**University of West Georgia Sustainability Plan 2018-2021**

The UWG Sustainability Plan is produced by the UWG’s Center for Sustainability and is approved by UWG’s Sustainability Council. The plan focuses on goals to be achieved in the coming three years.

The 2018-2021 Sustainability Plan of the University of West Georgia is based on achieving sustainability goals in a broad range of areas. The goals and their measurement are based on categories and scoring as provided by the AASHE STARS 2.1 survey. The plan calls for at least a 5% improvement in the AASHE score achieved in each category of the AASHE STARS survey submitted in 2018 and a target of achieving a 15% increase in the overall score. Below is a list of the categories, with specific goals for each one:

**Curriculum**

The only way to significantly improve our performance with regard to curriculum (which is quite high already) is to increase the amount of courses being offered that have sustainability content and, most importantly, to increase the amount of degrees that have a sustainability learning outcome. Sustainability literacy assessments will have to be redeveloped as the old one will become defunct with the ending of UWG 1101 courses. Using the campus as a living laboratory is one of our strengths, which should be more formally embraced.

1. With regard to courses, continuing to offer professional development opportunities for faculty in how to incorporate sustainability themes into the curriculum will be important. Linking sustainability to the LEAP initiative will also be a priority, i.e. the focus on big themes and problem solving.
2. Learning objectives, on the other hand, are a tough nut to crack. Programs tend to minimize their objectives in order reduce the amount of assessment. Trying to get a sustainability focused course as a requirement for a specific program, college, or even for the entire University would be the ideal development. The best way to achieve this would probably be through a new QEP that has a sustainability theme. This avenue will be explored.
3. A new method needs to be found to asses a statistically significant group of students with regard to their sustainability literacy. This will require reaching out to the Social Sciences Center for Research and will cost money.
4. Lastly, efforts will be made to help facilitate learning laboratory initiatives via a webpage and faculty outreach.

There is a danger of losing points in the next three years, due to the loss of UWG 1101. A 10% improvement in the curriculum score should be achievable, however, a 40% increase would be achieved if sustainability education were made a mandatory part of every UWG student.

**Research**

There are only three credits in AASHE’s research credit.

1. Research in scholarship is difficult to influence as this is based on faculty preferences. However, an effort can be made to ensure that all research that is being done is captured. One idea would be to organize a mini-conference, where all sustainability research at UWG is presented. This may encourage more such research. Such a conference could be combined with a student sustainability research conference.
2. The Center should inquire about the possibility of including inter/cross/multidisciplinary work as a positive criteria for promotion and tenure.
3. The main emphasis should be in trying to establish “open access to research” policy at the UWG library. This will have to go through the Library and Senate.

Achieving an open access policy would boost our research score by 20%.

**Campus Engagement**

There are multiple avenues to improve campus engagement in Sustainability. Some are more feasible than others.

1. Student educator programs should be instituted for HRL. Ecoleaders also need to be regularly trained and encouraged to engage in targeted outreach campaigns. These campaigns need to be varied in their target, documented, and estimates of people reached should be offered.
2. Within three years sustainability should be a component of all student orientations. The best way to achieve this is to have UCM create a short 3 minute film on sustainability that can be shown at the various orientation sessions. Incoming students should also be emailed the sustainability handbook. Alternatively, sustainability themes can be incorporated into the existing Auxiliary film. Lastly, Brochures and training should be offered to HRL to ensure there is a sustainability component to the introduction of first year students to their dorms.
3. Possibilities will be explored to have a student rep participate in the highest governing body of the institution.
4. All employees should have exposure to sustainability by being given or being emailed the sustainability handbook. Perhaps the student orientation film could be used in employee orientation.
5. Professional development opportunities should be offered to staff in the form of online training and possibly face to face training.

Implementing most of these efforts would easily lead to a 50% increase in our campus engagement score.

**Public Engagement**

Most of the improvements here deal with community outreach, so a concerted effort will need to be made to link up with the Director of Community Engagement to see how we can tap into their efforts.

1. Community partnerships need to be encouraged and registered. An effort should be made to support partnerships that have a sustainability component – environmental, economic, and social. Including minority or underrepresented groups should be a priority.
2. Avenues should be explored for encouraging community service; possibly together with the Office of Community Engagement and the College of Social Sciences. A community service requirement, or at least an encouragement via a special recognition (on transcript for instance) would be very positive. Most improvement possibility exists in boosting community service.
3. An exploration will be conducted into the possibilities of having UWG advocate for sustainable public policy. If there are opening here, the Center for Sustainability could help in informing UWG in issues to take up.
4. UWG will be encouraged to join the Workers Rights Consortium or the Fair Labor Association.

