

PRESIDENT'S SUSTAINABILITY STEERING COMMITTEE

Annual Report
2018-2019



The University of Texas at Austin
Sustainability

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ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document was designed not to be printed and to be used as an online pdf with many hyperlinks to additional information. Please consider not printing hard copies of this report.

COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

The [President's Sustainability Steering Committee \(PSSC\)](#) was re-commissioned by President Gregory Fenves in December, 2018 for the 2018-2020 period.

The purpose of the PSSC is to recommend policies and practices to the University administration that reflect and expand the University's commitment to sustainability and stewardship of the environment; to ensure the campus policy is in alignment with UT System policy; to monitor implementation of the campus Sustainability Master Plan; and serve to implement a communications plan for both internal and external audiences.

The PSSC has two sub-committees to focus on Academics and on Operations. During the 2018-19 academic year, the PSSC had 10 members and met 3 times.

MEMBERSHIP, 2018-2020

Five members of General Faculty

Sharon Wood, Dean – Chair (Engineering) Sept. 1, 2017-August 31, 2019

Jay Hartzell, Dean – Vice-chair (Chair-elect) (Business) Sept. 1, 2018-August 31, 2020

Jay Banner, (Geosciences) Sept. 1, 2017-August 31, 2019

Molly Polk, (Liberal Arts) Sept. 1, 2018-August 31, 2020

Lucy Atkinson, (Communications) Sept. 1, 2018-August 31, 2020

Three Staff members

Chris Plonsky, (Athletics Director) or appointee or appointee

Jimmy Johnson, (Associate Vice President for Campus Safety)

Juan Ontiveros, (Associate Vice President for Utilities, Energy, Facilities Maintenance) or appointee

Students

Sarah Boatwright, undergraduate student (Student Government), Sept. 1, 2018-August 31, 2019

Lucy Blevins, graduate student (Graduate Student Assembly), Sept. 1, 2018-August 31, 2019

Ex-officio

Jim Walker, Director of Sustainability

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The PSSC is pleased to report solid, ongoing progress to the President and the Provost on both operational and academic goals across the university, with several major initiatives highlighted below. Background and benefits on each of these initiatives are provided in later pages. The PSSC believes the administration's support of these initiatives will enhance both the university's national profile and operational efficiency.

These initiatives are further explored on following pages.

Campus Sustainability Policy

The current UT Austin Campus Sustainability Policy ([HOP 3-1010](#)) was developed by the PSSC in 2007 and adopted as policy in 2008 and is overdue for both content and alignment with current policy guidelines. The PSSC reviewed an initial new policy draft from the Office of Sustainability in Spring 2018. Content updates were developed based on progress made, changes in context or relevance of a particular focus area, and alignment with [UT System policy on Sustainability Practices \(169\)](#) as well as the [2016 UT Austin Campus Sustainability Master Plan](#). The Office of Sustainability facilitated numerous conversations across campus with affected units and worked with the PSSC Operations Working Group to arrive at a draft the PSSC considers ready for formal Policy Office review.

The only recommendation from the PSSC to the President for 2019 is the adoption of the campus sustainability policy update once it is approved by the Policy Office. The PSSC is hopeful the policy update is ready for the President's Office review by October, 2019.

Key Initiatives

The PSSC recognizes many of the initiatives at UT Austin that "reflect and expand the University's commitment to sustainability and stewardship of the environment" do not result from the PSSC's actions. The proliferation of such initiatives is itself an indicator of the growing interest in and importance of sustainability as part of university's daily work and broad educational and research mission.

The PSSC would like to amplify several of these initiatives to the university leadership:

- Planet Texas 2050
- Waller Creek Framework Plan
- Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) benchmarking
- Student Government and Graduate Student Assembly
- Housing and Dining Sustainability
- Texas Athletics Sustainability
- Green Labs Program expansion
- Green Fund Program
- Growth in sustainability focused degree options
- Growth in sustainability focused student organizations

Earth Day 2020 (50th Anniversary)

Also worth noting at a high level is the upcoming 50th anniversary of Earth Day. In 1970, Earth Day was particularly energizing on college campuses and we believe the 50th anniversary will generate a national wave of reflection and looking forward – perhaps galvanizing the attention generated by the increasingly

urgent reports on climate change and related environmental impacts. If UT Austin is to be and be seen as a national leader in sustainability in higher education, then a concerted effort is needed to upgrade policy (even beyond HOP 3-1010) and invest in practices that demonstrate leadership.

