

The BCIT logo consists of the letters "BCIT" in a white, bold, sans-serif font, centered within a dark blue square. A small registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the top right corner of the square. The background of the entire page is a green wireframe landscape with a dark blue horizontal band across the middle.

BCIT<sup>®</sup>

# SUSTAINABILITY VISION

Enabling people to lead socially just lives within ecological limits

# Our Process

Sustainability was a powerful theme throughout consultation for the development of the BCIT Strategic Plan 2019–2022 (*Relevance, Reach, Renewal*). Building on this energy, we embarked on an intensive process to ask for community views on our objectives, role, and priorities in addressing the challenges of sustainability. BCIT leadership identified sustainability as one of the key areas of attention in the first year of Strategic Plan implementation. The goal was the creation of a Sustainability Vision that confirms our institutional direction; reflects the interests of our students, faculty, staff, and partners; and outlines the path for the continued integration of sustainability throughout BCIT policies, practices, and culture.

This series of conversations, which engaged close to 800 individuals across BCIT campuses, began in the spring of 2019. A Sustainability Thoughtexchange, the May 2019 Management Breakfast on Sustainability, and ongoing sustainability-themed Diversity Circles dialogues provided input that informed a draft vision and set of strategies. This framework was then tested and refined through multiple channels during the fall of 2019, including focus groups and an online survey, and culminating in a series of six open houses held at each of BCIT's five campuses and the Centre for Applied Research and Innovation. The survey and open houses invited feedback from all parts of the BCIT community, with the open houses attracting well over 200 students—by far the largest population in attendance. The focus groups were designed to allow discussion with teams and units with specific areas of expertise and interest<sup>1</sup>. The final phase of engagement invited several of BCIT's external partners to contribute their perspectives through a targeted survey.

Informed by a legacy of community participation and grounded in BCIT's Policy 1010 on Economic, Social, and Environmental Sustainability, the development of the Vision integrated the contemporary ideas and priorities of our community. The response to these various opportunities for input echoes the passion for sustainability that transcends BCIT. Comments reflected areas of societal concern, as well as opportunities that are especially relevant in the respective work contexts of stakeholders. Feedback accordingly encompassed topics from campus recycling and commuter transport to curriculum and applied research, to BCIT's capacity—indeed our obligation—to catalyze action across industry and society. Also reflected was a deep connection with BCIT's Indigenous Vision and the understanding that a sustainable and socially just world must include Indigenous people and reflect an awareness of their history, place, and space.

As with other plans and vision documents associated with BCIT's Strategic Plan, the Sustainability Vision articulates intent, areas of focus, and Institute accountabilities. Specific actions will be identified, and progress tracked, as we move forward in implementation.

Thank you to all who participated in the consultation and development of this foundational Vision for BCIT and for our world more broadly.

<sup>1</sup> Focus groups included representation from: the BCIT Student Association (BCITSA); Corporate Services; Facilities and Campus Development; Financial Services; Human Resources; Indigenous Services; Information Technology; International; Library; Learning and Teaching Centre; Marketing and Communications; Safety, Security & Emergency Management; Student Services.

The British Columbia Institute of Technology acknowledges the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish Nations of **Sḵwx̱wú7mesh** (Squamish), **səlilwataʔ** (Tseil-Waututh), and **xwməθkwəyəm** (Musqueam) on which our campuses are located.

## Our Context

We define sustainability as “**enabling people to lead socially just lives within ecological limits.**” While efforts to date at BCIT have focused primarily around the environment, our definition reflects the interdependencies between the environment and society. We are working to reposition sustainability in this broader context throughout our community.

Beyond BCIT, there is widespread attention on sustainability, with increasing global concerns around climate change. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by United Nations (UN) Member States in 2015, are an urgent call for concerted action. “They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth—all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.”<sup>2</sup> While many current practices are ecologically unsustainable, there are important opportunities to evolve to a form of economic development that will enable people to meet their needs while practicing stewardship of resources for long-term prosperity. These shifts in practice must be embedded in society, business, and government.

