**Welcome and Introductions**

**Members:** Kate Binder, Bill Davis, Chris Caprara, Anne Copeland, Mervyn Elliott, Harold Glasser, Jamie Hirsh, Carla Koretsky, Leah Omillon Hodges, Heather McGee, Tim Palmer, Paul Pancellla, Mary Peterson, Dave Reinhold, Pete Strazdas, Jeff Spoelstra, Caroline Webber, Joe Wilson  
**Guests:** Leigha Jones, Kim Juwong

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**Procedural Items**

**Approval of Minutes**  
Previous meeting minutes were provided by e-mail and were accepted by the committee without modification.

**Approval of Agenda**  
The committee accepted the draft agenda without modification.

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**Updates/Discussions**

- Committee members interested in suggesting or arranging PUSC campus sustainability tours are encouraged to contact Jeff Spoelstra (e.g., solar arrays, power plant).
- Bill Davis reminded committee members of the current call for student artwork for Spare | Change The Art of Climate exhibit.
- Matt Hollander, former Coordinator of Sustainability Projects, has left to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors.

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**Sustainability Award**

Should WMU create and present a sustainability award to provide recognition for any university or community member doing notable work in sustainability? If the committee agrees to produce an award – what should the process look like? Since the definition of sustainability is broad how would recycling efforts compare to food and social justice issues or other sustainability programs? Committee members interested in producing and presenting such an award are encouraged to come forward.

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**Michigan Good Food Charter**

Dr. Webber presented committee members with information from Michigan Good Food, a policy initiative centered on the Michigan Good Food Charter. The initiative aims to promote policy changes that will advance "good food" in Michigan - food that is healthy, green, fair and affordable. Its mission is to coordinate a grassroots process of developing specific goals for Michigan's food system that would promote equity, sustainability and a thriving economy across the state. The Michigan State University Center for Food Systems, the Kellogg Foundation as well as other groups and individuals in the state have signed the resolution supporting the charter. Dr. Webber asked whether the PUSC as a representative group of WMU faculty and staff would like to sign the resolution of support. In discussion, it was determined that the language in the resolution was unclear about whether signing the resolution would mean active change in WMU policies and procedures (purchasing for example) or if the resolution merely indicates a level of social support. It was determined that further discussion within groups such as dining services, WSA, GSAC, environmental studies, health and human services, and interdisciplinary programs is needed. The committee agreed to entertain a vote on a future resolution that could be included in a package of supporting materials for President Dunn’s consideration.
Sustainability Indicators Goals/Review
In the 2009 WMU Strategic Sustainability Initiatives Report, the PUSC recognized the need for a campuswide sustainability report with a small number of key indicators that are directly tied to policy and practice. The Office for Sustainability 2012 Highlights report provides a broad overview of projects, initiatives and sustainability achievements within the WMU community. The OfS has taken meaningful steps to develop and research some indicators and will incorporate them in future campuswide sustainability reporting. The objective of the discussion today is to gather meaningful input to use to develop additional qualitative and quantitative indicators. The goal of a campuswide sustainability report is to transparently document, track, and celebrate WMU sustainability efforts.

Reporting progress in sustainability consistent with PUSC plans and WMU strategic planning is necessary whether or not sustainability rating systems, like Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Reporting (STARS), are institutionalized.

Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Reporting Systems Update
STARS working groups have completed an initial “readiness assessment” and “action plan”. WMU is on track to register and generate a STARS report during calendar year 2014 with anticipated submission for an official STARS rating in December 2014. The STARS action plan was shared by e-mail prior to today’s meeting. The STARS 2.0 credit summary table was handed out for review (attached).

There is still some uncertainty about who will enter online data that ultimately generates the STARS report during calendar year 2014.

Education and Research Credits
The PUSC generated definitions of “sustainability related” and “sustainability focused” coursework. A subcommittee led by Dawn Gaymer recommended restructuring and digitizing the PARS in order to conduct an inventory of sustainability in all courses and across research using the PUSC generated definitions. Issue - Can we create a structure that works for all faculty within the university in a way that data available to the university are open and transparent? Such data could foster research collaborations. It is unclear at this time whether any next steps have been taken at the STARS Executive Committee.