Future Opportunities

Looking forward to next year and beyond, the PSSC has identified initiatives we believe offer significant opportunity to advance the both broad interests of the university as well as specific university sustainability goals. Over the summer we will explore these opportunities ahead of forwarding a focused work plan for the 2019-20 academic year.

- Strengthen culture of sustainability on campus
 - o Among students, staff and faculty
 - o Need to build on existing solid foundation to engage more people
- Local relationships
 - o City of Austin
 - o Austin Independent School District
 - o Travis County
- Curriculum development
 - o Continue to incentivize course creation/modification
 - o Integrate sustainability content with experiential learning methods
- Office of Development
 - o Corporate Partnerships
 - Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives
 - Environmental, Social and Governance initiatives
 - o Foundation
 - o Alumni engagement
- Waller Creek enhancement
 - o Philanthropy and local partnership opportunities
 - o Increasing frequency of clean-up days
- Circular Economy
 - o Leverage growing interest among corporate partners
 - o Could be innovation opportunity for academic/operation joint effort

POLICY UPDATE

The UT Austin Campus Sustainability Policy ([HOP 3-1010](#)) was developed by the initial formation of the PSSC in 2007 and adopted as policy in 2008 by President William Powers. In alignment with good institutional policy maintenance practice, and to ensure the policy is addressing current issues appropriately, a policy update began in 2018.

The Office of Sustainability compared the 2008 UT Austin policy with the [UT System policy on Sustainability Practices \(169\)](#) which was adopted in 2009 and most recently reviewed in October, 2018. The Office also compared the 2008 UT Austin policy with the goals and strategies in the [2016 UT Austin Sustainability Master Plan](#) and against achievements across the university over the last 10 years. Attention was also given to issues which have risen in importance since 2008 related to sustainability policy and practice such as storm water management and food systems.

The Office created a first draft of new policy formatted to align with current UT Austin guidance and offering initial language for new topical areas. Several sections were carried forward largely unchanged.

Section 1 Purpose Statement of the policy reads:

The University of Texas at Austin seeks to create a disciplined culture of excellence that generates intellectual excitement, transforms lives, and develops leaders. The Commission of 125 defines this culture as “excellence in all University endeavors, characterized by strong leadership and an engaged intellectual community, combined with individual and institutional accountability.” This includes excellence in advancing environmental stewardship and sustainability on our campus, in our academic and research programs, and in our public service and outreach activities.

Sections 2 through 6 and 8 through 11 are largely template to align with current policy guidance.

Section 7 lays out responsibilities related to operational functions of the university, mirroring the overall focus of the 2008 policy. Each topical sub-section is addressed below.

The Office facilitated numerous conversations across campus with affected units and individual leadership on the policy language as well as the need for any accompanying procedures that would need to be documented. These conversations resulted in two sections being pulled back for further discussion, Food Services and Air Quality.

The Office then worked with the PSSC Operations Working Group to arrive at a draft the PSSC considers ready for formal Policy Office review. The table on the following page summarizes the policy sections and their connection to the UT System policy and the UT Austin Sustainability Master Plan.