Closer to home, BCIT has a clear institutional commitment to sustainability, including to the CleanBC goals of decreasing public sector greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent by 2030. Indeed, this target was exceeded in 2016 in six buildings at the north end of BCIT’s Burnaby Campus. We are investing in sustainability innovation, as exemplified by the Smart Microgrid Applied Research Team (SMART), aimed

at exploring cost-effective technologies for Canada’s evolving electricity grid. We support natural health and food products research, and universal accessibility solutions for people with different physical abilities.

Nationally, BCIT is known as a leader in building science, including envelope technology, zero emissions, green roofs, and living walls. We also lead in ecological restoration, renewable energy and vehicle electrification, forensics research aimed at preventing human trafficking, new approaches to fostering sustainable business, low-cost solutions for filtering drinking water using bio-char, and non-destructive strength tests for building materials. Going beyond our national borders, BCIT was the program convener for the Ecocity World Summit in 2019, with notable international interest and significant levels of partner funding secured to support ongoing Ecocity Footprint activity. Our Institute Sustainability office contributes domain expertise, working closely with Education and Applied Research, several service areas, the BCIT Student Association, and community partners to effect change.

Post-secondary institutions, in general, are positioned well to advance efforts to address sustainability challenges through education, research, and translation to practice across their campuses as microcosms of society. In British Columbia, contributions to sustainability are part of the government mandate to the post-secondary education sector, which specifically requests that institutions align their operations with provincial climate strategy objectives around greenhouse gas reduction, renewable energy, and supporting technological innovation.

<sup>2</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

# Our Passion and Direction

Our leadership team is unequivocal in its pursuit of sustainability. We recognize that inequitable resource consumption is at the heart of climate change and is an urgent global challenge. Although climate action and adaptation will remain at the forefront of our academic, operational, and partnership efforts, we will also strive to uncover the deeper systemic causes and to address other sustainability challenges. Through shaping the knowledge and actions of our students and partners in the workplace, we aim to inspire and mobilize change across industry and society, underpinned by best practices across our campuses.

To achieve this ambition, we know that we must:

- articulate a **shared understanding** of our role as a polytechnic institution in being part of the solution, empowering students, faculty, and staff to contribute and make a difference;
- advance the **intellectual capital and operational excellence** that stimulate public dialogue and purposeful translation to practice in industry; and
- create the **institutional capacity** to train the workforce of tomorrow.

Three elements together position BCIT for success in these goals:

- A deep **community commitment** to sustainability
- Our model of **applied education and research**, delivered in close **partnership with industry**
- Differentiating **institutional expertise** in relevant domains, including systems change, smart technology, and regeneration

We understand that change takes time and that it requires both leadership and resources to guide, activate, and sustain. We are intent on building the necessary infrastructure to propel our journey towards a sustainable future, at BCIT and beyond.

# Sustainability in the 2019–22 BCIT Strategic Plan

In the Strategic Plan, we have articulated three Commitments that represent our primary areas of activity and accountability. We are intent on being a **people-focused organization** that delivers **future-proof applied education**, amplifying our impact through **globally relevant connections**.

Key initiatives align with these commitments to create a framework for action and decision making. Interwoven in much of the Strategic Plan, and highlighted in our core values, sustainability is explicit in—and integral to—these initiatives:

- Process and system redesign: redesign processes, systems, and structures to enhance our agility and effectiveness and to embed sustainability
- Augmented and sustainable environments: cultivate exceptional learning environments and communities through technology and sustainable campus development
- New models of collaboration: reinvent how we work with industry and peers to drive economic, social, and environmental prosperity in British Columbia and beyond

Together, these confirm our intention to embed sustainability in our education and applied research activities, across our campus operations and facilities, and in our interactions with stakeholders beyond BCIT.

