

Sustainability Cultural Assessment Informational Report

UVM Office of Sustainability
December, 2018



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Contents

- **What & Why:** What is sustainability culture? Why are we assessing it?
- **Background:** What led to this most recent survey? What has been done so far?
- **Results:** Overview of Spring 2018 survey. Understanding how it applies to you. Discussing what's next.

Why



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Sustainability Cultural Assessment

Continuous improvement:

- Evaluate the success, awareness, understanding of and satisfaction with current initiatives
- Identify areas for improvement
- Share findings with other departments to inform their work

Success in STARS, Princeton Review and Sierra Club:

- Receive points for Sustainability Cultural Assessment STARS credit
- Inform approach to Outreach Campaign and Employee Educator Program STARS credits
- STARS informs Princeton Review and Sierra Club's campus sustainability ranking lists

What the assessment is:

- Measurement of personal values and behavior
- Measurement of awareness and understanding of campus sustainability initiatives
- Research methods that can be replicated to show change over time

Background



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Timeline

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 2000 | Environmental Council surveys student perceptions of UVM's environmental performance in academics and campus operations to gain information of potential relevance for marketing UVM as a "green" university. |
| 2009 | Gund researchers publish case study at UVM that involved 1,500 participants from the UVM campus and Burlington community in a long-term visioning process. Their visions of a sustainable and desirable UVM were used in the 2018 survey. |
| 2017 | OoS partners with an undergraduate service learning course in CDAE. Students conduct direct observations, interviews and a survey to pilot the sustainability cultural assessment on campus. Results published in the journal <i>Sustainability</i> . |
| 2018 | OoS hires two students to review pilot findings to create and implement a new assessment that will meet STARS criteria. |

CDAE 250 Research Methods Class

Introductory course to qualitative and quantitative research methods and statistical procedures. Partnered with OoS to pilot a sustainability cultural assessment.

1. **Direct Observations**

Each student was responsible for directly observing on-campus locations related to sustainability (e.g. waste sorting area)

2. **Informational Interviews**

Each student was responsible for issuing ten in-person questionnaires to students and faculty on campus

3. **Survey**

Each student was responsible for issuing 20 online surveys. 717 total responses. 47% seniors, >20% CALS & Business.

4. **Final Report**

Four-person groups were responsible for drawing conclusions. Major finding was that students are supportive of sustainability efforts but concerned about greenwashing.

5. **Published Results:** <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/10/11/3849>

Spring 2018 Survey

- **Research Question:**
 - What are the sustainability-related **values/beliefs**, sustainability-related **behaviors** and level of **awareness** of campus sustainability initiatives of UVM students and employees?
- Brief online survey issued to students, faculty, and staff
- Emails provided by UVM Office of Institutional Research based on a set of criteria, allowing a more representative sample of the UVM population

Results



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Demographics

Students

- undergraduate = 171
- graduate = 24

Employees

- staff = 177
- faculty = 71

Note: responses did not differ significantly between student type and employee type so they will usually not be broken out in this presentation