Campus Sustainability Policy Update Summary Table

Section	Topic	UT System	UT Austin
I. Policy Statement			
II. Reason for Policy			
III. Scope and Audience			
IV. Definitions			
V. Website			
VI. Contacts			
VII. A. GENERAL & ADMINISTRATION	Authority of PSSC	UTS169:3&16&18	
VII. C. ACADEMICS & RESEARCH	Curriculum and Research	UTS169:14	HOP 3-1010 existing
VII. D. OPERATIONS	Campus Planning		HOP 3-1010 existing
VII. D. OPERATIONS	Energy Systems	UTS 169:6&7	Sustainability Master Plan
VII. D. OPERATIONS	Water Systems	UTS 169:6&7	Sustainability Master Plan
VII. D. OPERATIONS	Built Environment	UTS 169:12	Sustainability Master Plan
VII. D. OPERATIONS	Storm Water		
VII. D. OPERATIONS	Mobility	UTS 169:9	Sustainability Master Plan
VII. D. OPERATIONS	Waste Diversion	UTS 169:10	Sustainability Master Plan
VII. D. OPERATIONS	Purchasing	UTS 169:11	Sustainability Master Plan
VII. D. OPERATIONS	Climate Protection	UTS169:8	Sustainability Master Plan
VII. D. OPERATIONS	Landscape Management		Sustainability Master Plan
VII. E. AWARENESS AND OUTREACH	Internal	UTS169:13	Sustainability Master Plan
VII. E. AWARENESS AND OUTREACH	External	UTS169:13	Sustainability Master Plan
VIII. Forms and Tools			
IX. Frequently Asked Questions			
X. Related information and links			
XI. History			

General Administration and Reporting

Reflects current UT Austin policy guidance.

Academics and Research

The Academics and Research section may arguably be misplaced in this policy. Certainly great strides are being made in advancing sustainability in curriculum as well as in research (notably via [Planet Texas 2050](#)). Until sustainability within the educational mission is addressed elsewhere in policy, the PSSC recommends retaining this language.

The role of the Office here is solely in tracking efforts across academic departments and research units for the purpose of aggregating for institutional reporting.

Operations: Campus Planning

Unchanged from 2008. Sustainability was integrated deeply into the [2013 Campus Master Plan](#), as well as the [2014 Campus Landscape Plan](#), and then further refined in the [2016 Sustainability Master Plan](#). The 2018 Update on the Sustainability Master Plan reflects progress on these strategies and goals.

The Campus Planning and Project Management division is responsible for this section.

Operations: Energy Systems

Based on current university practice and strategies. Also reflects UT System policy and [State Energy Conservation Office](#) guidance related to all state agency capital projects.

The campus utility operation continues to receive [international recognition](#) for efficiency, most notably from the International District Energy Association in 2018. The campus utility was also the first United State Green Building Council (USGBC) [PEER: Campus energy system](#) in the world.

The Utilities, Energy and Facilities Maintenance division is responsible for this section.

Operations: Water Systems

Based on current university practice and strategies. Also reflects UT System policy and [State Energy Conservation Office](#) guidance related to all state agency capital projects.

Water systems are managed in a more decentralized approach than energy systems. UT Austin has been increasing the use of [reclaimed water produced by the City of Austin](#) for both chilling station operations as well as landscape irrigation, resulting in cost savings and increased water efficiency at the city level.

The Utilities, Energy and Facilities Maintenance division is responsible for this section.

Operations: Built Environment

In 2009, [UT Austin committed](#) to pursuing a USGBC Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver level certification for all new capital projects. At the end of 2018, UT Austin had over 3.5 million square feet of LEED certified space. The language related to new construction is based on current university practice and strategies.

The Office initially proposed extending this commitment to major renovations, such as those over \$10 million in total project cost and affecting all the major systems of a building (for example, the renovation of Welch Hall), as well as extending to private development on UT Austin owned land (building on the success of both 2400 Nueces and the Seton Teaching Hospital achieving LEED Gold). However, these extensions require more discussion and evaluation of impact and cost.

The PSSC reinforces the approach that pursuit of LEED credits should not supersede basic functions and purposes of a building.

The Campus Planning and Project Management division is responsible for this section.

The Office shall continue to develop a UT Austin Green Buildings Guidelines document collating how LEED aspirations are reflected in campus building standards, and how campus building preferences related to LEED standards.

Operations: Storm Water Management

Local flooding on Waller Creek through the campus has intensified in recent years. The university recently final approved the [Waller Creek Framework Plan](#) and is awaiting comment and approval from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality on the recently submitted renewal of the campus municipal separated storm and sewer system (MS4) permit). These efforts reflect a broad shift on campus toward more comprehensive, [campus-wide storm water management](#).

The Environmental Health and Safety department within the Campus Safety division is responsible for this section.

Operations: Transportation and Mobility

Based on [current university practice and strategies](#). Also reflects UT System policy.

