

Proposal for the Phased Development of a Center for Sustainability

Adapted from the 2005 Sustainability Task Force Final Report

Introduction

Environmental sustainability has emerged as a major concern facing college campuses nationwide. Sustainability - which incorporates concepts of environmental responsibility, economic prosperity, and social equality - is now a critical filter with which to evaluate operations and educational experiences. The university's pursuit of sustainability provides a mechanism to recognize numerous benefits, including cost savings; learning, research, and service opportunities; and collaboration between faculty, staff and students.

Background

Originating from a student proposal, an examination of campus resources was completed by a Provost-appointed Sustainability Task Force in the spring of 2005 (see attached Executive Summary). This task force submitted a set of recommendations with the objective of creating a Center for Sustainability to serve students, faculty, and staff as a centralized hub for coordinating sustainability activities and research. Nearly one year after the original recommendations were presented, there has been no significant progress towards the goals put forth by the Sustainability Task Force. However, support for the measures has grown among students, with leadership from student organizations contributing to the sustainability discussion.

Recommendations

To begin working towards the goal of a sustainable KU, the University of Kansas should employ a phased approach to implementing the Sustainability Task Force's proposal. Through such an approach, the University can begin laying the foundation for a Center for Sustainability in a cost-effective manner while addressing the recommendations originally presented. The initial phase will begin forming a hub for sustainability by:

1. Creating a full-time staff position with additional funding for a student hourly staff pool within the Environmental Stewardship Program to begin working towards the recommendations provided by the Sustainability Task Force.
2. Appointing a new Committee on the Environment (COE) to aid in establishing goals for a sustainable KU, providing recommendations to the Office of the Provost, and monitoring progress towards these goals.

Objectives

Staff and committee members will work together to reach the following set of objectives:

1. Research and establish indicators for sustainability at the University of Kansas.
2. Research and document baseline conditions utilizing those indicators.
3. Establish and prioritize goals for a sustainable KU.
4. Begin researching high priority projects related to goals.
5. Identify and promote student opportunities for sustainability education and research.
6. Promote basic concepts of sustainability among the campus community.
7. Begin developing a network of sustainability ambassadors.
8. Identify and pursue funding opportunities for sustainability research.

Implementation

Successful implementation will require collaboration between and among campus departments, with staff, committee members, and partnering entities playing specific roles in coordinating this effort. Partnerships with the Environmental Studies Program and the Center for Service Learning will aid in the development of opportunities for research and service.

Benefits

Support of this project creates a mechanism to recognize a range of benefits:

1. Establishes goals and develops strategies for cost-saving measures. Potential projects include:
 - a. Conserving energy in areas not currently addressed by the contract with ChevronTexaco
 - b. Conserving water by capturing runoff for irrigation
 - c. Reducing waste through thorough analysis of the campus waste stream
 - d. Reducing life-cycle costs of equipment through responsible purchasing guidelines
 - e. Reducing life-cycle costs of facilities through efficient design standards
 - f. Creating a collaborative campus-wide network to efficiently use existing resources
2. Creates opportunities for students to impact their campus through research and service.
3. Utilizes and enhances campus resources by coordinating existing education and research activities.
4. Fosters collaboration between academic departments, administrative units, and the student body.

5. Creates mutually beneficial partnerships with the Environmental Studies Program and Center for Service Learning.
6. Addresses the Board of Regents performance indicators to increase student service learning experiences and undergraduate research.
7. Addresses the environment component of the four research directions for KU announced in November 2005.
8. Addresses #1, #2, #5, and #6 of the Goals of General Education at KU.
9. Increases potential for acquiring grant funding for research and project implementation.
10. Promotes the University of Kansas as an environmentally and fiscally responsible institution.
11. Serves as a recruiting tool to attract students interested in sustainability.
12. Provides a system for evaluating environmental progress.

Conclusion

The proposed structure provides an opportunity for KU to establish goals for future growth and begin developing a hub to coordinate our valuable campus resources. The benefits of student research and service, combined with the collaborative relationships formed between campus departments will put the University of Kansas on the path to a sustainable future and make our campus more efficient and environmentally responsible.

Project Budget

	<i>Year 1</i>	<i>Year 2</i>
<i>Personnel</i>		
Full-Time Staff	\$54,725*	\$56,222*
Student Hourly	\$10,556*	\$16,890*
<i>OOE</i>		
Telecommunications	\$450	\$450
Office Supplies	\$400	\$400
Printing	\$1,000	\$1,000
Campus Events	\$2,000	\$2,000
Memberships	\$1,500	\$1,500
Travel	\$2,000	\$2,000
<i>Start-Up Costs</i>		
Computers/Printers/Software	\$1,900	
Telecommunications Set-Up	\$77	
Office Furniture	\$590	
Total	\$75,198	\$80,461

* Includes estimated fringe