A mandatory community service component would boost our public engagement score by more than 40%. Achieving the other goals here would result in another 40% boost. There is a lot of room for improvement here.

**Green Fee**

While not an official AASHE category, the possibility of instituting a green fee will continue to be explored and pursued. While the appetite for fees is immensely low right now, possibly this will change with time. A green fee should be a priority for UWG, as it would enable students to become involved in shaping the sustainability infrastructure on campus, and allow for investments that are popular even if they do not deliver the best return on investment.

**Air and Climate**

Improvement possibilities in this area are essentially limited to reducing green house gas emissions. This is a difficult thing to achieve, as the price of electricity is so low for UWG.

1. An effort will be made in setting guidelines for purchasing only energy efficient appliances and systems – see “Purchasing” below.
2. Facilities will be encouraged to make a concerted effort in transforming all lighting on campus to LED lighting.
3. Facilities will be encouraged to purchase systems that have built in solar components, such as HVAC pumps.
4. Solar systems that should be installed, whenever possible. If a green fee were instituted, a solar reinvestment scheme could be developed, in which savings from solar are directly reinvested into buying more solar.
5. The possibility of building a solar farm on campus by a third party will continue to be explored.
6. Purchasing or managing offsets will be explored, for instance renewable energy certificates.

While improvements require real resources, there is a lot of room for improvement. UWG received just 38% of this AASHE credit.

**Buildings**

Improvements in this area are very much curtailed by the fact that LEED certification can no be pursued with state monies.

1. The Center for Sustainability will work with facilities to study the viability of the Peach Certification system and consider moving to Green Globes.
2. Facilities should ensure that an energy and water benchmarking and management system is in place for all buildings.

UWG achieves less than 30% of the building credit, which will be hard to improve on without LEED certifications.

**Energy**

The energy initiatives overlap with the greenhouse gas efforts.

1. An effort will be made in setting guidelines for purchasing only energy efficient appliances and systems – see “Purchasing” below.
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5. The possibility of building a solar farm on campus by a third party will continue to be explored.
6. Purchasing or managing offsets will be explored, for instance renewable energy certificates.

UWG currently gets less than 30% of the energy credit and it will be difficult to improve without real investments in alternative energy.

**Food Dining**

With the switch in in house dining provision, there should be opportunities to pursue sustainable dining initiatives. These, however, cost money, which has been a significant damper on our progress in this area as Dine West is committed to keeping costs down. The key to improving in this area is to increase the purchase of certified sustainable products and buying from small, regional producers, especially with regard to meat.

1. The Center for Sustainability will work with Dine West to develop a sustainable dining policy
2. The Center for Sustainability will explore ways UWG can support the local farmers market
3. The Center for Sustainability will work with Dine West to explore the creation of sustainability events, such as sustainability themed meals, low impact dining event, and other outreach and education efforts.
4. The Center for Sustainability will work with Dine West to explore which part of its purchasing could be made more sustainable with the least impact on cost.

UWG receives less than 12% of the dining credit. There is a real need and possibility to improve this credit by at least 20% by pursuing the above efforts.

**Grounds**

There are limited number of ways to improve sustainability in grounds management, and our current performance is already quite good.

1. A key effort will be to have parts of the UWG campus be designated an arboretum via arbnet.
2. Related to the above, the Center will strive to have clear guidelines included in the campus master plan regarding development in areas that are currently natural areas, especially areas with trees.
3. The Center will work with grounds to explore the viability of pursuing an organic program in grounds management.

Due to our high score here already, the only way to improve by another 25% would be to implement an organic grounds management system for the entire campus.

**Purchasing**

There are a number of opportunities to improve sustainability purchasing at UWG. Some of these initiatives will require leadership from the administration.

1. Efforts will be made to create an institution wide sustainability purchasing policy that builds in sustainability considerations in all procurement.
2. Facilities will be encouraged to adopt life cycle analysis as standard procedure for all energy and water systems.
3. Efforts will be made to create sustainability specific criteria for purchasing in IT, food services, transportation and fuels, and paper.
4. More specifically IT will be asked to establish an EPEAT only purchasing policy and paper purchased centrally should have a minimum recycle content.

Purchasing decision are somewhat hobbled by USG requirements, but there are several options for improvement. Currently UWG gets less than 15% of this credit, this could relatively easily be brought up to 75% if the above efforts were to result in implementation.

**Transportation**

Transportation improvement are difficult as most of them are based on getting more employees and students to campus without using cars. Given the way Carrollton is planned, this is challenging. There are a number of initiatives that can be pursued, however.