The Parking and Transportation division is responsible for this section.

Operations: Waste Reduction and Management

While this is based on current university practice and strategies it is resetting the university goal for zero waste from 2020 to 2030. Also reflects UT System policy.

The PSSC reinforces the need for establishing annual improvement targets and milestones between 2020 and 2030.

Waste management is currently decentralized on campus with [Facilities Services](#) managing all 'education and general space' as well as select contracts with small units (and [Surplus Property](#)). Auxiliary units, notably the large ones such as [Texas Athletics](#), and [Housing and Dining](#), are able to control contracts, bins and signage, collection procedures, etc. This section is intended to create a singular overall common approach that can be pursued by various departments.

Individual units are responsible for this section based on whether they are authorized to enter into their own waste management contracts (through the Office of Purchasing). Units will still be expected to share their data on waste and diversion with Facilities Services and Office of Sustainability for institutional reporting purposes.

Operations: Purchasing Practices

Based on current university practice and strategies. Also reflects UT System policy.

The Office of Purchasing division is responsible for this section. The Office of Sustainability will collaborate with the Office of Purchasing on developing guidelines for various goods and services.

Operations: Climate Protection Practices

New section, reflects UT System policy.

UT Austin does not have any carbon emissions reduction goals but is focused on maintaining a strong culture of energy efficiency. Within utilities, this culture is managed through the efficient production of generated utilities and an aggressive demand side energy conservation program. Both of these efforts reduce the natural gas consumed that result in less carbon emissions.

The Office of Sustainability is responsible for this section and will maintains a campus Greenhouse Gas Inventory updated every five years and document relevant university practices.

Operations: Landscape Management

New section, but based on [current university practice and strategies](#). No corollary UT System policy.

This section establishes the university's overall intentions related to landscape and reinforces the Landscape Master Plan and related documents such as the Waller Creek Framework Plan and storm water management efforts.

The Landscape Services department in the Facilities Services division is responsible for this section.

Awareness and Outreach

Based on [current university practice and strategies](#). Also reflects UT System policy.

The PSSC believes great opportunity exists to build on current successes and awareness to create a broader, deeper culture of sustainability at UT Austin.

The Office of Sustainability is responsible for this section and tracking efforts across operational and academic departments and research units for the purpose of aggregating for institutional story telling.

KEY INITIATIVES

The PSSC recognizes many of the initiatives at UT Austin that “reflect and expand the University’s commitment to sustainability and stewardship of the environment” do not result from the PSSC’s actions. The proliferation of such initiatives is itself an indicator of the growing interest in and importance of sustainability as part of university’s daily work and broad educational and research mission.

The PSSC would like to amplify several of these initiatives to the university leadership:

Planet Texas 2050

Since its inception in fall 2017 as the first grand challenge initiative from the [Bridging Barriers](#) program, [Planet Texas 2050](#) collaborations have been contributing to:

- A better understanding of the processes and feedback cycles in human-environment interactions, and of the potential threats to societal resilience that can emerge from these interactions;
- A transformational integration of data to create predictive models that incorporate both scientific data and socioeconomic and cultural factors;
- A set of strategies to build resilience in Texas communities, co-developed with those communities.

In 2018, Planet Texas 2050 funded nine major research projects that set our path towards achieving these research outcomes.

Degree Options

Since Fall 2016, the undergraduate [Sustainability Studies program in the College of Liberal Arts](#) has grown to over 200 students. The undergraduate [Environmental Science](#) program, offered through College of Natural Science, Jackson School of Geosciences, and College of Liberal Arts, continues to have a competitive admissions process with strong interest from prospective students. The [Environment and Sustainability track in the Bridging Disciplines Program](#) also continues to be one of the most popular BDP options. The College of Engineering expanded its academic opportunities in sustainability through the development of the [Sustainable Urban Systems MS/PhD program](#) and the [Graduate Portfolio in Sustainable Design](#) within the School of Architecture continues strong. The [Sustainability Course Development Awards](#), supported by the Mitchell Foundation and administered through the Bridging Disciplines Program, continues to grow sustainability course offerings to students across campus. To date, 14 existing courses were altered to include a substantial focus on sustainability and 18 new sustainability courses were created.