Not Representative

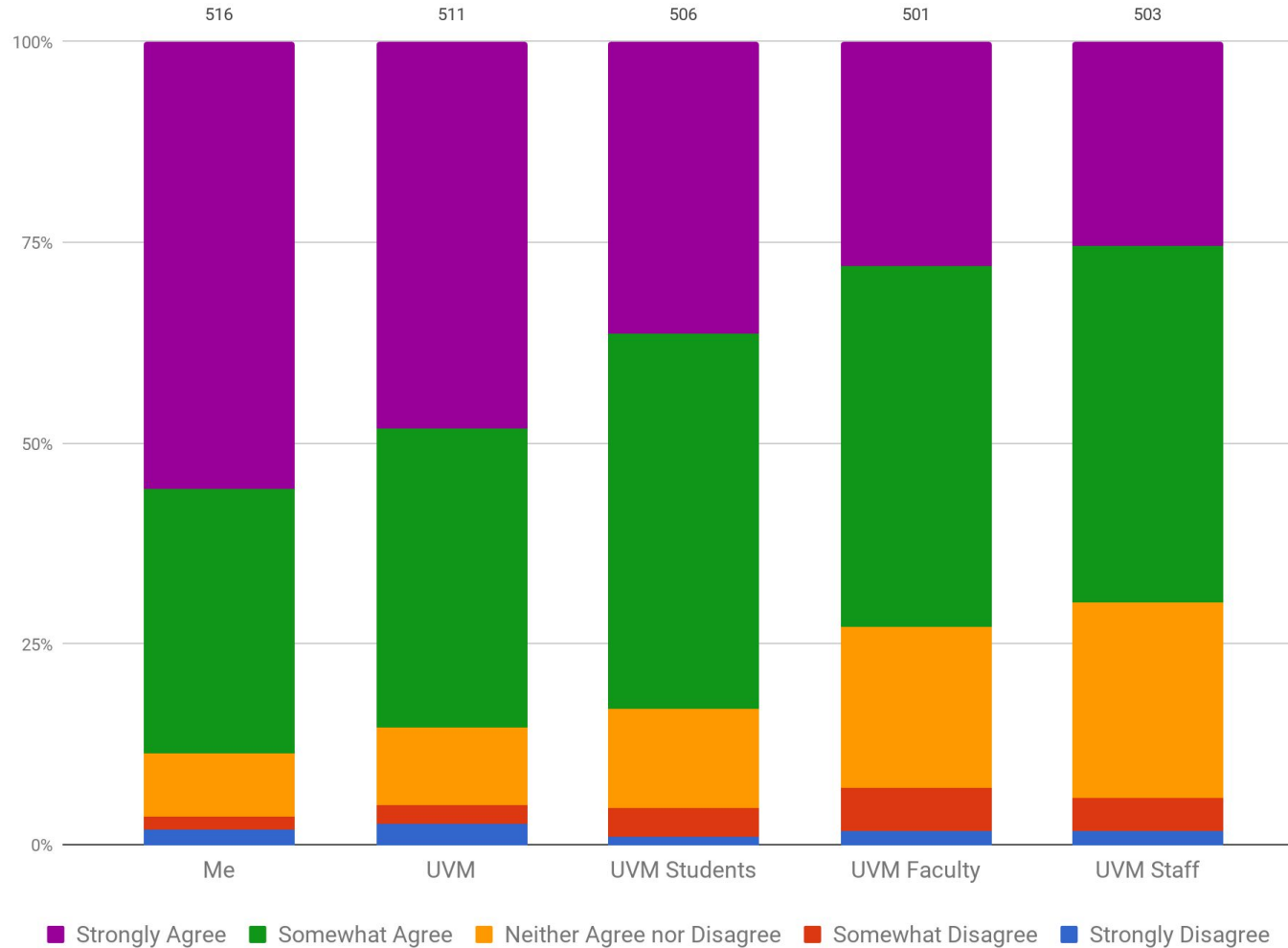
- sex: 66% female
- affiliation: staff are overrepresented, undergraduates are underrepresented

Representative

- class year
- units (employees)
- colleges (students)
- race (students)

Results: Importance of Sustainability

Sustainability is important to...