The committee indicated that other efforts should be noted when considering education and research credits including the new Freshwater Studies undergraduate program, the recent Lyceum Lecture Series, Climate Change Study Group efforts to infuse climate change into coursework and create research collaborations, and efforts toward the formation of the Center for Research on Instructional Change in Postsecondary Education.

Jamie Hirsh continues her work researching core competencies in learning for sustainability, undergraduate and graduate programming, and learning outcomes.

All of these efforts are leading to an increase in sustainability research and coursework but how do we measure success and advancement in our students consistent with the WMU strategic plan? What are the indicators?

Sustainability Goals Review
The committee was provided with PUSC approved sustainability goals for review and consideration (attached). The OfS provided examples of progress and solicited additional input from committee members.


Goal 2) Innovative strategies and policies - Harold indicated that WMU has already committed to two structured indicators 1) greenhouse gas inventory; 2) solid waste reduction. Additional indicator discussions are expected as we begin to implement the Climate Action Plan. Other efforts mentioned by the committee to consider include Sangren Hall solar panels, non-motorized transportation policy, innovative financing, tobacco free campus policy, electric vehicles and charging infrastructure, sustainable food systems, and stormwater retention projects.
Goal 3) Efforts mentioned include StART, StART-II/FLC, Sustainability Studio, aquaponics pilot project, sustainability idea database, sustainability library, and sustainability speaker series.

Goal 4) Efforts mentioned include research focused initiatives within climate change and freshwater studies, designing the new Gibbs House permaculture layout, and asset database development.

Goal 5) Efforts mentioned include the Environmental Studies Program changing its name to include sustainability and updating its programming including recent hire in ecological design and sustainability.

Goal 6) Efforts mentioned include the Wesustain student internship program, honors students, Gibbs fellows, Student Sustainability Grant process and project assistance. A potential indicator includes the number and quality of applicants to several programs of these OfS programs.

Goals 7) This area is both promising and challenging. It ties directly to a STARS credit item, sustainability literacy assessment. Our best practice review suggests no easy way to institute a sustainability literacy assessment.

Heather asked if there has been discussion of an undergraduate sustainability “honor” recognizing a mix of coursework, research experience, hands-on projects, internships, etc. The OfS is developing such a recognition for Wesustain Interns.

Harold said that the provost has prioritized two major efforts including the development of a graduate level sustainability certificate program and the infusion of sustainability into the General Education (GE) program. Harold and Paul Farber have been meeting for some time primarily on the certificate program but also considering GE.

Dave said that there is a faculty senate committee exploring reforms in GE. Any change must go through the faculty senate. Historically this takes about 3 years, sometimes longer. Whether faculty want sustainability in GE is an open question, but Dave says that sustainability is a topic of discussion given its presence in key strategic planning documents. He recommends that this group get involved in the process. We should review places that already have sustainability assessments in place. A recent example includes Wisconsin Oshkosh where their revised GE includes three “quests”, one of which is sustainability. Every student takes a common sustainability course.

Dave suggested that developing a graduate certificate is more straightforward and requires getting faculty together and putting in a proposal. There are challenges with approvals for interdisciplinary programs involving more than a 2-3 colleges. Harold asked if the provost’s prioritization could lead to more involvement between the PUSC and the faculty senate committee? Dave suggested that the committee will regularly report out to the full faculty senate and that he recommends attending the faculty senate meetings.

Jamie found that most schools have disappointing sustainability literacy assessment programs with very few examples of pre- and post-assessments.

The group discussed how to assess sustainability literacy beyond just counting courses:

- Exams to earn a special graduation honor (e.g., cord).
- Create an undergraduate version of a competency exam based on the sustainability work that students did – tests can be designed to allow the students to pick the questions that are relevant to their field of study or experience.
- Students could develop a portfolio that is assessed by faculty against criteria or learning outcomes.
- A sustainability learning outcome(s) would need to be generated to measure against.
- It may be necessary to decentralize the definition of sustainability by college, or the learning outcomes – one size does not fit all.

