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THEME: COURSES AND CURRICULUM

Discussion:

There was an expressed desire to create more than standalone courses. Participants recognized that there is a range, from introduction to deep knowledge of sustainability, and a spectrum of areas of study that link to sustainability (scientific, economic, cultural, social, political, etc). They recognized the added benefit when different perspectives were included in courses and felt it was a good topic for teaching critical analysis, critical thinking, and decision making analysis. It's an excellent opportunity to explore why we believe what we believe and how we make decisions based on beliefs. Sustainability is political: students should be inspired to be more socially active and engaged with politics; sustainability is essential to the UW's vision of educating world citizens. Can we identify career options in sustainability and then teach/prepare students with skills for those areas?

Themes:

- Explore new interdisciplinary “gateway” courses. Bring faculty from across colleges and schools together to introduce students to the range of areas involved
- Identify career options and competencies necessary. Design interdisciplinary degree at undergraduate and graduate levels
- Clearly identify links between courses and identify resources to guide students in course selection
- Develop tools to educate faculty about spectrum of areas linked to sustainability and support connections between courses/perspectives

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Appendix IV: Themes from Student World Café

THEME: COURSES/DEGREE PATHWAYS

Discussion:

Students expressed a desire to have sustainability offerings in many classes throughout the curriculum, and for classes to incorporate sustainability.

Themes:

- Bias in class: some deal with sustainability, some don't
- Classes with no lectures--student-directed learning
- Include sustainability into core classes
- Distribution study/credits outside major
- Class in each major that incorporates sustainability
- Writing or other courses with theme
- Sustainability "certificate?"
- Teach/communicate about sustainability as part of class

THEME: "WELL ROUNDED" STUDENTS, STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Discussion:

The discussion centered around what is needed as part of 'core' curriculum and major requirements, and whether sustainability should be a core competency.

Themes:

- Re-think the "well rounded" liberal arts degree and general university requirement (e.g. ULPA etc.). Have sustainability required for core within some other requirement
- Students challenge unsustainable practices, question things that haven't been questioned
- Small scale things that can be done—individual to social groups
- Empowerment, not guilt trip
- Need themes in coursework, use expertise at UW
- Opportunity to change lifestyle
- How to communicate sustainable ideas beyond the classroom?

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- Incorporate into non-classroom activities e.g. recycling, compost, etc., other operations

THEME: CAPACITY

Discussion:

Is there faculty and TA capacity to incorporate sustainability?

Themes:

- Staff and faculty education on sustainability is needed
- Grad student/TA training on how to include sustainability
- Make discussion section relevant to students—TA's could check with professor on how to do that
- Convince professors that sustainability education is important

THEME: EVALUATION

Discussion:

Some discussion focused around a desire to be more evaluative, both personally and in terms of courses, regarding what was learned and how.

Themes:

- Self-reflection, incorporate into majors
- Student feedback/evaluation of what they wish they had learned
- Evaluations—more narrative, comprehensive course evaluations
- Challenging the answer/professors/others

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Appendix V: Themes from Staff World Café

Participants in the staff World Café included advisers, curriculum staff, Housing and Food Services, the Physical Plant, UW Solar, the Curriculum Office, First Year Programs, Husky Adventures, and the ASUW.

THEMES

- Peer-to-peer communication is how many UW students learn about sustainability. How can we make the environmental dialect more accessible?
- DO SOMETHING: experiential learning and hands-on skills
- Campus as a “living and learning laboratory”
- Think about lifecycles
- Aligning theory and science with personal practices
- What is the administrator’s “why” for devoting university time to these questions?

SUGGESTIONS

- Incentivize cross-disciplinary courses; overcome ABB obstacles
- Consider that kindred fields don’t use sustainability language. American Indian Studies may communicate in terms of land-based relationships and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK)
- Integrate campus operations into academic sustainability
- Ground-truth existing sustainability courses: advisers can help with this
- Take advantage of existing university-wide initiatives: new student orientation, FIGs, Common Book, Walker-Ames lecture, Exploration Seminars; Center for Teaching and Learning
- Create Resilience Studies minor
- Foster communication: create an online inter/intra-campus forum to share results of these events and catalyze discussion
- Network with new sustainability-related minors: Food Studies; Environmental Humanities; Climate
- LEED-style certification of courses: Silver, Gold, Platinum in the course catalog
- Staff help with logistics, set up connections in the community to form pre-made experiential learning

