

Academic Senate Sustainability Committee Annual Report for 2018-2019

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This memo serves as the report from the Academic Senate Sustainability Committee regarding activities performed during the 2017-2018 academic school year.

A summary of the top outcomes and initiatives of the Academic Senate Sustainability Committee efforts in 2018-2019 are noted below.

1. At the start of the academic year, to ensure action on the Senate resolution on Sustainability passed at the end of the prior academic year, the SSC reached out the Provost's office to initiate dialogue. The Provost's office offered the opportunity to organize a mini-retreat on Sustainability. Preparing for and dealing with follow-up from the retreat has been the bulk of the SSC's work this academic year
2. The Senate Sustainability Committee organized the mini-retreat agenda (covering discussion of research, education and operational goals for the next decade leading up to 2028, invitee list, external facilitator, specific requests to the Provost) and worked in collaboration with Mark Ewalt (Executive Director, Admin. Operations), who had been formally tasked by the Provost with executing the event.
 - The invitees included representatives from the 4 sustainability student groups, staff who manage campus operations and capital projects, the five Deans on the Provost Task Force on Sustainability, and all members of the Academic Senate Sustainability Committee.
 - The SSC worked together to come up with three asks for the retreat. These included:
 - The Senate Sustainability Committee asks the Provost to support the Charter for the creation of USC's Sustainability 2028 Plan Proposal.
 - The Senate Sustainability Committee asks the Provost to charter a parallel initiative for the development of research and education.
 - The Senate Sustainability Committee asks the Provost for funding to support initiatives for the development of research and education.
 - To set the groundwork for discussion panels included: Advancing Sustainability in Education, Research and Infrastructure at USC: A Call to Action; The 2028 Charters; and Research Initiatives Already in Place.
 - Working groups discussed options for increased integration of programs and initiatives; where ideas converge and vary; and what should be included as immediate next steps and what should be explored over time

- The event was considered successful and allowed for fruitful conversation amongst many of the key players on sustainability across the university.
3. Following the mini-retreat on Sustainability, The Academic Senate Sustainability Committee drafted a letter to Yannis Yortsos, chair of The Provost's Committee on Enhancing Security and Sustainability with a request that the Committee endorse a call for the Provost Office to support some "quick wins" that the Provost himself solicited at the end of the meeting; specifically, 1) encourage the Provost to help Dornsife move ahead with enhancing existing efforts in sustainability research and education while also encouraging the development of new initiatives in the College; and 2) support the Center for Sustainability Solutions.
 4. The Provost office soon thereafter provided matching funds in support of the Center for Sustainability Solutions, and the Center's webpage went live on April 22nd 2019 (see: sustainabilitysolutions.usc.edu) with a leadership team that includes faculty from all relevant schools, and a faculty advisory board of over 40 faculty members, many of whom are members of the SSC.
 5. Issues that have come out of the retreat and discussions amongst the SSC since that will be important for the following year include:
 - Organizational issues
 - There remains a need to show on sustainability we truly have alignment across the university. This is necessary to advance academic excellence, and to ensure USC as a whole can be seen as a leader.
 - There is a need to get all relevant Deans on board not simply those who were at the retreat (eg Keck and Architecture).
 - There is a need to know what initiatives are happening, and to put in place something more comprehensive or unified than currently exists. Starting with *self-assessments* from the schools themselves in terms of both research and education, perhaps this is something the SSC could organize next year, including then capitalizing on strengths and noting gaps that need to be filled. It would be important that these be shared amongst all faculty, not just dean to dean.
 - In the next year to become more aware of respective strengths at the faculty, dean and student levels a coordinated set of activities would be super helpful (eg inventory, website, lunch table at the U Club, lecture series, a ½ day symposium, tbd)
 - As research and education is relevant to constituencies beyond the SSC representation, an inclusive process for drafting a strategic plan for research and education could be facilitated by the SSC but done by a group larger than the SSC, supplemental to the activities noted above.

- Some Substantive issues to be addressed, not necessarily for the SSC alone, but need to be recognized and addressed include:
 - To support growth in work in this area there needs to be clarity on the impact for junior faculty on TT unless hired specifically to work in this area .. (to note several folks importantly said to work in this area would be career suicide as tenure is currently thought of in most schools as tied to the research area you were hired for, the journals known by the committee etc., if research and education in sustainability is to be supported by folks on tenure lines and across schools this will require significant education, support and incentives to happen centrally)
 - Likewise, this impacts how we think about our PhD programs in different schools and how they do or do not address sustainability, and what this means not only for academic programming but for what we prepare students to be able to do upon graduation
- Education
 - A GE course in sustainability, something everyone is interested in, but the logistical issues are enormous. There is a need to determine how to support broader undergraduate education in this area, even if the GE cannot happen in the immediate future. The possibility of a 3 to 4 hour one credit, no cost to the student, online sustainability course has been discussed but this would need funding. Likewise, there is interest in creating an undergraduate honors course bringing together diverse faculty working in this area across the university.
 - A coherent portfolio at masters and doctoral levels does not yet exist. This too needs attention.
- Website and communication
 - There is a need for a website at general level that is externally facing, that tells a comprehensive story that works for students and others. It was suggested that sustainable cities, as a focus for the U marketing around what as a U we do in sustainability, could be an approach. Creation of a website that would include reporting of what each unit is doing in research and education, then a coherent narrative drawing these all together? We need to be very clear about how we present externally on such a website – *but who would decide, manage and own this remains to be determined.*
- The SSC. There is interest in growing the SSC as its not seen to adequately represent all faculty perspectives on sustainability. The charge and purpose of the committee needs to be clear to all in deciding if it should grow, and what sort of people should be added.

- Overall tactical issue going forward: Do we want to delink or link Operations, Research and Education (compare to Stanford that links these all explicitly) but with sufficient attention to be sure it doesn't result in weird reporting structures.

The Academic Senate Sustainability Committee welcomes input and participation to help advance issues of sustainability confronting the University.