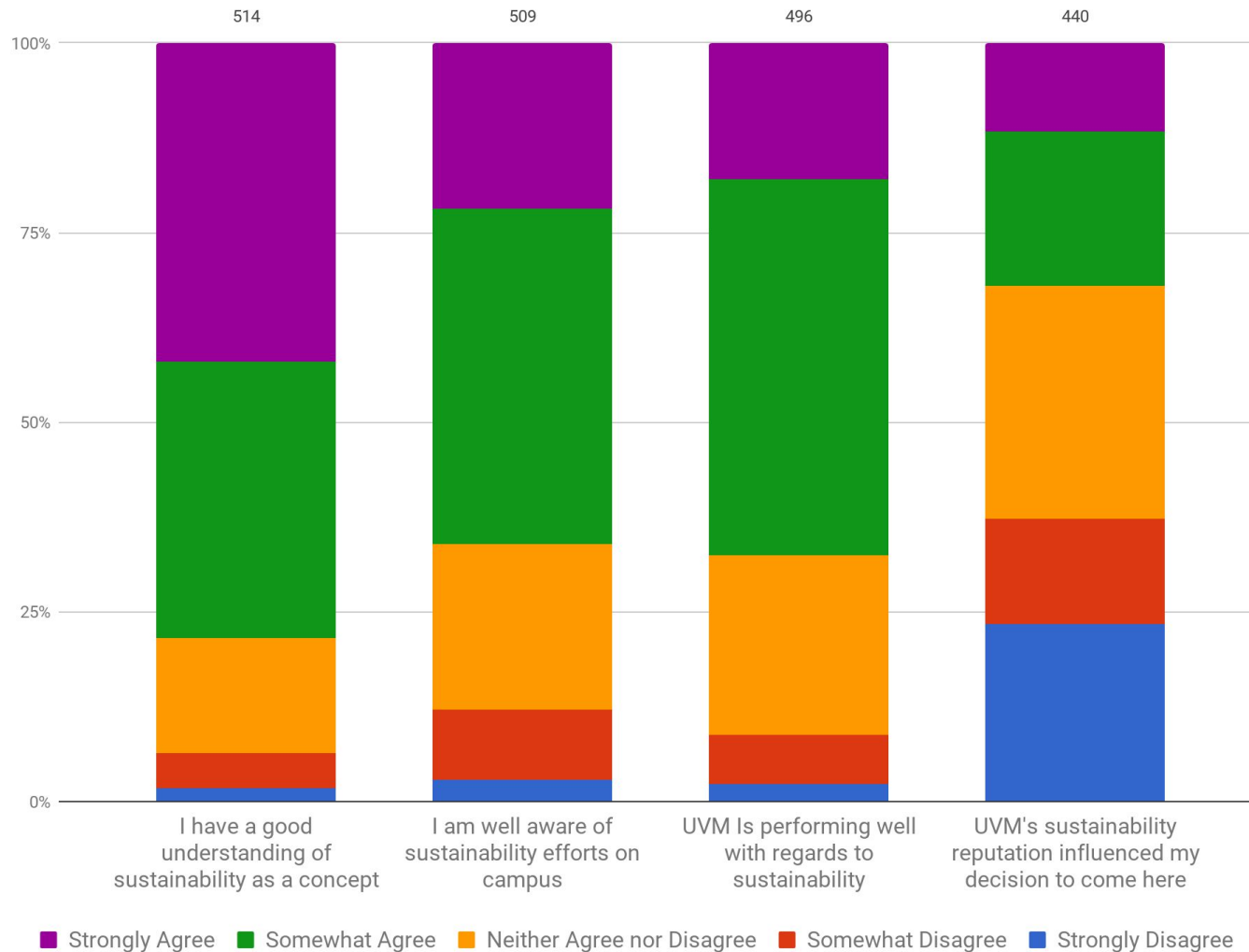
Highlights:

Perception that sustainability is more important to “me” and UVM as a whole than any other specific population segment

Average Ranking of Population Segment by Population Segment

| Order of Importance (from most to least) | Students | Faculty | Staff |
|---|-------------------|----------|----------|
| | Me & UVM (tie) | Me | Me |
| | | UVM | UVM |
| | Faculty | Students | Students |
| | Staff | Faculty | Staff |
| | Students | Staff | Faculty |