These sustainability strategies, aligned with our commitments (people, education, and connections), demonstrate both the multiple facets of our approach to sustainability and the close alignment between this Vision and the BCIT Strategic Plan.

# Accountability and Connection with Sector-wide Policy

Post-secondary institutions have long been recognized as leaders in societal change, and the urgency of ecological sustainability is no different. We take our responsibilities as a public advocate very seriously.

BCIT is a member of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), North America's preeminent leader in providing sector-specific resources and support. AASHE's Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS)<sup>3</sup> is a transparent self-reporting framework for post-secondary institutions to objectively measure their sustainability performance and compare scores with peers across North America. AASHE is in the process of aligning its STARS methodology with the UN SDGs, a benchmark that provides global context.

The STARS tool and other AASHE resources outline expectations in terms of the scope and scale of sustainability efforts across the sector. BCIT's decision to commit to this framework reinforces both the extent of our ambitions and our desire for accountability. There is a clear connection between the five STARS components and the commitments in our Strategic Plan:

- **Operations**, which encompasses building design, energy consumption, food and dining, grounds, purchasing, transportation, waste, and water [people-focused organization]
- **Planning and administration**, including assessment of institutional procedures and performance in areas such as diversity, affordability, wellbeing, and finance [people-focused organization]
- **Academics**, which tracks advances in sustainability curriculum and research [future-proof applied education]
- **Innovation and leadership**, covering institutional efforts to effect and embed changes in practice beyond the campus [future-proof applied education, globally relevant connections]
- **Engagement** on issues connected with sustainability, both across campus and with external partners and the general public [globally relevant connections]

As described in our sustainability strategy for accountability reporting, BCIT will adopt and integrate the STARS to measure and manage our progress in sustainability.

<sup>3</sup> More information about STARS available at <https://stars.aashe.org/>

# Our Strategies

Our sustainability strategies leverage existing strengths and activity at BCIT, in each case articulating a clear direction and outlining a roadmap for progress. All strategies derive from our definition of sustainability that integrates both ecological and social objectives.

## PEOPLE-FOCUSED ORGANIZATION

### STRATEGIES

1. Changes in day-to-day practice that support our people in reducing their environmental footprints
2. Demonstrably sustainable procurement of goods and services across BCIT, in partnership with our suppliers
3. Steady evolution in governance processes to signal and ensure institutional focus on sustainability

## FUTURE-PROOF APPLIED EDUCATION

### STRATEGIES

4. Renewal and development of curriculum and credentials that integrate sustainability across BCIT programs
5. Channeling of applied research to advance knowledge and practice in areas in which BCIT can contribute to meaningful socio-ecological change
6. Harmonization of built and natural learning systems and spaces that transform our campuses as living labs

## GLOBALLY RELEVANT CONNECTIONS

### STRATEGIES

7. Accountability reporting through active participation in post-secondary sustainability programs
8. Development of the Ecocity Centre to advance BCIT research and leadership
9. Facilitation of dialogue and mobilization of collective action, both internally and beyond, to embed and advance the sustainability agenda



## Commitment 1

# People-focused Organization

The strategies in this area attracted the strongest support during consultation, in part because they resonate with the daily experience of many of our community members, and in part because these are areas in which BCIT has made most progress to date. The Strategic Plan signals a new level of commitment to our students, faculty, and staff, and this is demonstrated in our approach to sustainability. The primary role of Institute Sustainability in these strategies is one of expertise and facilitation, working with units across the Institute to elicit change.

## 1. Day-to-day Practice

We will extend, develop, and embed practices that create low impact on the environment and help advance a socially just economy. Progress here begins at the policy level; when we build policies that demand sustainable action, we know that sustainable action will follow. Communication is also critical to foster awareness and build conviction, as is resourcing for grassroots stakeholder initiatives. We will support our people in making changes when such transition is difficult, costly, or simply less convenient. We will remain focused on moving away from paper-based processes, landfill waste diversion and waste minimization, and reduction in carbon emissions through adoption of alternate modes of transit and ways of working.