Sustainability Living Learning Committee

[University Housing and Dining](#) initiated a [Sustainability Living Learning Community \(LLC\)](#) in Fall 2017. Each year, a cohort of approximately 30 new students is immersed in sustainability at Whitis Court Residence Hall. These students are introduced to topics ranging from zero waste to social equity by UT professors, sustainability staff, City of Austin employees, and community activists. All incoming residents have received a free Eco2Go box since Fall 2018.

In food services, Housing and Dining is the first university to participate in the [Good Food Purchasing Program](#); maintained approximately 20% of their total spend on food purchased from local, sustainable, fair trade, and/or organic sources; hosted 12 [Farm Stand](#) events during the AY18-19 year in their third year and the UT Austin Farm Stand student manager received the President's student employee of the year award; and edible food waste decreased from 45 tons in 2016 to 30 tons in 2018

STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System)

UT Austin achieved a [Silver rating](#) in 2018 in an assessment program to encourage sustainability in all aspects of higher education. The Sustainability, Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) is administered by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE).

In 2008, UT Austin was the only Texas research university to participate in the STARS pilot program to test the various credits and benchmarks eventually included in STARS version 1.0.

The program is open to all institutions of higher education in the U.S. and Canada, and the criteria that determine a STARS rating are transparent and accessible to anyone. Because STARS is a program based on credits earned, it allows for internal comparisons as well as comparisons with similar institutions.

Texas Athletics

Texas Athletics continued to grow its zero waste initiatives at football, baseball, and softball games. In 2018, over 50 different student organizations volunteered to [sort waste after football games](#) leading to a diversion rate over 75% at the final two games of the season. The average diversion rate for the 2018 season was 52%. Additionally, more than 5,300 lbs of food (4,450 meals) were donated to fight hunger in Central Texas. These efforts won them acknowledgement as a [2019 Green Sports Alliance Innovator of the Year](#), on the heels of their [2018 Green Sports Alliance Innovator of the Year](#) for their efforts becoming the first Division 1 baseball program to achieve two consecutive years of zero waste.

Energy Building Optimization

In 2011, the PSSC established a goal of reducing campus energy use by 20% reduction in energy use intensity by 2020. The [Energy Management and Optimization team met the goal in early 2018](#), over two years early. Over twenty projects have been completed in buildings that average a 23% reduction in total building energy use and almost \$50,000 on average in annual avoided fuel costs per project.

Examples include:

- Gates Dell Complex: after modifying the control sequences of the HVAC system, this building gained 40% in energy savings, or \$103,000 per year in avoided fuel costs.
- Completion of an air handling project in the Belo Center for New Media saves \$20,000 per year.
- Lab fume hoods in the Norman Hackerman Building were put on a hibernation schedule when classes were not in session, saving \$22,000 annually in fuel costs.

Other projects have led to less dramatic energy reduction but provided tangible benefits. Replacing 5,175 lightbulbs with LEDs in the Perry-Castaneda Library saves just over \$15,000 in fuel costs each year, as well as decreases the time needed from maintenance crews.

Waller Creek Framework Plan

Waller Creek is been simultaneously central to campus and nearly invisible, and the [Waller Creek Framework Plan](#) (WCFP) is one critical way that will both invigorate the disparate stakeholders and shine a light on this important urban waterway. The need for WCFP grew out of the [2013 Campus Master Plan](#) which envisioned campus growth shifting to the east and impacting the Waller Creek / San Jacinto Blvd corridor. The [2014 Landscape Master Plan](#) continued the need rethink Waller Creek by recommending a more managed, natural approach to the landscape, as did changes to campus like the new Engineering

Education and Research Center, the 16-acre [Dell Health District](#) that achieved the first Sustainable SITES Gold certification in Texas, and other factors.

