

# EXTERNAL METHODOLOGY

## AC-9 Faculty Sustainability Research Inventory

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## Purpose of Document

Summary of methodology and outcomes of AC-9 faculty sustainability research inventory for STARS submission.

## Summary | Findings

- Total number of employees that conduct research: **7,502**
- Number of employees engaged in sustainability research: **268**
  - From Self-Reporting Survey: **120**
  - From Presidential Working Group Data Sources: **69**
  - From Environmental Sustainability Research Network Data Sources: **79**
- Percentage of employees that conduct research that are engaged in sustainability research: **3.57%**
- Total number of academic departments that include at least one employee who conducts research: **175**
- Number of academic departments with at least one employee who conducts sustainability research: **74**
- Percentage of departments that are engaged in sustainability research: **42.29%**

## Summary | Scope of AC 9 Credit

USC AC 9 credit in the version 2.2 STARS assessment covers sustainability research conducted by the institution. The data is an inventory of research conducted at or by the university. This credit applies to all institutions where research is considered in employee promotion or tenure decisions. The assessment includes the percentages of employees who conduct research and that are engaged in sustainability research, as well as the percentage of academic departments that conduct research and has at least one employee who conducts sustainability research. USC has provided data for one year - between July 1, 2018, and June 30, 2019 - based on the definition of sustainability research outlined in AASHE's Standards and Terms, and USC has included the following information for each individual researcher conducting sustainability research:

1. Name
2. Departmental affiliation
3. Research interests/topics or a brief description justifying the individual's inclusion.

To create an inventory of employees that conduct sustainability research, USC's Office of Sustainability conducted the following methodology:

1. Carried out a faculty-wide survey<sup>1</sup>,
2. Reviewed research listed on two data sources assembled by the Presidential Working Group on Sustainability in Education, Research and Operations (PWG), and
3. Reviewed two data sources assembled by the non-active USC Environmental Sustainability Research Network (ESRN)

The data was collected into a spreadsheet and analyzed by the Office of Sustainability with the support of student interns.

## Summary | Methodology

### Step 1 | Data Collection - Faculty Survey

- **Coordination with USC Research Council:** The Office of Sustainability met with the Research Council to present a draft survey, and the Research Council provided feedback to improve the clarity of the survey's introduction language and key questions.
- **Distribute faculty research survey:** The Office of Sustainability coordinated with the Research Council to confirm who would disseminate the survey and key dates. The

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<sup>1</sup> This included Tenure-Track, Research, Instructional, and Clinical faculty; however, only faculty in schools with representation on the USC Research Council received the survey. This may be addressed in future surveys.

survey was distributed in the spring of 2021 and remained open for 3 weeks. Reminders to complete the survey were sent four times.

- **Analyze faculty research survey responses:** responses were outputted into a spreadsheet where they were analyzed by Office of Sustainability staff, student interns, and GreenerU.
- **Confirming sustainability research:** Faculty were asked to self-report any research that aligned with AASHE's definition of sustainability-focused research in the survey.
- **Cleaning data:** Identifying fields (name, faculty rank, full-time/part-time) were reviewed to ensure consistency and accuracy (i.e. no typos).
- **Clarifying departments:** A Human Resources Information System (HRIS) report that includes every full-time and part-time faculty member from every school was obtained from University Human Resources. This report includes the official departments on file for all faculty members and was used to clarify departments that survey respondents are housed in.
- **Supplementing survey responses:** For responses in which faculty self-reported that they conducted eligible sustainability research but for which the sample provided was incomplete or outside of the eligible time frame, student interns reviewed their publications via Google Scholar and confirmed whether they had eligible research. If eligible research was found, the researcher was included in the inventory.

## Step 2 | Data Collection - Presidential Working Group Data Sources

- The Office of Sustainability identified additional faculty sustainability researchers through two (2) data sources assembled by the Presidential Working Group on Sustainability in Education, Research, and Operations. Faculty members of the Presidential Working Group have determined that the research centers, programs, and institutes in these resources are sustainability-focused, therefore the researchers within these centers and the research they conduct are treated as sustainability-focused for the purposes of STARS.
  - [Presidential Working Group Centers, Programs, & Institutes web page](#)
  - [PWG USC Sustainability Research Initiatives presentation](#)
- For each research center, program, or institute listed in these data sources, Office of Sustainability student interns, with the oversight of USC sustainability staff, conducted a manual review of websites to identify faculty who conducted eligible research using the steps outlined below:
  1. Navigate to each center's web page and find the "Research" or "Research Highlights" or "Research Papers" or "Publications" page.
  2. Identify research that fits eligibility criteria for the inventory (timeframe and type of research)
  3. For individual researchers listed on eligible publications, confirm whether the researcher has already taken our survey. If not, add the researcher and a sample of their research to the inventory.
  4. Identify each researcher's faculty rank, full-time or part-time status, school, and department from the HRIS report produced by University Human Resources. Add this information to the inventory.

### Step 3 | Data Collection: Environmental Sustainability Research Network Data Sources

- The Office of Sustainability identified additional faculty sustainability researchers through two (2) data sources assembled by the non-active USC Environmental Sustainability Research Network (ESRN). Faculty listed in these data sources have self-identified as sustainability researchers, therefore the researchers within these resources and the research they conduct are treated as sustainability-focused for the purposes of STARS.
- For each faculty researcher listed in these data sources, Office of Sustainability student interns, with the oversight of USC sustainability staff, identified faculty who conducted eligible research using the steps outlined below:
  1. Confirm that researchers are still active USC faculty by identifying them in the HRIS report produced by University Human Resources.
  2. Confirm whether the researcher has already taken our survey. If not, then the researcher is eligible for inclusion into the inventory.
  3. Utilize Google Scholar or USC department websites to identify specific research that fits the eligibility criteria for the inventory (timeframe and type of research)
  4. If the above has been confirmed, add the researcher and a sample of their research to the inventory. Identify each researcher's faculty rank, full-time or part-time status, school, and department from the HRIS report produced by University Human Resources. Add this information to the inventory.

### Step 4 | Data review

- **Internal review:** The USC Research Council reviewed and confirmed the faculty sustainability research inventory. The Council identified areas of opportunity for capturing more sustainability researchers, which can be incorporated into USC's next STARS submission.
- **Additions and confirmation:** Office of Sustainability reviewed the final data.
- **Third party-review:** The final inventory was reviewed by GreenerU prior to STARS submission.