## 2. Sustainable Procurement

Most of the impact of consumption is in the supply-side of manufactured goods, so a focus on sustainable procurement can yield significant benefit. We will deepen and augment our commitment to social and environmental responsibility in our purchasing, working closely with our suppliers and partners to ensure a systemic approach. Where relevant, we will advocate for regulatory shifts to lift constraints on our capacity to promote sustainability in our buying decisions. And we will communicate and support the adoption of best practices across the Institute. Different units have different needs and parameters; we will collaborate with each to ensure that we move the needle in procurement while respecting the local academic or business context.

## 3. Governance Processes

We aspire to a future in which senior leadership and the BCIT Board of Governors and BCIT Foundation consistently reflect our commitment to sustainability in decision making around direction, operations, and investment. This is arguably the most complex strategy, and it will take time to effect real change. We will create and apply policy that integrates sustainability principles into Institute governance. We will, in parallel, encourage accountability across the BCIT community by asking that faculty and staff articulate clearly the sustainability context and resulting recommendations in business cases and other resource requests. By seeking to influence change, both “top down” and organically, we will strengthen our collective resolve to explicitly integrate sustainability in resource allocation at BCIT.

A wireframe illustration of a wind turbine, rendered in green lines. The turbine is positioned vertically, with its nacelle and three blades extending upwards. The background is a white grid of green lines, creating a technical or architectural feel. The turbine's structure is composed of various geometric shapes and lines, giving it a skeletal appearance.

## Commitment 2

# Future-proof Applied Education

A focus on applied education is what differentiates BCIT from most of our peers. We combine theory and practice in a way that enables our learners to leave BCIT confident and able to have immediate impact in their work. This approach is critical to advancing the state of knowledge in sustainability. We must continue to evolve our content and methodologies to stay ahead of the needs of industry, and we must nurture an environment in which learners and faculty thrive. The main contributions of the Institute Sustainability team in these strategies are those of expertise and coordination.

## 4. Curriculum and Credential Renewal

BCIT offers a range of programs, courses, and educational resources focused on meeting the challenge of sustainability. We match industry partners with student research and capstone projects that provide learners with real-world experience in addressing sustainability challenges. These are a good start, but we must do more. Working through the Schools, Academic Planning, the Learning and Teaching Centre, and the Education Council, we will renew and develop new offerings that embed and explore sustainability across more of our programs. In partnership with like-minded global peer institutions, we will create new credentials that enable learners to advance their careers through joint programs. We will also continue to promote sustainability-informed educational delivery. And we will work with the Library to help ensure that it maintains sustainability resources across all disciplines.

## 5. Applied Research

BCIT has an impressive track record in sustainability applied research, driven both by the Schools and by the Centre for Applied Research and Innovation [CARI]. These activities seek to create a “solution space” for industry. Current successes include the Factor Four project, focused on achieving a fourfold [75%] reduction in materials and energy use without compromising building service levels, and the Elevated Roof Platform, designed to educate and train the next generation of students and local professionals in leading-edge green roof, living wall, and green façade technologies. We will extend our support for such efforts and, working closely with our industry partners, will identify new areas for investment. Consistent with BCIT direction, we will embed these activities throughout our education model to strengthen outcomes in student learning and practical application.

## 6. Campuses as Living Labs

We face many of the same complex challenges as a small city, with stresses on transportation, power, and waste management systems. There are several examples of sustainable practice across our campuses, including the daylighting of Guichon Creek, the introduction of natural drainage within landscaping installations, and the enhancement of pedestrian, cycling, and car-sharing infrastructure. We collect solar energy on rooftops and use signage to communicate projects that demonstrate sustainability in action. We enable students to safely observe and monitor working equipment, as well as wall assemblies, pipes, and pumps, so that they can see first-hand how the built and natural environment work together. We will strengthen our articulation of the BCIT sustainability story through these experiences, striving to find ways to involve students and partners more actively in these living labs. As our campus redevelopment gathers pace, sustainable environments will become an increasing feature of studying and working at BCIT.





