Five years ago, Seattle University invested in the Center for Environmental Justice and Sustainability to support excellence within this broad, interdisciplinary area of scholarship. As a result, 28 faculty and 16 student fellows have contributed dozens of presentations and publications to their respective fields. In addition, CEJS has sponsored two international conferences and published two special journal issues of *Interdisciplinary Environmental Review*. The center has also reached over 3000 members of the Seattle University and neighboring communities through the sponsorship of more than 50 seminars, workshops and special events. The center has built new relationships with local and international partners that have led to service-learning and research projects with SU students and faculty. It has also become the hub for SU’s academic and facilities-related sustainability endeavors and continues to enhance our reputation for excellence in these areas.

After completing the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's (AASHE) Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) program, SU became eligible for the Sierra Club’s Cool Schools annual rankings and has jumped 100 places since last appearing in 2014. Compared to six competing institutions, SU was surpassed in the 2017 rankings by Loyola Marymount University, Loyola University Chicago, and Santa Clara (Table 1). In addition, SCU and LMU appear on the Princeton Review’s top 50 Green Colleges at #12 and #21, respectively, and despite a score of 94/99, SU does not appear on this list.

Table 1: 2017 Sierra Club Rankings for select institutions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Institution** | **National Rank** |
| Loyola Marymount University | 7 |
| Loyola University Chicago | 16 |
| Santa Clara University | 44 |
| **Seattle University** | **48** |
| Gonzaga University | 134 |
| University of San Francisco | - |
| University of Portland | - |

Sustainability and Enrollment

According to a 2015 Princeton Review survey of prospective students and their parents, 61% of respondents (n=10,437) said a colleges' commitment to environmental issues would contribute "strongly," "very much," or "somewhat" to their attendance decisions. Similarly, Loyola University Chicago found that 49% of their fall 2015 enrollees (n=431) believed that sustainability programming was “Important or Very Important” for influencing their decision to attend LUC.

In a fall 2016 survey of enrolled SU freshman, 57% of respondents (n=167) agreed that SU’s sustainability practices and programs influenced their decision to enroll “Somewhat (40%) or Very Much (17%)”. In fall 2017, 68% of respondents said that sustainability influenced their decision to enroll. The fall 2017 survey also indicated that 47 percent would support a $1 per credit sustainability fee and 47 percent might support such a fee with only 6 percent saying they would not support a fee.

These numbers suggest that a university’s sustainability programs and practices are significantly valued by prospective students, and there is [growing evidence](http://www.coxconserves.com/Survey) that this trend toward valuing sustainability for enrollment decisions will continue in the years to come.

Seattle University has the opportunity to make sustainability an even stronger part of our brand and increase our visibility among millions of prospective students who say sustainability is a significant factor when choosing where to attend college. We can set ourselves far ahead of our competition by ***staking claim to a series of firsts***and locking-in our appeal to a growing pool of sustainability-minded students and a new group of prospective donors. SU could be the first Jesuit university to be 1) fully divested from fossil fuel investments 2) climate negative and 3) ranked as the top university in the United States for its sustainability practices.

The Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) Task Force will soon be offering a plan that will enable SU to fully divest over the next five years. If this plan is approved by the Board of Trustees, SU will become the first Jesuit institution to commit to complete divestment. It will also demonstrate that student and staff voices meaningfully contributed to shared governance at our university. If and when the announcement for divestment is made, SU can also announce how it plans to provide additional leadership toward climate action. This will include joining other higher education institutions in the Pacific Northwest who have sustainability fees for students (Table 2). **We can also announce that we will be the first carbon negative campus in the world**. At SU, we lead by example, we always give an effort of 110 percent, and we are going to help account for the emissions of our community.

Table 2: Universities in Oregon and Washington with green funds.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **University** | **Fee** |
| Bellevue College | $10 per quarter |
| Evergreen State College | $1 per credit |
| Lewis & Clark College | $85 per year |
| Oregon State University | $8.50 per term |
| Pacific Lutheran University | $20 per year |
| Southern Oregon University | $15 per semester |
| University of Alaska, Fairbanks | $20 per semester |
| University of Oregon, Eugene | $2 per semester |
| University of Washington, Seattle | $5 per quarter |
| Washington State University | $5 per semester |
| Western Washington University | $21 per year |

\*Source <http://www.aashe.org/resources/green-funds/all/>

The President’s Committee for Sustainability would like to propose that SU adopt a **$15 per quarter sustainability fee for all students**. (We can further refine this to ensure that the fee is applied to part-time students in the same way as the current technology fee ($465 per year) and recreation fee ($300 per year).

If we assume 7000 students pay $45 per year, this will generate $315,000 per year in revenue. This revenue would be used to offset 110 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions or $60,000. The funds would also be used to restore most of the CEJS budget ($190,000) and $65,000 would be used toward sustainable campus infrastructure projects (e.g. charging stations, solar panels). Any additional revenue would go toward campus infrastructure projects or perhaps to a green fund that is managed by SGSU for student sustainability initiatives.