

Sustainability Research Plan 2016-2018

Academic Sustainability Programs Office of the Provost Auburn University

Timeline of development

17 September 2015: Plan drafted by Dr. Nanette Chadwick, Director of Academic Sustainability Programs, and presented for comment to members of the Academic Sustainability Advisory Committee (ASAC), at the annual meeting.

Context: Developed in preparation for Auburn University's submission in early 2016, of credits for a rating in the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS) of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE, www.stars.aashe.org), based on credits for Sustainability Planning in the Stars 2.0 Technical Manual http://www.aashe.org/files/documents/STARS/2.0/stars_2.0_technical_manual.pdf

ASAC Members: Mike Kensler (Office of Sustainability), Amy Wright (Agriculture), Christian Dagg (Architecture), LaKami Baker (Business), Lisa Kensler (Education), Jeff Fergus (Engineering), Chris Anderson (Forestry), Kate Thornton (Human Sciences), Kathryn Flynn (Interdisciplinary Studies), Giovanna Summerfield (Liberal Arts), Chandana Mitra (Science and Math), Lorraine Wolf (Undergraduate Research), Nathan McWhirter (student representative)

12 October 2015: Revised plan presented for comment to Associate Provost of Undergraduate Studies, Dr. Constance Relihan.

20 October 2015: Finalized plan approved by the Director of Academic Sustainability Programs, adopted as a working plan for the next 3 years, and posted on the program website: http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/undergrad_studies/academic_sustainability/index.html

Overall long-term goals

Incorporate sustainability-related aspects into a large proportion of research and scholarly activities in all colleges on campus, involving a large proportion of faculty and students.
Establish an interdisciplinary umbrella unit (institute, center) for sustainability research.

Short-term goals, to achieve over the next 3 years (2016-2018)

(A) Sustainability-related research activity across colleges

Objective #1: Ever-expanding number and proportion of faculty engaged in sustainability-related research, within each department and college.

Deliverable: Both the number and proportion of faculty conducting sustainability-related research projects increases in all departments and colleges at each 3-year assessment.

NOTE: Both the number of faculty (72 to 112) and departments (25 to 46) involved in sustainability-related research increased by ~ 50%, between the 2010-12 and 2013-13 assessment periods; see research inventories posted online at: http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/undergrad_studies/academic_sustainability/activities2015.html

(B) Funding and incentives for sustainability-related research

Objective #1: Explore the potential to pilot a program for provision of seed funding for new, interdisciplinary sustainability-related research projects on campus, involving both faculty and student support.

Measurable: Examine seed funding programs for sustainability research at other universities, as well as the structure of the current Intramural Grants Program (IGP) and Undergraduate Research Fellowships (URF) at Auburn. Develop a proposal and budget for a sustainability research seed grant (SRSP) program at Auburn, coordinated with, or perhaps as a subset of the IGP and/or URF. Include award guidelines for student and faculty support, review committee composition and procedures, etc. Present proposal for comment to ASAC, Provost Office, and Office of the Vice President for Research. Frame the proposal as a one-time budget request at close of the fiscal year. If funded, proceed to administer the program, evaluate, modify, and seek long-term funding.

(C) Interdisciplinary, sustainability-related research in tenure and promotion

Objective #1: Explore the inclusion of interdisciplinary, and optimally, sustainability-related research activity, as part of the official review process for faculty promotion and tenure.

Measurable: Meet with appropriate parties on campus to discuss the potential addition to the faculty handbook, of a section on how to include interdisciplinary and sustainability-related research activities as a distinct category in the faculty portfolio/CV for promotion and tenure. Explore how and to what extent the evidence of these types of activities would be considered to enhance the faculty member's portfolio. Use the recent addition of consideration of faculty Outreach Activities in this process, as a precedent.