

## Sustainability Task Force – Fall 2015 Meeting II

November 20, 2015

Stadium Parking Garage, Room 123

11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Voting Members: Alex Robinson, Belkis Hidalgo, Kaysheva Chamupathi, Stephanie Coates, Joana Tan, Gabriel Durham, Kristin Wintersteen, Kokila Jayasekera, Jayde Fitzgerald (SGA Alternate)

Ex-officio members: Esmeralda Valdez, Maria Honey, Sarah Kelly, Jacquie Vargas, TJ Meagher, Jeanne LaMontagne

Support staff: Nikhil Schneider, Nicole Blanton, Leighanne Dean, Clancy Nelson

Other present: Carlos Gramajo, Rick Beltran

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- I. Introductions and Lunch
  - a. New SGA member and alternate
    - i. Jayde is an alternate from SGA. She can vote in the place of one of the two voting members if they are not present.
  - b. Ex-Officio vs. voting members
    - i. See above and the updated members spreadsheet for clarification.
    - ii. Everyone introduced themselves and talked about how they incorporate sustainability in their daily lives.
- II. Sustainability Updates
  - a. AASHE conference recap
    - i. “Parking isn’t free” was the most useful seminar Sarah attended
    - ii. How can some of the ideas from that session be implemented at UH?
    - iii. [www.aashe.org](http://www.aashe.org) -UH is a member institution; we fill out the STARS report through AASHE. All with a UH email address can create an AASHE member account.
  - b. TRACS conference, Feb 1-3, South Padre Island
    - i. Register and more information at: [www.utrgv.edu/tracs](http://www.utrgv.edu/tracs).
    - ii. UT Rio Grande Valley will be hosting the summit.
    - iii. There is an open call for posters and proposals from faculty and students. The deadline is soft, and if you’re submitting a relevant proposal, it’s unlikely to be denied.
    - iv. Early registration for TRACS ends (11/21). Students pay \$50, faculty pay \$100. Registration costs go up slightly after that.
  - c. Sustainability Fest

- i. The event went well despite the rain.
      - ii. There were much fewer exhibitors due to the smaller space at Rockwell Pavilion.
      - iii. There were 250 attendees.
      - iv. Jacquie Vargas said that, as an exhibitor, the event went very well. They were able to engage lots of students. The smaller space allowed for a more intimate setting and higher energy.
      - v. All the non-compostable, non-recyclable waste from the event fit in a small trashcan.
      - vi. Clancy said the event was a success; though the sound was insufficient. However, the sound couldn't be turned up any more in Rockwell Pavilion.
    - d. Rock the Campus, Tree Campus USA, Harmony Award
      - i. Rock the Campus satisfied the university's Arbor Day observance and service learning standards for the Tree Campus USA application and certification.
      - ii. The Office of Sustainability won an award for its efforts in engaging students on campus from Harmony Public Schools.
    - e. STARS
      - i. Sarah received the president's letter, and the final STARS report is expected to be submitted on Monday (11/23).
- III. Recycling and waste open forum
  - a. Independent Texas Recyclers - Facility Tour feedback
    - i. Clancy learned that recycling is a dirty job, and is not a perfect process, which demonstrated the importance of reducing and reusing first.
    - ii. Kayshewa was surprised at how much of the process was done by hand.
    - iii. Nicole was struck at the economic aspect of recycling, and how the fluctuation of other industries such as the oil industry affects the recycling industry. Education is a key component of recycling.
    - iv. Sarah mentioned that the office may have a waste panel for the next sustainability meetup featuring industry leaders in the waste industry – to include to manager of ITR.
    - v. Plastic bags and films can be recycled at grocery stores.
    - vi. Gabriel mentioned that some places such as Saint Arnolds Brewery and Whole Foods reuse their products if they are returned.
  - b. Recycling Open Forum
    - i. This open forum was supposed to include David Oliver, but he was not present at the meeting.
    - ii. Gabriel said that on-campus living has a lot of potential for recycling.

- iii. Jayde said a student at the SGA meeting was talking about creating a recycling task force in residential life and housing.
- iv. Carlos suggested an on-campus, food-related incentive for a recycling contest.
- v. Stephanie said that move-out day generates a lot of trash as well. Sarah said there are staff members in CV2 and Moody Towers who have active move-out recycling and donation programs, but it's not instituted in each residence hall.
- vi. Jacquie said that Goodwill has a campus program where they will send trucks to pick up useable items, though such programs also end up taking a lot of staff time.
- vii. Maria re-emphasized the need for people in administrative roles in residential life and housing to buy into the types of programs that are being discussed.
- viii. Kayshewa mentioned the need for more signage, especially in dining halls.
- ix. Sarah said that the recycling process (or lack thereof) is the biggest issue. The entire chain of getting recyclables from consumers to recycling centers needs to be streamlined to involve custodial staff, students, faculty, and Facilities Services.
- x. Jeanne talked about bringing Aramark and other partners in on sustainability efforts. How can we support an effort on their part to incorporate recycling into their events and operations?
- xi. Carlos pitched the idea of having a message at freshman orientation. The Office of Sustainability currently has a presentation at orientation, and is working on turning #SustainableCoog into a brand that students can identify with and commit to. For the first time, we will present to students at the winter orientation.
- xii. Dr. Robinson suggested having some slides that professors could download and have on the first few slides during the first week of school to engage students.
- xiii. Maria brought up the health and wellness survey that was sent to faculty and staff, and mentioned a possible tie-in to sustainability within the survey.
- xiv. Gabriel mentioned that sustainable living usually correlates with healthy living, and asked about when a sustainability literacy survey could be distributed.
- xv. Joana is going to explore incorporating sustainability into Cougar Kudos, a Staff Council Program.
- xvi. Carlos brought up the idea of a recycling tour as an industry visit for the college of technology students.
- xvii. Gabriel asked about "secret shoppers", who could observe the staff involved in recycling to evaluate their effectiveness.
- xviii. Jeanne stated that clarifying the proper procedures and re-establishing proper practices with the janitorial staff would be more beneficial.

