

Inaugural meeting of the Campus Sustainability Commission  
Meeting Minutes November 30th, 2018 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm  
Welch Hall 205

Attendees: Lisa Voelker, Natalie Taliaferro, Michael Valdes, Mark Monarch, Chris Grant, Lewis Savage, Lyla Ellens, Kevin Kucera, Mary Fallot, Luis Romero, Sarah Fisher, Eva Koelzer, Negar Heidari Matin, Callie Degracia, Tom Kovacs, James Smith, Colleen Sadows

Several extra attendees (Journalism majors, a public safety officer in uniform) and others were present, in addition to the commission members,

[Link to the powerpoint slides](#)

1. Introductions - 10 minutes (full commission)

Many diverse members present all representing many departments and contingents from throughout the university community.

**Questions.** *Mary Jane Fallot:* are there corporate partners? *Pres. Smith:* yes, ENGIE Services was one for the [cogen](#) plant. Could we use it to feed WCC? Viability and partners? Has had a few discussions. There are more than just companies to partner with. *Lewis Savage:* flagship opportunity to become a university of choice for sustainability. What are we willing to do? How willing are we to market this? *Pres. Smith:* Mark Jefferson's opening and \$90 million budget with a focus on energy efficiency (LEED Gold) is an example of how we powerfully articulate the ways in which we are doing good work. Coach Creighton lip synching with Destiny's child has been seen all across the country, rather than how well we are investing in Science. We tragically undersell the fact that this is America. People come from all over the globe and we need to bring this to the attention of the people.

## 2. President Smith welcome message - 10 minutes (President Smith)

Welcome all. President Smith is interested in action steps, and ways to improve what we are already doing. To think about and talk about ideas that will improve the mission of our committee. Dr. Smith alluded to the wind energy project at Bowling green state. Comprehensive inventory and existing ways we address sustainability, and how to address what we should be doing. Marketing and articulating the points of pride are also key outcomes to the commission.

## 3. Commission Chair Kovacs welcome message (chair)

We are here to find out how to bring the ideas of the commission and make them a reality. Many people here have already done things that are important to this commission. We need to celebrate what we are doing. Move-in and move-out example of recycling, beds could not be donated until dogs were brought in to rule out the possibility of bed bugs. Planning committee met for about a year prior to this. Summer @ Univ. of Vermont, where Dr. Kovacs has received a certification for campus sustainability leadership.

## 4. Define sustainability and systems thinking - 5 minutes (chair)

“Sustainability entails both principles and practices that promote and maintain the responsible use of natural resources by current generations to ensure the availability and well-being of those resources for our future generations. Individuals, communities, and institutions should strive together to develop and support comprehensive actions/initiatives that include: a) safeguarding environmental vitality; b) promoting ecologically sensitive economic development; and c) bolstering community prosperity and resilience across both short and long-term time scales.” It has become politicized, but there’s more to it than just environmentalism. We embrace sustainability as more than environmentalism, but we are also interested in bringing marginalized people and the conservative right within the sustainability effort.

### **THREE LEGGED STOOL**

- Environmental

- Economic
- Social well being

We must have a systems approach: it's great to have enthusiasm to change the world, but we must consider and work with contextual and existing systems in order to move forward with our ambitions.

Understanding the interrelatedness of all things, bring ideas forward. We are all commissioners, and all of your ideas are important, but we are here to share ideas, know that ideas are valued, and work on the ways to improve. The only way to improve is to change, it is difficult, but it is the only way to improve, we are here to talk about how and why, not just stop at "that's the way we've always done things".

#### 5. AASHE and STARS - 10 minutes (chair)

##### Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE).

AASHE produced the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) as a way to measure, include a baseline, and publicize what we are doing. STARS is used by hundreds of institutions worldwide.

Measure sustainability performance and create a baseline for continuous improvement

- 21 institutions in Michigan (2 gold rated – U of M and Grand Valley State; 5 silver rated)
- Gain international recognition, compare to peer institutions, and identify best practices at <https://stars.aashe.org/institutions/participants-and-reports/>
- Engage students, staff, faculty, and administrators in building a culture of sustainability

**We Can Create a Culture of Sustainability**  
We can aim to quickly become STARS silver rated.

#### 4. Sustainability Framework: based on STARS - 10 minutes (chair)

Mark Jefferson has a [LEED gold certification](#). We spent \$90 million. Bioswale outside of Strong to measure runoff water, we can have signs there, and draw more attention to it, we use it as a laboratory .

#### 5. Commission deliverables - 5 minutes (chair)

- Baseline STARS criteria ([STARS rating](#) submission?)
- Recommendations to president: these will become much stronger if we know what we are already doing.
- Publication of campus sustainability: last but not least. How are we telling the story to the world: Natalie Tailaferro is instrumental in this
  - [www.emich.edu/sustainability](http://www.emich.edu/sustainability)
  - Facebook (@EMUSustainability)
  - published report
- media release: tell our stories about the cogen, and the bed bug sniffing dogs.
- Sustainability Campus Index (w/STARS submission) - Princeton Review, Sierra Magazine both base their ratings on the STARS Campus index
- Points of Pride: If we attain a bronze or a silver rating, we can add this to one of the points of pride

STARS has 68 criteria that we can earn points toward different levels of rating (bronze, silver, gold, and platinum), we will collaborate on ways to reach these levels and these ratings last 3 years after which we would need to resubmit.