1. First off, a new survey on transportation needs to be conducted to gauge how everyone gets to campus
2. Implementing a carpooling system, like Zimride will be explored.
3. Increasing bike racks and bike outreach will be pursued.
4. Preferred parking for carpool or e-vehicles will be explored
5. Incentives for living close to campus will be explored
6. Telecommuting policies will be explored
7. Guidelines for purchasing only fuel efficient cars in the fleet will be explored

UWG gets about 15% of the transportation credit. This can certainly be improved by 10% if some the incentives above were implemented. Changing the dynamics of how people get to campus, however, will be a long term effort, made even more difficult by the fact that more and more students commute from Atlanta.

**Waste**

While UWG does not perform terribly with regard to waste – thanks mostly to a reuse and recycling program – there is a lot of room for improvement.

1. One of the biggest challenges in measuring improvement here is that we have no way to measure the waste in dumpsters being pulled out by the city. Facilities will work to find a way to quantify this amount.
2. Measurement and waste labor could be addressed by moving to a “Big Belly” system. This options should be explored, with and analysis on pricing and impact.
3. Recycling has stagnated and should be rejuvenated, hopefully with the hire of a more senior recycling officer. Concerted efforts should be made to capture recyclables in HRL and particularly during move in and move out.
4. Move out cooperation with Good Will needs to be revisited. Any reuse of items via a move out program should be assessed for weight diverted.
5. Electronics recycling should be further pursued for students and for the items that are not purchased in our re-use program. This could entail a greater collaboration with Southwire’s e-recycle events.
6. Any e-recycling programs should analyzed and options for certification under e-Stewards or R2 should be explored.
7. Facilities will be encouraged to develop a system to measure and hopefully recycle as much construction waste as possible.
8. Work will continue with Auxiliary to compost post-consumer waste from East Commons.

UWG scores less than 40% on the waste credit. The score could quite easily be improved by 20% if just some of the above initiatives were executed.

**Water**

The only measurements with regard to sustainable water use deal with consumption and rainwater management.

1. UWG needs to continue its efforts to reduce its water use by pursuing a water management plan that seeks to reduce water use. Having requirements on low water usage for new and renovated systems will be critical.
2. Finding ways to reuse gray water in new constructions needs to be explored.
3. Facilities will be encouraged and assisted in creating a rainwater management plan that requires EPA Low Impact Development (LID) in any new constructions.

While UWG’s water credit score is not bad, the institution could improve its score by more 50% if it adopted LID practices.

**Diversity and Affordability**

With the creation of the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, UWG has made significant progress in social sustainability. The other large factor in this focus pertains to the number of low-income students who are served by UWG and the support they receive. Supporting low income students and diversity is the best way to improve the overall diversity/affordability goals; while this is already done to a great extent at UWG, a few targeted areas of improvement will be pursued.

1. Creating recruitment programs that specifically aim to capture underrepresented groups for student, staff, and faculty positions will be explored.
2. Counseling and mentoring for underrepresented faculty will be explored.
3. Efforts will be made to expose a greater portion of students, faculty, and staff to diversity training.
4. Efforts will be made to establish a campus pride index.

UWG’s score for the diversity and affordability credit is quite good, but could be improved at least by 10% if some of the above aims are realized.

**Investment and Finance**

Currently UWG does not have any sustainability efforts in place with regard to investment and finance. The possibilities of working with the UWG Foundation in this regard are significant, while realizing that some of the aims here may fly in the fact of standard operating procedure with regard to investment.

1. An effort will be made establish a committee on investor responsibility, preferably one that has staff, faculty, and student representation.
2. Possibilities will be explored in offering investment disclosures and making commitments to sustainable investments, for instance socially responsible mutual funds.

Seeing that UWG is currently getting no credit for sustainable investment and finance operations, there is a significant opportunity to raise the UWG’s overall sustainability score.

**Well Being and Work**

UWG does quite well in pursuing well being and good work practices as assessed by AASHE STARS. The biggest room for improvement has to do with income, particularly for the lowest paid. Some additional efforts can be made with well-being outreach to faculty and staff.

1. The upper administration will be asked to consider adopting a policy of providing a living wage to all non-student UWG employees, which is about $15 an hour.
2. Possibilities will be explored to establish wellbeing counseling and referral programs for faculty and staff.

Improvements in well being initiatives at UWG will not be easy to come by as they will require monetary resources. The biggest room for improvement lies in low income wages and offering well being services to staff and faculty. Bringing all workers up to a living wage (currently at 85%) would improve UWG’s score in this category by about 20%.