- xix. Jeanne also suggested a “Sustainability Minute” at events and meetings to talk about little things relating to sustainability.
- xx. Nikhil talked about the need to ensure that recycling and janitorial staff as well as building occupants be trained properly on a clear and consistent recycling process.
- xxi. Esmeralda mentioned the need for an in-depth understanding of the University’s recycling infrastructure. Knowing how the program works is vital to reforming it into an effective recycling system. She said David would be open to recommendations from this committee.
- xxii. Sarah said that, according to Roger, each building has a central recycling location where his team picks up recycling, and that there is a lot of miscommunication about the program.
- xxiii. Esmeralda mentioned the high turnover rate within Facilities Services and how this has affected the recycling processes on campus. The committee should ask them what their program is, rather than tell them what the program needs.
- xxiv. Sarah brought up the fact that having a clear, established program will help the bottom line.

c. Solutions and next steps

- i. Create a doodle poll to determine three goals for the Sustainability Task Force to focus on in regards to waste diversion and waste management.

IV. RecycleMania

a. 2015 UH activities and results

- i. The University’s performance over the past few years has dwindled.
- ii. The programming should be slimmed down this year to facilitate easier communication.
- iii. Past RecycleMania on-campus recycling competitions have had issues such as inaccurate scales, people bringing waste from home, contamination of recyclables, etc.
- iv. The task force voted on an idea as part of the What’s the Big Idea competition during UH’s RecycleMania programming last year, which proposed reducing paper waste in the College of Optometry. The project has not gained much traction.
- v. How should we get big organizations such as Greek organizations to participate?
- vi. The biggest success in Sarah’s mind was the electronics recycling drive. There was lots of interest in the drive and many people dropped off electronics.

b. 2016 brainstorm

- i. Sarah mentioned kicking off Recyclemania this year with the electronics recycling drive. People should be given ample time to prepare for the drive in comparison to the last minute communications that went out last year.
    - ii. The nationwide competition is primarily a comparison of university and college waste and recycling data, and it is up to schools how they choose to engage students.
    - iii. Committee members can look at the Recyclemania website ([recyclemaniacs.org](http://recyclemaniacs.org)) and some webinars to brainstorm additional ideas.
    - iv. Sarah proposed opening with the recycling drive, having two waste focused sustainability meetups and closing with games and a celebration.
    - v. Kayshewa talked about how having very visible, high profile events are good for engagement. Other members agreed. Clancy will research different high profile activities that we can do during RecycleMania to garner interest on campus.
- V. Sustainability Policy Review
  - a. Deadline Jan. 29 for final signed policy
    - i. Coming up with a definition of sustainability specific to UH is something that could be addressed at the next meeting.
    - ii. Sarah talked about restructuring and renaming the task force, as well as including community and alumni members. Finally a sustainability champions or “experts” database could be introduced.
    - iii. The task force also needs to establish leadership.
    - iv. The task force needs to determine how it will make recommendations to the administration.
  - b. STF comments due, Dec. 8 EOB
    - i. Rick mentioned “365” as a method of having members make comments on the policy. It can be found on AccessUH. You have to use your cougarnet to sign in.
    - ii. Sarah decided to use Google Docs because Word Online only allows you to include comments not edits/track changes. The Sustainability Task Force share folder can be accessed at <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B0gnRviwhatyVG9KVUtrZE5VNkE>.
- VI. Open forum/other items
  - a. Carlos asked where our budget comes from and what our budget is.
  - b. Sarah said that the budget for the Office of Sustainability is \$20,000, but that we don’t have a designated sustainability project fund. The office currently pursues funding from community partners. Funding can be a priority of the committee.
  - c. A representative Sarah talked to at the AASHE conference said their school’s sustainability project budget is \$365,000 per year.

- d. Ideally, costs saved through energy efficiency measures, decreased landfill waste, recycling credits could be allocated for a sustainability project fund. Energy companies could also be approached for funding. Esmeralda mentioned that the office of corporate relations would assist with funding projects.
- e. Rick gave an example that illustrated how corporate donors are interested in funding specific projects.

## VII. Action Items

- a. Voting and ex-officio members:
  - i. Review the campus sustainability policy and provides suggestions and comments by December 8. Link: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/17-dfmoTyt8BtHJBaTIkyb9yWpaekQPim5mAFXwSmT8/edit?usp=sharing>
  - ii. Identify policies you'd like to work on.
  - iii. Review the committee structure of other universities.
  - iv. Provide feedback on structure changes to the university's task force.
  - v. Brainstorm how the committee will make recommendations to administration.
  - vi. Look at the Recyclemania website (<http://recyclemaniacs.org/>) to brainstorm ideas.
  - vii. Brainstorm ideas for a university-wide recycling audit to better understand the university's recycling system.
- b. Sarah Kelly: Distribute doodle poll to select three task force goals for the year.
- c. Clancy Nelson: Research high impact demonstrations to engage the campus in RecycleMania.