#### 6. Discussion on how commission should function, bylaws - 30 minutes (full commission)

- How should the commission function?
- Commission vs. Subcommittee
- Commissioner communication (email, Google Drive, STARS) talk about how we communicate as we get things done.
- Bylaws: have an ad-hoc committee put these together. We can add them to google

drive.

- Volunteers and Interns: students are here and willing to help. Commissioner Kovacs runs the internship program and has an easy channel for recruiting interns for these kinds of work

*Luis Romero:* likes the idea of sub-committees *Kevin Kucera:* Do we envision goals, *Tom Kovacs:* did a calculation on how we can earn points quickly-subcommittees pick their criteria that they could score quickly, and pick those out and then subcommittees prioritize next. (See slide 5) *Lewis Savage:* benchmarking, perhaps to video conference with the other schools, share best practices. So we can avoid making the same mistakes. Perhaps Shared resource ideas, how to recycle, Connect and partner, perhaps Michigan State schools operations team. *Tom Kovacs:* Stars system provides a good jumping off point to research how they are doing things. Tom knows the U of M commissioner, and the U of Vermont, and all members who attended the certification program he completed, which provides a network of schools we can partner with, peer schools are a good target. *Kevin Kucera:* What is the timeline for the commission? *Tom Kovacs:* part of it will be based on bylaws. Planning committee decided 3 yr term for members, and lead only 1 yr. 1-3 years is a minimum from the university. Diversity Equity and Inclusion and Women's commission are also president's commissions and are expected to be permanent. *Luis Romero:* how would we do subcommittees, how often will they meet? Timeline? *Tom Kovacs:* we will decide here today when our sub-committees are to meet. *Lyla Ellens:* each committee will be different, we can each define that *Tom Kovacs:* Twice a year, is the current schedule where we meet. Once per semester, Tom envisions most of the work getting done in the subcommittees. Example: TK was the only commissioner and the chair. He began receiving all sorts of emails some are time-sensitive. How would you like to receive this information? And how should we ensure these emails are responded to by the subcommittees?

*Sarah Fisher:* if its related to the sub-committee, directly share with each sub-committee *Eva Koelzer:* perhaps once a month, send a full email to update the entire committee. *Tom Kovacs:* an email example. The number of birds running into windows. The person emailing wants to add things to the windows, if Tom waits for a sub-committee to respond, and the response isn't fast enough, how to curtail negative press. And that is how bad stories are spread. Tom wants to ensure this is being addressed

*Callie Gavorek:* Wants to know as soon as possible if someone has a concern about vegans, and other dining related concerns. *Lewis Savage:* Tom could receive the emails and serves as a conduit. **1st** responds to the concern with a “we are going to work on this for you,” **2nd** refers the inquiry to the respective subcommittee and introduces the concerned person to the chair and subcommittee. *Lewis Savage:* agreed. How do we collaborate better. *Tom Kovacs:* Great question. *Callie Gavorek:* How do we open up the communication? *Sarah Fisher:* four sub-committee chairs could be listed on the website. And we can always keep the default *Lisa Voelker:* we keep TK in the loop to respond to the initial inquiries, affirm people immediately. And create a general affirmation of the concern *Lewis Savage:* direct people to a google doc, google form and then each subcommittee, passive *Chis Finch:* Stars submission, how does it work? *Tom Kovacs:* We currently have a free version where there is a document where things are saved, but we must pay to submit it. Set up an account and then they receive access to the account. Someone has to look through and read first. We can give everyone access or just the chairs. *Mary J Fallot:* We have many areas where we can improve. *Tom Kovacs:* Everything is up for grabs. 180 total points in STARS, which serves as the denominator for the rating. A quick calculation showed we have a quarter of the points that I know about, but together we can identify points we can obtain, and provide that documentation to obtain those points. Because of the type of institution we are, there are points removed from the denominator that can help our rating. Rating is based on the percentage of points we can reasonably obtain. *Callie Gavorek:* what are some examples of points we cannot obtain? *Tom Kovacs:* Universities that do not have graduate schools would not be expected to be able to obtain points related to graduate students. *Negar Matin:* how do we publicize the projects we are working on? *Tom Kovacs:* Tom tries to supply twice per week responses on Facebook.

Tom Kovacs : elect a chair for each subcommittee and that person will be the main point of contact, and in charge of the STARS submission for each sub-committee.

## 7. Subcommittee organization - 10 minutes (full commission)

MJFallot Requested to be moved from the planning and administration into the Engagement subcommittee Tom Requested to find out about the progress of the Faculty Senate Appointment and member from the Provost office Evan Findley perhaps

8. Schedule next meeting - if time permits (full commission)

When is the best time of year to meet again. Middle of the semester was a resounding yes. before winter break, February or end of January. doodle poll?

9. Adjourn