Results: Sustainability Attitudes & Awareness

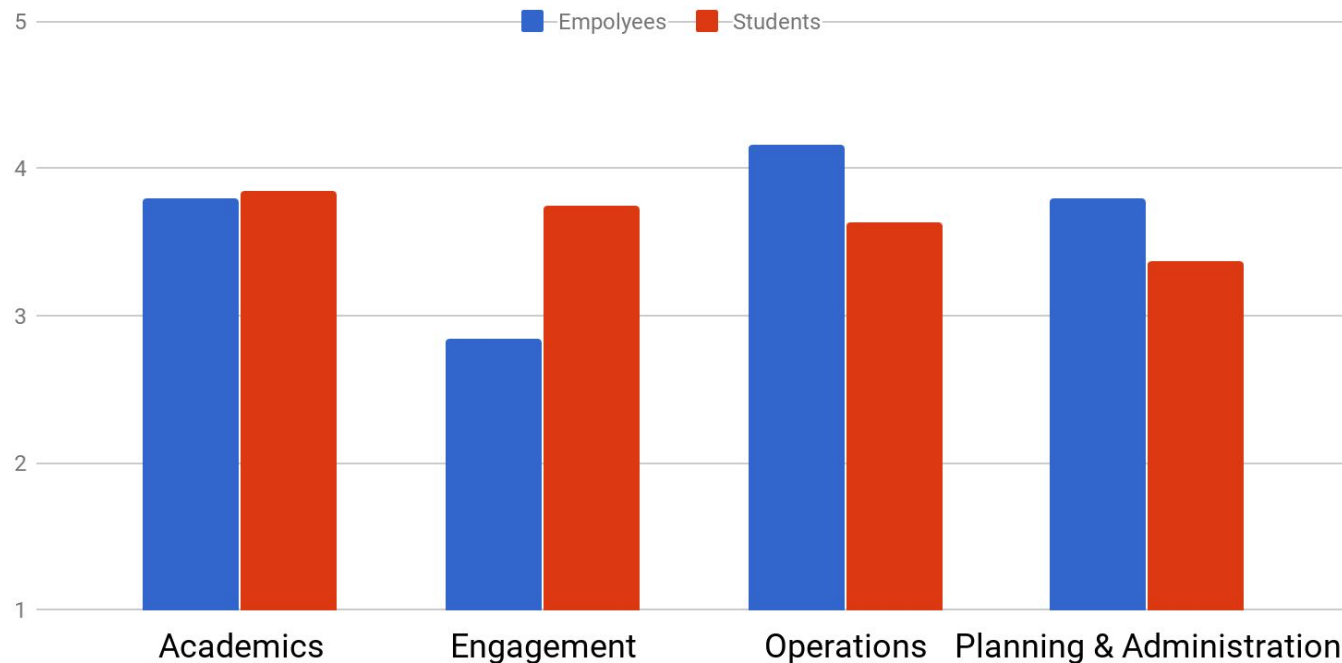


Highlights:

- Strong understanding of sustainability as a concept but less known about efforts on campus. Yet, perception of campus performance is still positive.
- Sustainability is a factor in students (42%) choosing UVM but is not for employees (21%).

Results: Perceived Performance

UVM is performing well in these areas in regards to sustainability.



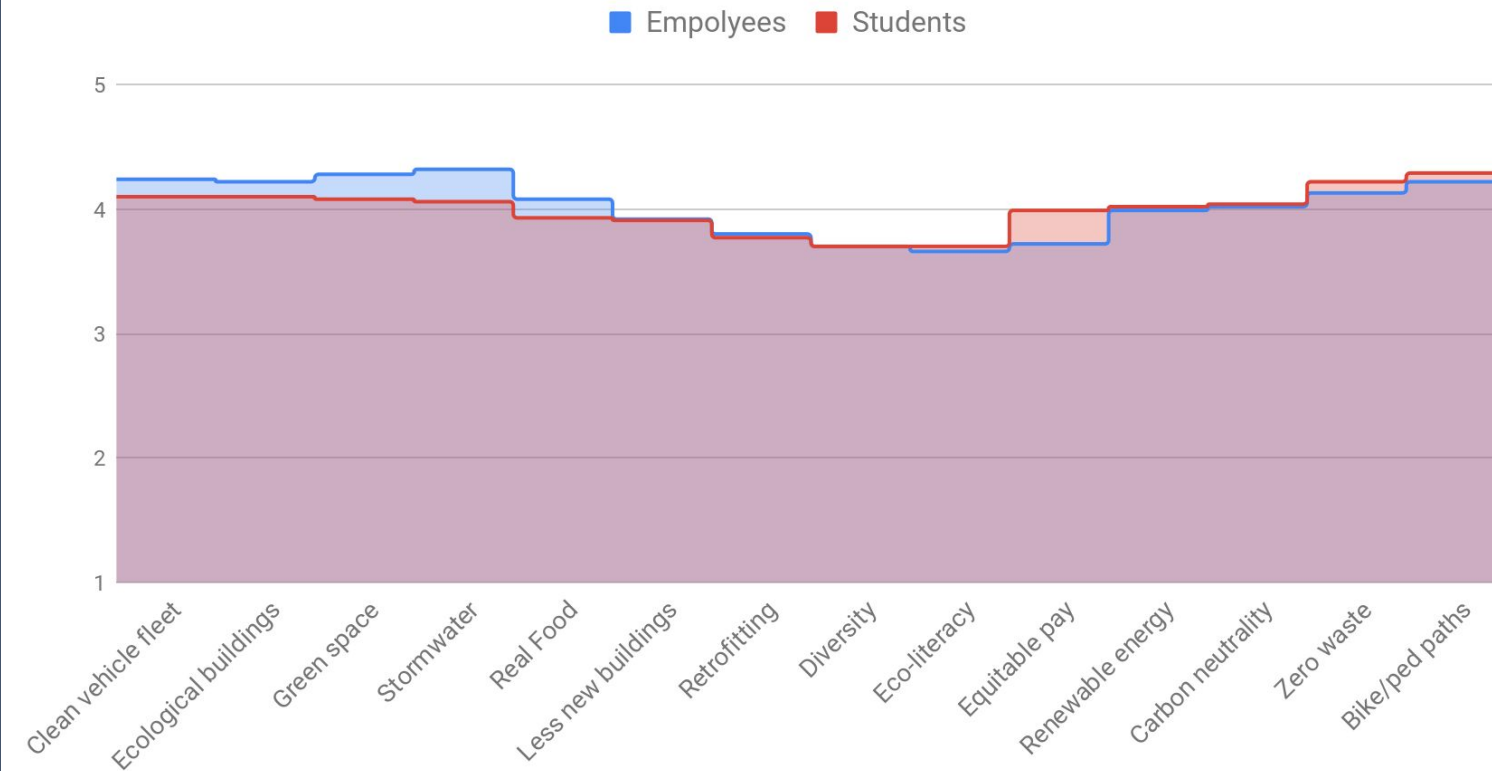
Highlights:

Perception matches exposure

- Employees are not the audience for existing sustainability outreach
- Students have less exposure to operations and planning than employees
- UVM's strong academic reputation for sustainability is understood universally

Results: Vision Statements

These actions are important to advancing sustainability at UVM:

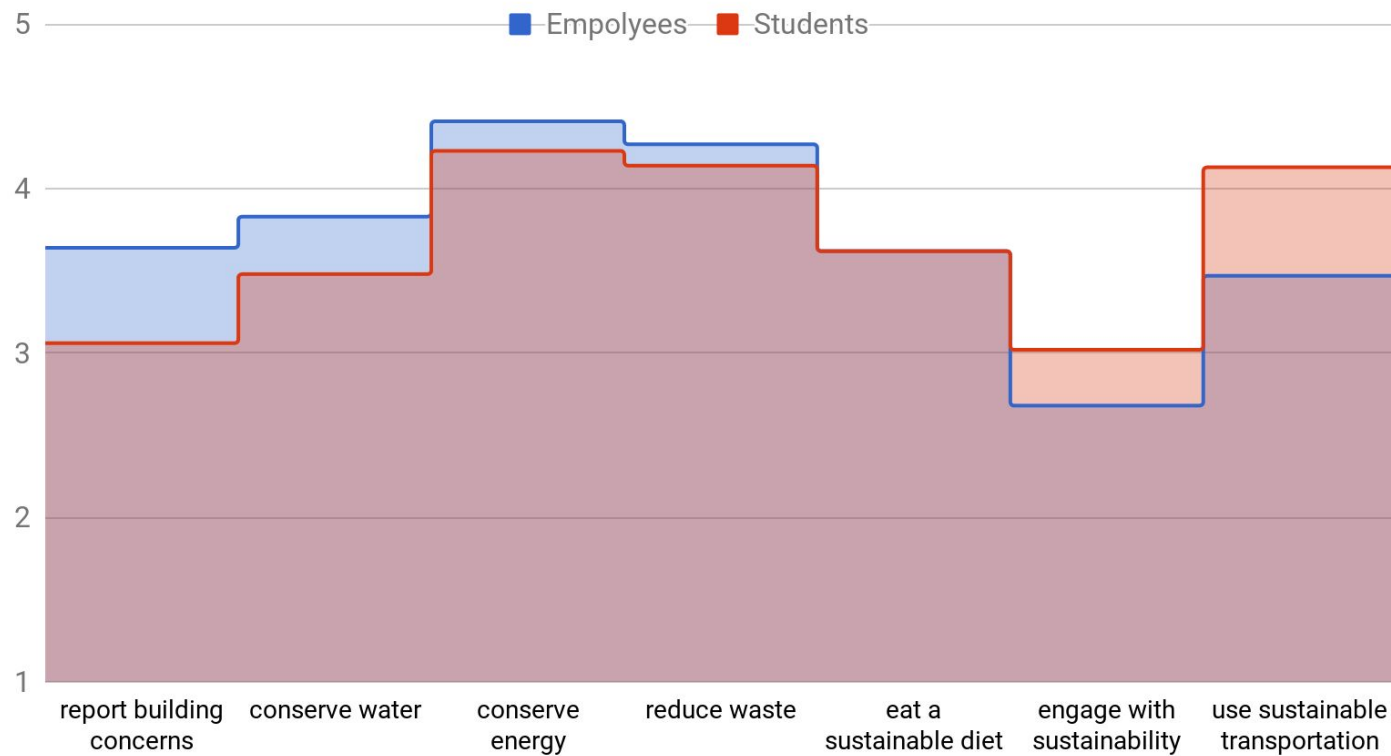


Highlights:

- No actions are considered neutral or unimportant
- Social actions may not be seen as connected to sustainability (pay, diversity)
- Literacy may not be seen as an “action”