Green Fund Committee

Since its creation in 2011, the [UT Austin Green Fund](#) competitive grant program has awarded over 175 grants totaling over 3.5 million dollars to students, faculty and staff for sustainability projects and research on the UT Austin campus and its affiliate locations. In this year's competition, the student majority Green Fund Committee reviewed 30 grant applications and voted to fund 18 grants. The approved projects include student research projects on potential water conservation methods in hydroponic gardening, the purchase of an electric bicycle and electric landscaping tools for Landscape Services staff, vertical farming structures for University Housing and Dining's organic farm and faculty research projects on water and energy conservation in buildings.

Green Labs Initiative

The Office of Sustainability, in collaboration with Environmental Health and Safety, and under the auspices of the Vice President of Research and Vice President of University Operations, launched the voluntary [Green Laboratory Initiative \(GLI\)](#) in February, 2011. The GLI is designed to assist faculty and lab managers with identifying more sustainable lab practices and strategies that continue to support research while consuming less university and natural resources.

In 2018, the BASF Corporation supported the GLI with a three year gift that was matched by the Senior Vice-President and Chief Financial Officer that will enable the hiring of a full time Green Labs Coordinator staff position to further expand the program.

Student Government

[Student Government](#) continues to demonstrate interest in several ways. In 2017, UT SG created two Sustainability Coordinator positions. The student leaders appointed to these positions were and are active in promoting legislation in support of various sustainability programs, such as Half-Pint Prairie, and in collaborating directly with various campus units to promote student initiatives, such as improving waste diversion in the Unions. Student Government also maintains appointments to the Green Fund Committee and the PSSC.

Graduate Student Assembly

The [Graduate Student Assembly](#) also demonstrated ongoing interest in sustainability through supporting joint legislation with the Student Government focused on encouraging greater efforts toward achieving zero waste on campus. The GSA also maintains student appointments to the Green Fund Committee and the PSSC.

Student Organizations

Student interest in sustainability continues to grow as evidenced by an expanding number of related student organizations. Longstanding student organizations like the [Campus Environmental Center](#) (est. 2002) and [Engineers for a Sustainable World](#) (est. 2003) continue to develop their programs including a new campus prairie, a biodiesel initiative, an expanded urban farm, and a robust aquaponics project. New organizations including Precious Plastic, Fashion Anonymous, Students Fighting Climate Change, and

Campus Bike Alliance showcase the broad sustainability interests of our students. There are now more than 25 student organizations related to sustainability and the environment listed on HornsLink.

BEEVO Beekeeping Society	Longhorn Energy Club
Campus Bike Alliance	Longhorn Environmental Outreach
Campus Environmental Center	Longhorn Lights Out
Clean Tech Group	Longhorn Stream Team
Design for America (student chapter)	Net Impact (student chapter)
Embrace Relief (student chapter)	Precious Plastic Texas
Engineers for a Sustainable World	Students Against Cruelty to Animals
Environmental Justice and Eco-Therapy Student Organization	Students Fighting Climate Change
Environmental Law Society	Students for Equity and Diversity
Fashion Anonymous	TexASHRAE (student chapter)
Geography Society	United Students Against Sweatshops
Girl Up (student chapter)	Urban Studies Society
Hyperloop Engineering	Well Aware at UT

COMMUNICATIONS

News

A [single web portal for UT Austin sustainability initiatives](#) was created that includes a new [green tour](#), calendar, and newsfeed. News stories written by OS—which have more than doubled in the last year—are distributed in the monthly *Bleed Orange, Live Green* newsletter, through the UT newsfeed, and through the Financial and Administrative Services newsfeed. OS is also tracking [media mentions](#) by *The Daily Texan* and other outlets.

Social Media

OS maintains a number of social media channels either daily ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)) or less frequently ([LinkedIn](#), [Flickr](#) and [YouTube](#)). Most social media posts have shown a significant increase in engagement (i.e., doubling) in the last year.

Mitchell Sustainability Symposium

An annual signature event, the Mitchell Sustainability Symposium, will be presented for the eighth time on Friday, October 25, 2019. The Symposium highlights the efforts of the PSSC as well as a broad cross-section of collaborative efforts across campus as presented by faculty, staff and students. This year, a series of curated talks and panel discussions will showcase The University of Texas at Austin as a living lab. The schedule will include case studies representing how the campus is a living lab, including the built environment, the natural ecosystem, the food system, and university policy and future directions.