

DISCUSSION ITEM

Senate Task Force on Sustainability Recommendations April 2017

Membership: Chris Briggs (Biology), Ashley Haines (History), Ignacio Sardinas (Architecture), and Chisato Uyeki, Chair (Library).

Purpose: To develop Academic Senate recommendations on the integration of sustainability and climate neutrality into (1) the curriculum and educational experiences for all students, and (2) into professional development for faculty in order to fulfill the campus commitment to climate neutrality. The role of the task force is to recommend actions to ensure sustainability, carbon neutrality, and climate resilience are part of the curriculum and educational experiences for all students.

Background: In 2014 the Academic Senate passed Senate Resolution 14-05, in support of the college joining the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), now called Second Nature's Carbon Commitment. In August 2014, President Scroggins signed this climate commitment. The commitment affirms that climate change affects all parts of the world and all people. By making this commitment, Mt. SAC, along with more than 600 other higher-ed institutions, has taken on an obligation to provide leadership and guidance through education on environmental sustainability. The Academic Senate created this task force to make recommendations on implementing the Climate Commitment components that are academic and professional, and therefore are under the purview of the Academic Senate. Recommendations passed by the Senate will be integrated into the Mt. SAC Climate Action Plan.

Methods of consultation: The task force held in-person meetings on September 9, October 7, October 21, December 9 (2016), and March 24, 2017. The group also shared electronic documents and exchanged e-mail messages.

Informational Findings: The task force found that educating students on climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, environmental sustainability, and climate adaptation can and should be addressed across a diverse range of disciplines at the community college. The related skills and knowledge gained will be vital in the workforce:

“From business practices to ecosystem management, from community planning to law, from architecture to health care, trained professionals who understand the impacts of climate change and the best practices for responding to them will be vitally needed as communities and citizens face the realities of changing climate.” (Second Nature, *Higher Education's Role in Adapting to a Changing Climate*, p. 12)

Sustainability is already integrated into the College Mission as a commitment to educating students to “become productive members of a diverse, sustainable, global society,” and as a commitment to the community through “active civic engagement.” The Institutional Level Outcomes (ILOs) state expectations for students' overall experience with the college. ILO #4 speaks directly to environmental

sustainability, “Personal, Social, Civic, and Environmental Responsibility: Students demonstrate awareness and respect for personal, social, civic, and environmental responsibilities.”

Mt. SAC offers an Environmental Studies degree. Many courses across campus, including CTE courses, have already integrated content on sustainability and environmental issues.

Through Second Nature’s reporting system, task force members accessed Climate Action Plans from various institutions, particularly community colleges, to learn what and how other campuses are addressing the integration of sustainability into curriculum and into professional development. The task force members found that there are many different methods used to address integration, depending on the size of the institution, support for the integration and programs, and where the college is in their overall climate action planning and work. For example, Cabrillo College and Santa Monica College both have Ecological Literacy requirements. Experiences of other campuses demonstrate that we need to have established mechanisms for the institutionalization of recommendations on curriculum and Professional Development.

Resources Consulted: In addition to Climate Action Plans from multiple institutions, the task force reviewed several sources, including the text of the original ACUPCC, the Current Carbon Commitment, Second Nature reports from various colleges across the country, Climate Action Plans from multiple campuses, Second Nature documentation, including *Education for Climate Neutrality and Sustainability: Guidance for ACUPCC Institutions*, *ACUPCC Implementation Guide*, and *Higher Education’s Role in Adapting to a Changing Climate*. Email interviews of staff and faculty at other institutions were conducted by task force members. Task force members also discussed the feasibility of recommendations with administrators and coordinators Dr. Joumana McGowan (Associate VP Instruction), Liesel Reinhart (Faculty Professional Development Coordinator), and Michelle Sampat (Curriculum Coordinator).

Recommendations:

1) Adopt Environmental Sustainability Literacy requirement for Associate Degrees.

The task force recommends that the college make it a graduation requirement to attain Literacy in Environmental Sustainability. Students will be required to demonstrate competency in sustainability. Environmental sustainability reflects an understanding that the needs of the present must be met without compromising the ability of meeting future needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

This Environmental Sustainability Literacy requirement is already affirmed in Mt. SAC’s Institutional Level Outcomes, as an expectation of Mt. SAC students: “Students demonstrate awareness and respect for personal, social, civic, and environmental responsibilities.” Environmental Sustainability Literacy may be attained through various methods, including by taking a leaf-designated course (see recommendation 2 below), or by taking a leaf-designated workshop developed to fulfill this purpose.

The task force feels strongly that to broadly reach students Mt. SAC should have a sustainability requirement in the Associate Degree.

2) Develop “Leaf” designation for classes.

This designation is meant to ease the identification of courses or sections that integrate sustainability. These classes may either be courses for which *every* section is focused on environmental sustainability, (for example, Environmental Politics), or may be courses for which *particular* sections focus on an environmental topic and therefore that section is a “leaf” class (for example, a section of English 1A that uses readings on climate change and requires essays written on related topics). Leaf classes should be those which will contribute significantly to students' understanding and practice of environmental sustainability. Interested departments or faculty could request designation, rather than having designation assigned to courses.