- Of most importance overall: green spaces, stormwater landscaping, zero waste, bike/pedestrian paths

Results: Behaviors

I regularly...

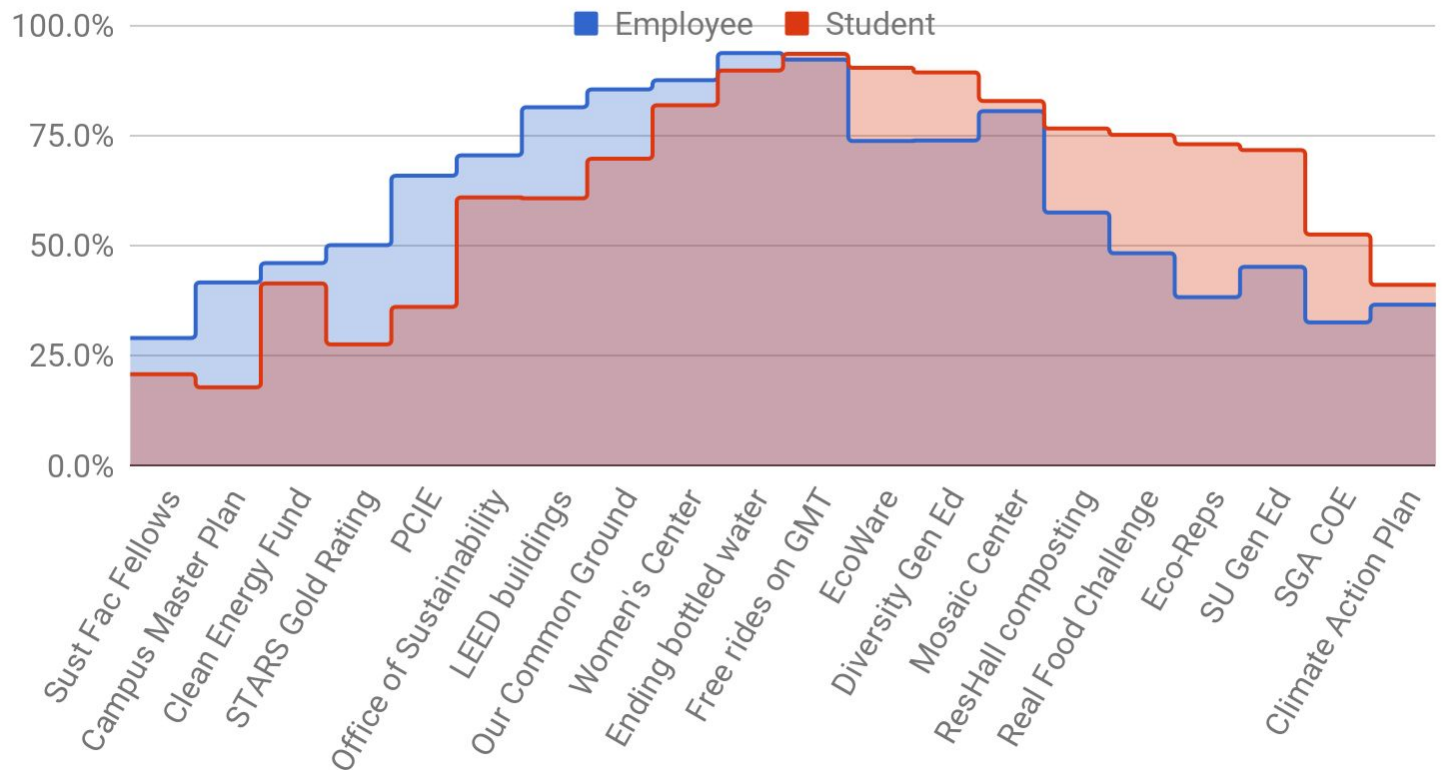


Highlights:

- Employees are more likely to conserve water and report building or facility concerns.
- Less employee engagement (ex: attending an event) with sustainability. Possibly because more opportunities are designed for students.
- Most students live on or close to campus (low commuter population) and this shorter travel distance allows for more sustainable transportation methods than employees who generally live further away.