Bill pointed out that to measure what is learned we need to know what students know when they arrive. The FLC is trying to understand sustainability in each of their fields. Some are looking toward accrediting bodies that aren’t themselves ready. Some are looking toward their students to try to determine a baseline. It would be great to give the final exam on the first day and on the last day. Some are recognizing the lack of basic sustainability awareness and exposure in K-12.

Goal 8) Efforts mentioned include STARS, StART, and STAR Communities, which advances community indicators and complements previous work conducted at WMU with the Maureen Hart series in 2010. Participants in that series
identified the need for strategic collaboration on regional sustainable development, and sustainability indicators. The OfS is exploring bikeshare opportunities for campus and the surrounding community (link).

Goal 9) Efforts mentioned include OfS and PUSC efforts to build teams across campus, and the OfS is seeking diverse funding opportunities.

Goal 10) Efforts mentioned include the Student Sustainability Survey, the OfS website, the 2012 highlights report, and today’s exploration of additional indicators.

**OPEN DISCUSSION**

Dave said that the GE committee has taken the Essential Learning Outcomes from AAC&U, as well as 7 from another highly regarded publication, and tried to map those to the Academic Affairs and University Strategic Plans. The committee recognizes sustainability as a key area because of its prominence in strategic planning documents. The Provost asked the committee to report out progress to the faculty senate in the Fall.

Harold is working with the AAC&U on an article on sustainability learning outcomes.

There is interest in using external advisors from places where students might get jobs as a model of assessment. The freshwater studies program is considering this model. Engineering does this. And the OfS will host a student/employer panel discussion with the Southwest Michigan Sustainable Business Forum in the near future.

Mary suggested that we consider whether it would be possible during the admissions process to assess the sustainability literacy of applicants. Carla suggested the creation of a sustainability module, similar to the “responsible alcohol use” module that new students are required to take. Jody has shown interest in the idea of a module before.

Given that any GE reforms might take several years, it may be uncertain to make a useful plan for pre- and post-testing.

Members gave examples of program level pre- and post-testing:

- Political science tests during senior baccalaureate writing class, a capstone course.
- Geosciences has something similar during students final audits, though it is not a requirement for graduation. Geosciences also has embedded substantial sustainability content across its courses.
- Some indicated that they had been discouraged in their departments from this sort of pre- and post-testing or exit examination even for their own internal assessment needs.

Dave suggested that it is easier to incorporate this kind of testing into senior capstone classes in reasonable size departments.

Other considerations were voiced:

- Skepticism for a one-size-fits all approach or set of learning outcomes and sustainability definitions.
- A suggestion that keyword searches of written documents are possible to assess the depth of sustainability understanding.
- In-depth interviewing is very valuable, but like the portfolio idea, requires considerable time and effort and may not be practical for thousands of students a year.
- We can’t forget the life experience and barriers faced by some student that come to us from overseas.
- Consider implementing in one college at a time to spend time customizing sustainability literacy assessments by college.
- Make sustainability goals mean something (e.g., relevance for future employment).

Harold indicated that the OfS can take on the task of conducting a tentative exploration of best practices in sustainability literacy assessment. How do we provide useful information to the faculty senate group? Anyone interested in a subcommittee on this subject? We are likely initiating a new FLC again in the future, and it could be pursued there. Bill and Heather are willing to introduce this idea to the current FLC.

Bill suggested a model - what if freshman take a sustainability module in their first year then again at the end of their GE. Then, when students choose a major, their home departments can use that baseline assessment for reference and
comparison to sustainability assessments that are more tailored.

Pete pointed out the low point value of literacy assessment in STARS. Perhaps starting in one department makes the most sense. Harold reminded the group that we are trying to meet the 10 goals for universitywide sustainability.

Denise suggested that representatives (e.g., PUSC, FLC) be designated to attend faculty senate meetings; HG indicated he will attend. If anyone else would like to volunteer to attend please let Jeff Spoelstra know.

Harold noted that if changes to GE really can take 3-7 years, it gives us time to ponder today’s discussion, connect with the Faculty Senate group, and back-cast a strategy. Ideas have been raised here including modules, research, FYS, and formal faculty senate interaction.

Motion to adjourn Webber. Seconded Keele. Adjourned.

Next meeting: September 19, 2013, 3-5 p.m. in the Office for Sustainability