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- Advisers can help by clearly joining faculty course intention to descriptions that students can query
- Staff can collaborate with other departments to share sustainability best practices
- Inspiration—use existing expertise to share a resource database, identify gaps
- Incorporate sustainability into campus tours
- Document and learn from what other schools are they doing

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Appendix VI: Open Space Session: Possibility Mapping

The final group session was structured slightly differently from the World Cafes. We reviewed notes and data from World Cafes and generated 11 theme areas, below. We invited all prior attendees of World Cafes, as well as all prior invitees for the World Cafes and asked that the invitees share with any others that might be interested. We had 33 participants in the final group. Of note, 4 were returning and 29 for whom this was their first engagement.

Participants were asked to select questions that were most interesting to them and engage in conversation around that question for 20 minutes. They then rotated to another question. At the end we had representatives from the tables report back to the group.

THEME AREAS:

- 1) How can we get faculty/staff "up to speed" on sustainability?
- 2) How can faculty who are not up on the issues learn to incorporate sustainability into any course? What needs to happen to help faculty do this?
- 3) How can we integrate campus operations into the UW sustainability curriculum?
- 4) What are the best programmatic structures for institutionalizing sustainability education at UW, e.g., a major, minor, certificate program?
- 5) Questions of language: Do we want to define sustainability? If so, how? Do we want to use other language?
- 6) How to get serious about interdisciplinary in the current ABB structure?
- 7) How can the three campuses learn more from one another?
- 8) What does 'sustainability literacy' entail? What should students graduating from UW know?
- 9) 'S' courses: should they exist and what would they look like? Should 'D' and 'S' replace NW and I&S course requirements?
- 10) What university-wide, big-umbrella sustainability education initiatives should UW pursue? Gateway course, Common Book S-FIGs, etc (*NOTE: this theme was not selected by any participant*)
- 11) How can sustainability education prepare students professionally?

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SUMMARY:

THEME: INSTITUTIONALIZING (THE MOST POPULAR TABLE)

- Best programmatic structures: a major, minor, certificate program, S courses?
- How to manage interdisciplinarity under current ABB structure?
- Big-umbrella initiatives: gateway course, Common Book S-FIGs, etc.
- 'S' courses: should they exist? what would they look like? replace NW and I&S?
- How can the three campuses learn from one another?
- How to get faculty/staff "up to speed" on sustainability?
- How to train faculty who wish to incorporate sustainability? How can staff assist?

Summary:

- ABB is barrier to interdisciplinary collaboration
- SAC is vital and needs to be incentivized—teaching, research, everything
- Need academic sustainability adviser
- Transcriptable concentration
- Active learning creates sustainable learning—projects, hands-on

THEME: CAMPUS AS A LEARNING LAB

- How can we integrate campus operations into the UW sustainability curriculum?
- How can faculty learn what's happening on all three campuses?

Summary:

- Communication—*e.g.*, a searchable database by area of expertise
- Need a "point person," perhaps in the UW Sustainability office
- Incentivize SAC for staff/faculty/students
 - HR office (staff)
 - Provost (faculty)
 - Campus-wide academic sustainability committee
 - Expand Sustainability Studio model

THEME: WHAT DO STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW?

- What does 'sustainability literacy' entail? What should our graduates know?
 - Specific skills?
 - Ability to think, assess and communicate about proposed solutions systemically
 - Equip the strongly-committed to be champions during school and after

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- Are our graduates “more sustainable?” Institutionalize Green Graduation Pledge
- How can sustainability education prepare students professionally?
 - Is “professionally” too narrow? Citizen focus
 - Ideal vs. actual; normative vs. descriptive
 - Cultivate resilience and ability to operate in future realities

Summary:

- Citizens, not just workers
- Lens vs behavior
- Ability to evaluate claims
- Fields have different offerings, but all can teach sustainability
- Students should be able to teach others
- See and understand different systems—self-introspection
- Ask programs/fields to identify what they contribute

THEME: DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY

- Do we want to define sustainability? If so, how? Do we want to use other language?
- Who defines sustainability? Definition can provide legitimacy
- Is it neutral or political? Not just a buzzword, should have scientific/social merit
- Brundtland Commission definition
- Living within material limits or triple bottom line?
- We are very far from sustainability: globalizing US lifestyle would require 5-6 Earths

Summary:

- Definition should be broad but not vague and offer a positive framework
- Reality underpinning; Define the “how”
- Next steps
 - Roadmap
 - Develop a statement of how to define
 - Identify a point of contact to take steer this project

THEME: HOW TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT INTERDISCIPLINARITY IN THE CURRENT ABB STRUCTURE?