Results: Program Reach

Prior to taking this survey, were you aware of the following?



Overall awareness: students = 62.8%, staff = 61.6%, faculty = 60.8%

Highlights:

- More than 80% of employees and students know about:
 - Free rides on GMT buses
 - Ending bottled water sales
 - Women's Center
 - Mosaic Center
- Awareness aligns with target audience of programs.
- Highest overall awareness among students followed by staff, then faculty. Aligned with how much time each population spends on campus.
- Respondents who were not well aware of sustainability efforts on campus were also less aware of these programs.

Emerging Themes From General Comments

180 employee comments (72.6%) | 145 student comments (74.4%)

Engagement

Transparency: sense of greenwashing, a misrepresentation of UVM's performance and commitment to sustainability

Outreach: interest in hearing more about existing initiatives and how to get involved

Academics

Sustainability General Education Requirement: some faculty and students dislike components of this, including designation process and learning outcome effectiveness

Operations

Buildings: employee concerns about deferred maintenance related to energy use, health and safety

Food: interest in plant-based menus and sustainable procurement.

Transportation: support for alternative transportation infrastructure and dis/incentives

Waste: support for zero waste initiatives but concern about health impacts after ending bottled water sales

Planning & Administration

Policy: some sense that high level decisions are often incongruent with UVM sustainability values

Finance: concern about unsustainable tuition costs and interest in fossil fuel divestment

Diversity: split opinion about whether diversity is a component of sustainability

Conclusions



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Changing Culture: key findings from past surveys & from 2018

| Then | Key Finding | Now (2018) |
|-------------|--|---|
| 2000 | On average, <50% of students had an opinion or knew about UVM's commitments to sustainable activities | 72.7% of students and 65.6% of employees believe they are well aware of sustainability efforts on campus |
| 2009 | <p>Students most value: ecologically designed buildings; local and organic food systems; ample green space; systems thinking and problem-based learning courses</p> <p>Employees most value: policies and practices that foster quality of life; ecologically designed buildings</p> | <p>Students most value: ecologically designed buildings; clean vehicle technologies; waste reduction; bike/pedestrian paths</p> <p>Employees most value: clean vehicle technologies; campus green spaces; functional landscaping for stormwater</p> |
| 2017 | Students are supportive of sustainability efforts but concerned about greenwashing | Students and employees want more transparency and better communication |

Conclusions

Research Question: What are the sustainability-related values/beliefs, sustainability-related behaviors and level of awareness of campus sustainability initiatives of UVM students and employees?

Values & Beliefs

Sustainability is valued amongst students, staff and faculty. Each group perceives the others to value sustainability as well.

Employees don't believe UVM is performing well around sustainability engagement.

Behaviors

Sustainability is a factor for many students in choosing UVM but rarely is for employees.

Engagement with sustainability topics is less regular than practicing of sustainable behaviors.

Awareness

Students are slightly more aware of sustainability programming than employees.

Social justice component of sustainability is not understood as well as environmental aspects.

Opportunity Areas

Communication gap shows up in multiple places and is a crosscutting opportunity for improvement.

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Next
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Office of Sustainability Response

- Design and implement Employee Sustainability Ambassadors Program
- Offer sustainability content for employees through Professional Development & Training
- Be intentional and explicit about naming and explaining the social justice component of sustainability in/of our work (presentations, strategic plans, Eco-Reps training, marketing efforts, grant applications)
- Support sustainable transportation module requirement for all parking permit-seekers
- Continue pursuing communications support for OoS

What Now?

- Share findings with stakeholders (you!) to...
 - Increase OoS communication efforts
 - Help articulate specific concerns/accolades
 - Hear how this relates to your understanding or work
 - Seek feedback on design of future assessments