

Sustainability Task Force Action Plan Academic Year 2008-09

Summary of the Current Situation:

The world is facing an environmental crisis. Because the missions of institutions of higher education are education and research, these institutions should participate in the process of finding solutions to the environmental, social and economic issues around sustainability. As one of these institutions with a global population, the University of Houston would like to begin participating in the dialogue about sustainability: how it is defined, what it means for the campus, how to measure the university's efforts, and then translate these measurements into a comprehensive Campus Sustainability Strategic Plan.

Plan Objectives and Strategy:

The overall strategy of the University for sustainability is to become educated about sustainability and what it means; disseminate this knowledge to the campus community; and once the campus is educated, change behavior to create a campus culture of sustainability. The first step in this process is to establish the Task Force charged with this effort. This requires all members of the campus community to participate. There are many roles and tasks to be carried out and each group will naturally gravitate to the tasks that match their aptitudes. Also, we have to also recognize that we can't do this all at once.

The Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Reporting System created by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) framework gives us a list of areas and tasks to help guide our efforts (see page 9 of the attachment). As the STARS measurement tool will be utilized to measure campus sustainability in 2009, it is recommended that the Task Force follow the STARS model, even though the tool is in the pilot phase. Then, the Task Force should determine areas of improvement based upon the criteria utilized in STARS. At the end of this process, the goal is to develop a Campus Sustainability Strategic Plan, which can be used as a road map for the University for sustainability policy development, funding and organizational changes. This Strategic Plan should be comprehensive and present the total costs, proposed policy changes, timelines and other actions necessary to achieve this effort.

Responsibilities and Specific Activities:

As the University is in the beginning stages of the process, the following steps should be followed to create the Strategic Plan:

Establish a Task Force composed of faculty, staff and students that will be divided into the following working committees to complete the following objectives/activities during the 2008-09 academic year:

Executive Committee:

- a. Ensures regular meetings of the Task Force are scheduled by assigning the task of scheduling meetings and making room arrangements to the Logistics Section.
- b. Works with the Planning Committee to create Section task assignments.
- c. Communicates with members of the Task Force and external community regarding Task Force activities and updates (meeting notices, meeting minutes, events etc).
- d. Works with Planning and Operations Committees to ensure adequate resources are provided to completing the above tasks including but not limited to: locations for additional meetings, identifying on-campus subject matter experts, and providing additional manpower for completing tasks.

Planning Section:

- a. Utilizes information and resources to develop the Campus Sustainability Strategic Plan, proposed actions with timelines for completion, as well as the total cost for achieving compliance with each STARS criterion.
- b. Identifies resources necessary for determining campus and national subject matter experts for each criterion.
- c. Identifies action items associated with collecting data for each STARS criterion.
- d. Using resources provided by the Logistics Section, compiles all of the measurements into a comprehensive report, documenting the university's current sustainability status with STARS criteria.
- e. Provides the comprehensive report and status updates as necessary to the Operations Section Chief and provides status reports/briefings at Task Force meetings.

Education and Marketing Committee:

- a. Develops policies and procedures related to sustainability initiatives.
- b. Develops educational materials to train the campus and change behavior for Task Force regarding policies and procedures for sustainability initiatives.
- c. Establishes and promotes sustainability events.

Responsibilities and Specific Activities:

Establish a Task Force composed of faculty, staff and students that will be divided into the following working committees to complete the following objectives/activities during the 2008-09 academic year.

The working committees will develop policies and initiatives. When the committees are ready to present initiatives, they will invite Dr. Carlucci to their presentation so that they have direct contact with the Executive Vice President.