### Commitment 3

## Globally Relevant Connections

This area is in many ways also the most motivational for our stakeholders; there is a clear desire for BCIT to be a more active participant in the public conversation around sustainability. Working in these ways is critical if BCIT is to succeed in its vision of creating lasting impact beyond our campuses. In these strategies, Institute Sustainability will play a more active role, contributing both expertise and capacity for execution. This includes collaboration with international agencies and organizations that seek opportunities to collaborate through efforts that leverage our educational and applied research capabilities.

## 7. Accountability Reporting

We are committed to transparency. And we know that what gets measured gets achieved. The AASHE STARS sustainability tool provides a valuable sector-wide framework from which to work. We will establish an integrated system to track our progress against these objectives, with the resulting data used across the Institute for the purposes of reporting, research, and engagement. We will also continue to share information so that we can be assessed through other ratings agencies such as the University of Indonesia GreenMetric World University Ranking. These systems will enable us to benchmark BCIT's performance against that of our peers, which will be especially important as we prioritize and communicate our efforts going forward.

## 8. Ecocity Centre

BCIT is already doing outstanding work in various fields that contribute to urban sustainability and has invested a tremendous amount of resources in the highly successful 2019 Ecocity World Summit in Vancouver. A legacy of the conference, the Ecocity Centre will anchor the global leadership of BCIT through the ongoing development of the International Ecocity Standards as a tool to help communities create locally relevant pathways to achieving the UN SDGs. As part of a broader institutional hub in sustainability, established and evolved in collaboration with industry, the Centre is a critical opportunity to position BCIT for greater local and international profile and brand recognition. The Centre will be a platform for education and applied research. It will advance and provide the tools, metrics, expert planning, policy advice, and training to support the restructuring of cities to reduce their carbon and ecological footprints while simultaneously regenerating natural habitat.

