

Sustainability 2028 Update

September 23, 2020, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Meeting Notes

Recorded by Elias Platte-Bermeo

Meeting Attendees

Ellen Dux, Mark Ewalt, Farris Sukkar, Elias Platte-Bermeo, Joshua Sierra, Gina Whisenant, Ron Mackovich, David Gerber, David Wright, Evan Davis, Gary Polakovic, Isabella Caltabiano, Jackson Fitzgerald, Jeffrey Shapiro, Jeremy Kagan, Jerome Jontry, Jessica Dutton, Jill Sohm, Karen Reed, Kyle Konis, Melinda Ramos-Alatorre, Naomi Martinez, Nichelle Huizar, Nick Hudson, Peniel Park, Rebecca Lonergan, Jeana Rettig, Sri Sankarapu, Tianna Shaw-Wakeman, Tony Mazza, Zelinda Welch, Pix Verendia, Jon Soffa, Elizabeth O'Toole, Gabe Savage, Miguel Gonzalez, Niki Lalwani, Jose Eskenazi, Dan Mazmanian, Sophia Lee

Agenda

- 1. Welcome + Introductions (11a – 11:10a)**
- 2. Meeting Ground Rules + Goal (11:10a – 11:15a)**
- 3. SMEs Updates (11:15a – 11:40a)**
 - a. FMS Waste - Gina Whisenant
 - i. Conducting a zero waste pilot program at the end of October with exterior multi-stream bins. Starting with 2 small areas on UPC and HSC and 8 total bins: 4 with pour stations to dump liquids, 4 without them, and educational signage to explain where items should be thrown
 - ii. Will be conducting audits before and after, and monitoring them throughout to track program progress
 - iii. Waste operations team will also create a portal to better track and display waste diversion data, which, in the future, will also include waste reduction and recovery numbers and ultimately raise our waste diversion numbers. This will take a considerable amount of time to develop.
 - iv. FMS will also be gaining more auditors who can pay more attention to items commonly disposed of (correctly and incorrectly), and this information can ultimately be used to make targeted changes across departments and buildings.
 - b. USC Transportation - Tony Mazza

- i. Recently partnered with Proterra to obtain \$200k of a \$3m grant. This \$200k will be used to develop a blueprint for transitioning USC's buses to an all-electric fleet and determine where we'll need to put new chargers.
- ii. From August-November of 2019, USC Transportation finished installation of 9 additional EV chargers on Childs Way. The Valley Lot at HSC (currently under construction and partially opening in January 2021) will have 92 additional charging ports, bringing USC's total to 235 charging stations
- iii. Transportation is working with FMS Energy to make parking structures available for solar panel installation (see FMS Energy updates below)
- iv. Continuing to look at TDM initiatives. We currently offer 50% subsidy for faculty and staff - in the future, may want to offer 100% transit subsidy and do more to get people out of their cars
- c. FMS Energy - Zelinda Welch
 - i. Using reduced building capacity due to COVID as an opportunity to optimize energy usage by powering down certain buildings; also taking advantage of reduced building capacity by completing LED retrofits on 3 buildings, with 4 more LED retrofits in the works
 - ii. Completed the solar project at the Galen Center which was projected to generate up to 15% of the facility's energy. Now, with extremely reduced occupancy, there are certain days when energy generated exceeds energy consumed, and the surplus energy can be sent back to the grid to supply clean electricity elsewhere.
 - iii. Working on a pony chiller for the Galen Center which would help save energy when there are few people in the arena, as there are now
 - iv. Potentially partnering with the Wrigley Institute to expand the solar micro-grid at the Catalina facility
 - v. Working with LADWP to join the Green Access Program to access 25 megawatts of solar from the Mojave Desert
 - 1. Related to this effort, FMS is considering participating in the "Feed-in Tariff" by installing solar on several of the off-campus parking structures. Energy from these projects would be sold back to LADWP.
 - vi. EBEWE building audits have been put on hold by the city but USC has finished benchmarking 150 buildings, and data has been put in Energy Star and is publicly available

- vii. FMS Energy will soon begin USC's next annual FY20 Greenhouse Gas Inventory
- d. FMS Water - Karen Reed
 - i. The main recycled water infrastructure at UPC has been installed since early 2019, and LADWP is looking at the end of 2024 as their date for construction completion, meaning UPC could start receiving recycled water by 2025
 - ii. FMS is nearly complete with phase 1 of their water metering project; will have 1/3 of buildings at UPC metered and with detailed water data by next month, which will allow us to closely monitor usage and identify any issues. Phase 2 of the project will eventually meter half of the buildings at UPC
 - iii. 1600 faucets (mostly across UPC and HSC) will be replaced with low-flow, touchless fixtures. Project will continue through March 2021.
- e. Capital Construction & Development - Jerome Jontry
 - i. The new Viterbi Computer Science building will be USC's first ever LEED platinum building. The design process started earlier this year and is structured as a highly inclusive process with stakeholders from across the university who can help the project achieve LEED platinum certification and also address USC's specific sustainability goals
 - ii. Project will prioritize efficiency and wellbeing criteria but also will particularly address waste diversion upfront.
 - iii. Prioritizing energy efficiency which provides opportunities for innovation in terms of using natural ventilation, enhancing building resilience, and addressing COVID concerns
- f. Office of Sustainability - Elias Platte-Bermeo
 - i. Office of Sustainability recently launched a USC Sustainability newsletter. [First issue](#) was published last week and received great feedback. Office of Sustainability would love for everyone to [subscribe to the newsletter](#) and spread the message to their teams that it now exists as a central channel for disseminating sustainability news.
 - ii. Office of Sustainability also has a new [Instagram account](#) (@green.usc) and hopes that everyone will follow the account and spread the word.
- g. USC Procurement - Peniel Park
 - i. Making a sustainable procurement website to outline what people should look for when making procurement decisions and to

highlight the sustainable products that are already available through USC's preferred vendors

- ii. Procurement has a goal of creating trainings on sustainable procurement and getting these out to everyone making procurement decisions
- h. DivestSC - Tianna Shaw-Wakeman
 - i. Last year, Tianna and other student leaders wrote a letter to USC's Investment Office and Dr. Folt urging them to disclose how much USC invests in fossil fuels.
 - ii. Earlier in 2020, this informal group of students began meeting with Dr. Folt and the Investment Office, but work was largely halted when COVID hit and because USC was in the process of hiring a new Chief Investment Officer (CIO)
 - iii. New CIO has just been hired, so Tianna and others are working to build a representative coalition of students who can pick up where things left off and continue to push USC to divest from fossil fuels and strategically reinvest those dollars with the environment, equity, and social justice in mind
- i. Environmental Student Assembly - Jackson Fitzgerald
 - i. One of ESA's main focuses will be getting the Green Engagement Fund up and running again this year, since it currently has a number of issues that need to be worked through.
 - ii. Also using social media and other platforms to promote how students can be more sustainable at home and are looking for ways to expand meaningful virtual sustainability programming.
 - iii. ESA may focus on plastic waste and pushing USC to align with our peer universities who have made impressive public announcements about plans to eliminate plastic waste
- j. Presidential Working Group - