

Recommendations regarding the University's strategic vision for leadership on sustainability Seattle University President's Committee for Sustainability

June 26, 2020

Seattle University's recently adopted *Strategic Directions* envision the university as "a leader in environmental sustainability that is socially just, recognizing the centrality of environmental justice to our mission and value and infusing the science, economics and ethics of this issue in our programs, operations, and investments." The President's Committee for Sustainability (PCS) has developed four priorities to support this vision.

Priority 1: Sustainability in the Curriculum

Over the next year, we will engage the campus community in reviewing how sustainability is incorporated into SU's Undergraduate Learning Outcomes and discussing how these translate into specific and tangible program- and course-level outcomes to be achieved by every Seattle University graduate. The work should involve (1) stating the sustainability concepts central to SU's educational mission, recognizing that sustainability includes social, economic, and environmental dimensions that are inextricably linked to racial, economic, and social justice, and (2) ensuring that the central concepts are translated to actionable academic learning outcomes with broad support among faculty, staff, and students. This process should include review of how these learning outcomes can be achieved through the UCOR curriculum and development of resources to support faculty in delivering the learning outcomes.

- **Recommended Action:** Convene a "Sustainability in the Curriculum" task force composed of key stakeholders, including the provost, deans, core director, faculty stakeholders, and engaged students.
Goal: Develop sustainability-related learning outcomes and a collection of course materials for faculty

Priority 2: Support for Progress Toward Carbon Neutrality

SU's greatest challenges with respect to carbon neutrality include (1) Air travel and commuting and (2) natural gas for heating buildings. We should develop a plan to reduce or offset these emissions that includes a timeline for carbon neutrality.

- **Recommended Action 1:** Identify corporate sponsors for offsets and encourage voluntary carbon offsets by SU's campus community.
Goal: Continue our movement toward setting a carbon neutrality date and the acquisition of offsets that provide environmental, social, and economic benefits to communities where the offset projects are located.
- **Recommended Action 2:** Ask the Board of Trustees' facilities working group to develop a built-environment carbon neutrality implementation plan that will guide new construction decisions and upgrades to our energy infrastructure over the next 30 years within the context of future regulations.
Goal: Achieve real, on-campus, building operation-focused carbon emissions reductions

Priority 3: Promote Responsible Investments and Sustainable Procurement

Decisions related to investment and procurement have a major impact on the progress toward building a more sustainable economic system and a just and humane world. Our groundbreaking work in fossil fuel divestment should be celebrated and shared widely. Yet, while we have committed to divestment, another critical step would be to expand our socially and environmentally responsible, mission-related investments in the portfolio. A similar approach should also apply to the university's procurement decisions: to use our

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purchasing power to prioritize environmentally and socially preferable products and services to support companies with strong commitments to environmental and social sustainability.

- **Recommended Action 1:** Work with the SRI and Retirement Plan Investment Committee to develop a sustainable investment policy incorporating ESG investment principles
Goal: Increase investment decisions that promote sustainability
- **Recommended Action 2:** Engage the Directors of Procurement and Auxiliary Services to assess SU's purchasing behavior; identify opportunities; and set, publish, and promote sustainability criteria to be applied when evaluating products and/or services.
Goal: Adopt an institutional policy for sustainable, ethical, and equitable procurement

Priority 4: Taking a New Organizational Approach to Sustainability

The President's Committee for Sustainability (PCS) serves as a forum for sharing sustainability-related ideas on campus. It works closely with the Center for Environmental Justice and Sustainability (CEJS), which provides important staff support for implementing sustainability programs. Considering SU's *Strategic Directions* and the three recommended sustainability priorities above, there is a need to strengthen communication and partnership between the PCS, CEJS and decision makers in all units of the University.

- **Recommended Action 1:** The PCS will create a working group to review the organizational structure of sustainability committees, programming and planning at exemplary peer institutions.
- **Recommended Action 2:** The PCS bylaws and committee structure should be reviewed and updated. We note that the original PCS charter was adopted prior to the formation of CEJS—so the relationship between PCS and CEJS should be addressed explicitly. More broadly, this action would identify university leaders who are positioned to implement the university's sustainability priorities and would develop a strategy for engaging with them.
Goal: Develop a campus-wide sustainability vision, framework, and plan with support and participation from campus decision makers.