- Vital to have collaboration
- Create a system that acknowledges and supports/incentivizes interdisciplinary education (at present, ABB interdisciplinary is disincentive)

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- Must be interdisciplinary to teach sustainability
- Students are discouraged because of cost and preference for TA/RA given to students within department
- Need to have “anti-disciplinary” units where ideas can be discussed, dialogued; teaching should not be defined by a faculty’s discipline
- Student need opportunity to develop more points of view
- Get students early- don’t wait for 300, 400 level courses
- Freshmen interest groups

Summary:

- ABB is barrier to interdisciplinary collaboration
- SAC is vital and needs to be incentivized—teaching, research, everything
- Need academic sustainability adviser
- Transcriptable concentration
- Active learning creates sustainable learning—projects, hands-on

THEME: HOW CAN THE 3 CAMPUSES LEARN MORE FROM ONE ANOTHER?

- A big issue—even for the smaller campuses getting info out and read is hard;
- Tacoma ESC is taking a more active role—putting info on a website;
- UW Bothell looks good at this—yearly assessment, but does it reach everyone? ;
- May require prompting;
- Advancement needs to actively link;
- Conversation to feel a part of it 2-way;
- COBE does a yearly colloquium, could be brought to all 3 campuses;
- Get weekly e-mail from Athletics, but is that too much? Same from College of the Environment;
- Can get metrics to see if messages are received;
- Continuous video feed on screens in buildings about what’s happening (Better than e-mail, Visual and dynamic but takes a lot of KHz to operate);
- Include in annual President’s address;
- Have Deans include it in their updates;
- Transportation measures and tracks behavior change;
- What’s working/not? (UPS—why bottled water, UPS initiative, Tacoma will too—how to share that info, Intriguing links to website/photos, Twitter feed);
- Institutionalized in goal-setting (e.g. Lean process);
- Green Seed Fund can be cross-campus

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Summary:

- Important and some examples of how working
- Need to raise the profile of sustainability

THEME: WHAT DOES 'SUSTAINABILITY LITERACY' ENTAIL? WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS GRADUATING FROM UW KNOW?

- To obtain a higher degree of literacy in the spectrum of sustainability, degrees should be interdisciplinary
- Specific “professional” skills?
- Ability to assess/evaluate actions and proposed solutions;
- Going beyond behaviors toward developing a different lens/view;
- They should learn and understand the “definition” of sustainability;
- Not just a buzzword, but has real scientific/social merit;
- UW-wide requirement/course;
- Equip the strongly-committed to be champions during school and after;
- Being able to make connections;
- Are our graduates “more sustainable?”

THEME: 'S' COURSES: SHOULD THEY EXIST, AND WHAT WOULD THEY LOOK LIKE?

- When we make things big, sometimes it is no longer good
- Make it good for those that want it; it doesn't need to be for everyone
- Explore in depth, do projects

THEME: WHAT UNIVERSITY-WIDE, BIG-UMBRELLA SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION INITIATIVES SHOULD UW PURSUE? **NOTE: ATTENDEES DID NOT SELECT THIS TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION**

THEME: HOW CAN SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION PREPARE STUDENTS PROFESSIONALLY?

- Is “professionally” too narrow?
- Citizen focus;
- Ideal vs actual;
- Normative vs descriptive;
- Aspirational;
- Understanding of how to operate in future realities;
- Program on Environment interns @ relevant organizations;

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- Communication practices re: sustainability;
- Build analytical skills into curriculum

Summary:

- Citizens, not just workers
- Lens vs behavior
- Ability to evaluate claims
- Fields have different offerings, but all can teach sustainability
- Students should be able to teach others
- See and understand different systems—self-introspection
- Ask programs/fields to identify what they contribute