## 9. Facilitation of Dialogue

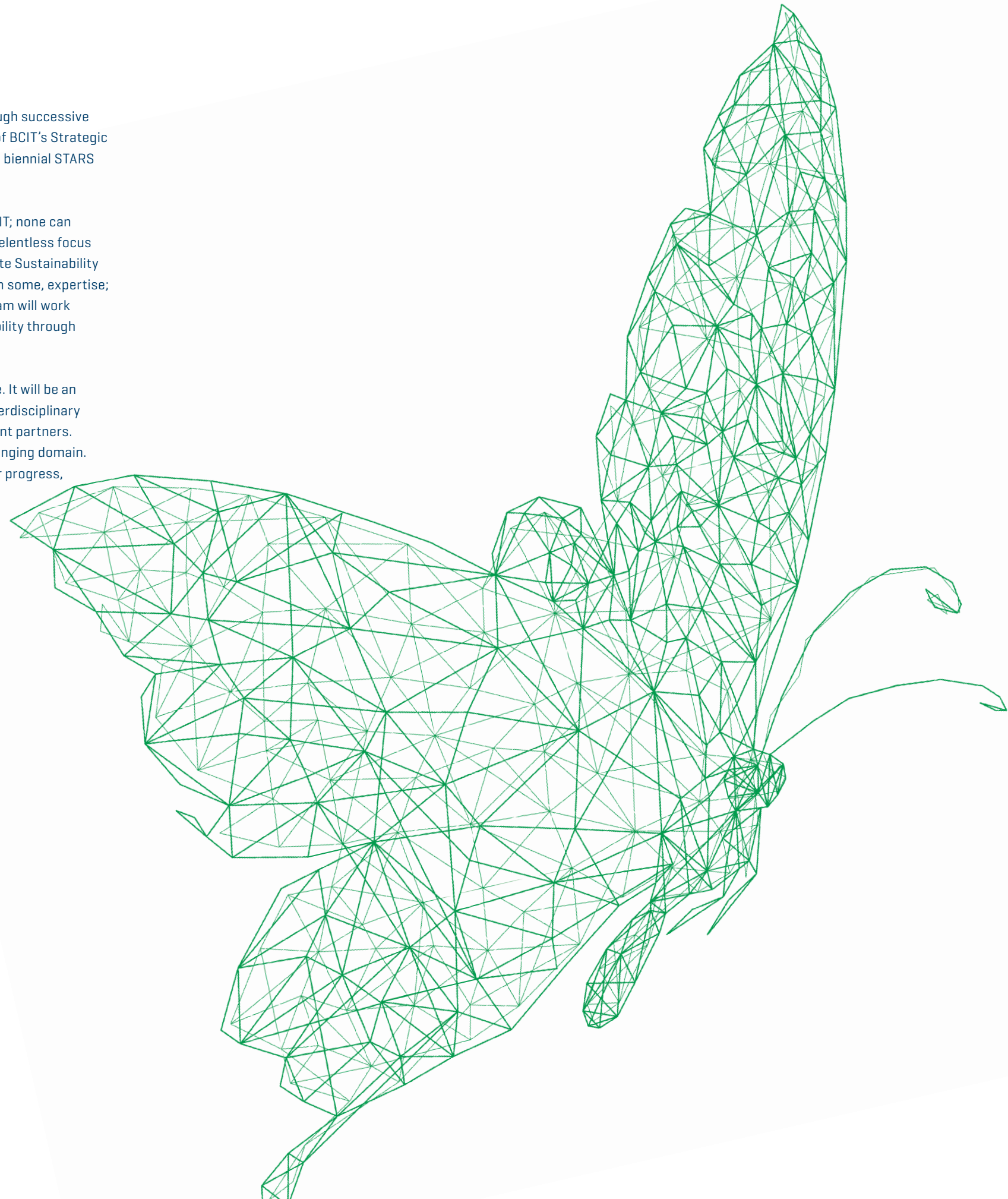
This strategy is particularly important as it provides for ongoing community conversation around sustainability, key if we are to strengthen awareness and incite action. We will develop a robust engagement plan, both internal and external, and will update and maintain tools to enable these interactions. We will continue to support the efforts of the employee-driven Green Team, and engage actively with students, faculty, staff, and the BCIT Student Association. Beyond the Institute, we will initiate discussions with our partners and the public. This Vision will be a key platform for communication and for further strengthening BCIT's profile, a powerful declaration of our knowledge, commitment, and practice. In many ways, our sustainability story will continue to evolve through these conversations, and our annual plans and priorities will be heavily informed by ongoing stakeholder input.

# Moving Forward

The Strategies outlined in this Vision will be translated to actions and deliverables through successive sustainability plans, with many of these also reflected in the implementation program of BCIT's Strategic Plan. The sustainability plans will be informed by objective gap analysis based on BCIT's biennial STARS submissions to AASHE. This connection will ensure ongoing focus and accountability.

Progress in the strategies is dependent on the actions of many stakeholders across BCIT; none can be implemented by any one School, department, or service unit. The commitment and relentless focus of BCIT leadership are crucial in inspiring, coordinating, and enabling action. The Institute Sustainability team also has a key role to play: in many cases, it is one of facilitation or coordination; in some, expertise; and in others, execution and progress reporting. Irrespective of its contribution, the team will work to secure resources, mobilize change internally and externally, and champion sustainability through communication and role modelling.

BCIT's first Sustainability Vision charts an exciting but complex journey for the Institute. It will be an exercise in tenacity and change management, underpinned by cross-functional and interdisciplinary collaboration. We will need to work closely with our industry, community, and government partners. Transparency and adaptability are also critically important in this complex and fast-changing domain. We will put in place the metrics and systems so that we can track and communicate our progress, enabling us to hone our approach as we proceed.



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**EDUCATION  
FOR A COMPLEX WORLD.**