3) Institutionalize faculty role by creating a Sustainability Coordinator Position.

To integrate sustainability into the curriculum, there must be an individual with responsibility for oversight and an institutionalized role. A faculty coordinator would develop, and then oversee the leaf designated classes, the Environmental Sustainability Literacy requirement and workshop, and sustainability professional development. (It is understood that such a reassigned position will need need to negotiated by the Faculty Association before it can be established).

The Task Force recommends that the Climate Commitment Implementation Committee be asked to develop a release time position request and submit it during the next academic year.

4) Support sustainability research.

As a community college, we are not required by the signed commitment to include a research component in our Climate Action Plan. However, members of the Mt. SAC community -- students, faculty, and administrators -- have acknowledged that participation in research opportunities support skills building towards careers and transfer, and have expressed a desire to include accountability for research in our reporting on the Climate Commitment. Therefore, the task force recommends that the Mt. SAC Climate Action Plan include research by staff, faculty, and students to further knowledge of sustainability. Inclusion of research in the Climate Action Plan will require that such research is documented and reported.

Currently, Mt. SAC's Presidential Sustainability Awards encourages students to engage in research on sustainability topics.

5) Integrate sustainability into Professional Development.

To support the goal of curriculum integration and to move the campus towards net-zero carbon emissions, it is necessary to provide professional development opportunities which address these topics. Professional Development curriculum needs to be developed for workshops and courses to meet the needs of faculty, including topics such as: how to integrate sustainability into curriculum or assignments; sustainable office and classroom practices; solar power, energy efficiency, paper use, and recycling. This curriculum could lead to a faculty certificate in sustainability. The development of this curriculum can be done in a collaboration between members of FPDC and a faculty member on the Sustainability Committee.

6) Integrate sustainability into New Faculty Seminar and any adjunct faculty orientation that is developed.

Statement of Disagreement or Concern:

None.

References Consulted:

ACUPCC agreement. Second Nature. Example copy here:

https://icap.sustainability.illinois.edu/files/project/489/Climate_Commitment.pdf

ACUPCC Implementation Guide. 2012. Second Nature.

http://secondnature.org/wp-content/uploads/ACUPCCImplementationGuide_V2.1_.pdf

Carbon Commitment. Second Nature.

http://secondnature.org/climate-guidance/the-commitments/#Carbon_Commitment

Climate Action Plans from multiple campuses:

<http://reporting.secondnature.org/>

Education for Climate Neutrality and Sustainability: Guidance for ACUPCC Institutions. 2009.

http://sustainability.wfu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/EducationforClimateNeutralitySustainability_2009.05.07_.pdf

Higher Education's Role in Adapting to a Changing Climate. 2011.

http://secondnature.org/wp-content/uploads/Higher_Education_Role_Adapting_Changing_Climate.pdf

Second Nature reports from various colleges across the country:

<http://secondnature.org/our-impact/publications/>

World Commission on Environment and Development. 1987. Our Common Future. Oxford University Press. <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>

Additional considerations or actions which will support the successful integration of sustainability into the curriculum if implemented:

- Establishment of procedures and oversight for getting a class or course designated as a Leaf Course.
- Formation of a task force to look into adding a sustainability requirement for graduation.
- Establishment of a clearinghouse of resources for instructors (Faculty sustainability toolkits).
- Development of a list of faculty who have successfully integrated sustainability into their courses, and are willing to share their expertise with others.
- Conducting a more thorough survey of courses, sections, and other educational opportunities that integrate sustainability and are potential “leaf” classes.
- Development the campus as a laboratory
- Building connections and learning opportunities (possibly internships) with the Facilities Department.
- Integration of environmental sustainability into student orientation.
- Development of service learning opportunities to connect learning, research, and action.
- Make leaf designation visible in online schedule for all appropriate sections, and visible in catalog for course-level designation. Include a filter in the online schedule to allow searching for these designated sections.
- Incorporate sustainability into Planning for Institutional Effectiveness. The 2018 Educational and Facilities Master Plan is currently in development. The development process of this plan has intentionally included sustainability.
- Add a statement on sustainability to professional development, travel, and conference documentation that requests employees consider the environment in their distance and methods of travel, and lodging for professional development.
- Fund a stipend for faculty who successfully demonstrate integration of sustainability within their curriculum.

Example Courses

A few examples of courses that could qualify for leaf-designation, as currently taught. This is not an all-inclusive list.

AGAG 1: Food, Land Use, & Politics

AGOR 13: Landscape Design

AIRC 67: Energy Management

ARCH 201: Design Level 3 - Environmental Design

BIOL 3: Ecology and Field Biology

BIOL 6: Humans and the Environment

BIOL 25: Conservation Biology

ENGL 1A: Freshman Composition (some sections)

GEOG 1: Physical Geography

GEOL 9: Environmental Geology

HIST 1: History of the United States (some sections)

LIBR 1: Information Resources and Research Methods (some sections)

POLI 10: Environmental Politics