

Sustainability Task Force Report: Executive Summary

In recent years, the challenges of diminishing global resources and current and future climate change have become part of everyone's consciousness. Creating and promoting a culture of sustainability has emerged as an important and growing part of the educational and outreach missions of San Jose State University and is one of President Whitmore's key goals for our campus. The Sustainability Task Force was charged with: 1) assessing best practices in higher education regarding sustainability, and to survey current sustainability practices, educational programs and research at SJSU, and 2) making recommendations to the Academic Senate and the President to build SJSU's sustainability programs and position SJSU to be a leader among universities in sustainability. Here we summarize our general recommendations for embedding sustainable practices in the culture of the university as well as our list of specific, top-priority action items to undertake relatively quickly.

General Policy Recommendations:

1. Establish a Sustainability Council as a permanent committee of the Academic Senate, charged with establishing sustainability goals, evaluating campus practices to promote sustainability, and recommending new goals, actions, and policies on an annual basis.
2. Fund a full-time Sustainability Director to oversee the implementation of sustainability directives and to seek external funding and community and corporate partners for sustainability initiatives. The sustainability director should have ties to both the academic and operational sides of the university and report at a high level to each.
3. Establish a Sustainability Faculty-In-Residence in each college, and parallel positions within non-academic units.
4. Use expert panels of SJSU faculty and external experts to bring information on specific topics to the Sustainability Council and to engage faculty and students in research, community service, and internship opportunities focused on sustainable themes.
5. Establish a Sustainability Research Institute as an Organizational Research and Teaching Unit (ORTU) that will serve as a vehicle to promote interdisciplinary research in areas such as environmental policy, sustainable practices in industry, agriculture, and transportation, and that will serve as a nexus for the ongoing creation of curricula and experiential educational experiences aligned along sustainable themes.
6. Regularly conduct environmental audits of university operations to assess sustainability of energy and materials use, lower costs, and provide direction for new operational policies.
7. Promote full implementation of existing CSU and SJSU sustainability policies such as CSU Executive Order EO 987 and Associated Students Board of Directors Resolution 08-09/02.
8. Sign the Talloires Declaration and the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment.
9. Identify resources to support programs to develop campus awareness on sustainability practices and ways to become involved. A fully functional and regularly maintained sustainability web site would be an integral part of this effort.
10. Promote continued collaboration on sustainability focused curriculum including interdisciplinary courses, minors, and degree programs.
11. Establish an interdisciplinary environmental literacy requirement for all undergraduate students, requiring students to take at least one Core GE or SJSU studies course with sustainability as a central course focus.
12. Establish certificates, professional masters degrees, and other professional training opportunities geared to the emerging green enterprise work force of our region.

13. Partner with the City of San Jose, other local municipalities, and regional partners to educate the public and promote a sustainable society in Silicon Valley.
14. Hold “Earth Symposia” at regular intervals as appropriate, to share information on sustainability practices among CSU campuses and other California universities.

Specific, Top Priority Action Items:

Facilities

1. Work toward maximizing energy conservation efforts.
2. Establish an energy plan for campus operations to achieve a carbon neutral campus.
3. Implement green building design guidelines for all aspects of building and facility design and incorporate sustainability principles concretely into SJSU Master plan.
4. Develop guidelines for a sustainable land use ethic for campus lands, including water conservation measures and introduction of drought tolerant and native plants for landscaping.
5. Design and retrofit buildings as possible by incorporating gray water systems, solar and sustainable energy production, and zero waste.

Student, Faculty, and Staff Awareness/Behavioral Change

1. Ensure availability of organic and/or locally grown food on campus.
2. Support and promote organic gardens on campus for food and hands-on learning.
3. Promote the use of non-personal car transportation modes.
 - a. Develop a better bike-oriented infrastructure.
 - b. Encourage students, staff and faculty to use mass transportation options promoted by Transportation Solutions.
4. Reduce solid waste generation on campus, especially throw-away items such as plastic utensils, polystyrene containers, and one-use plastic water bottles.
5. Require students, faculty, and staff to take an on-line tutorial on sustainable practices before they receive specific privileges such as parking passes.
6. Promote the use of previously used paper, use both sides of paper, and move to paperless communication whenever possible.
7. Establish annual sustainability awards for faculty, staff, and students.
8. Incorporate readings involving sustainability into the campus reading program.
9. Use the Martin Luther King Library as a center for sustainability talks and information for the campus and city.
10. Recognize sustainability projects, research, curriculum development and awards as activities that benefit faculty in the RTP process.

Procurement (Administration and Finance)

1. Enforce and expand Environmental Procurement Procedures.
2. Eliminate the purchase of virgin paper.
2. Establish and enforce sustainability guidelines for purchase of consumables and equipment.

Curriculum and Research

1. Identify and promote strategic, interdisciplinary multi-year research and project grants for sustainability.
2. Develop joint projects and programs with other universities, community colleges and K-12 schools.
3. Where practical, promote online classes and other modes of teaching that do not always require travel to campus.
4. Establish a Sustainability Literacy requirement for all students.
5. Identify and promote service learning and internships that address regional sustainability issues.
6. Secure funding for scholarships for students in sustainability-focused degrees and programs.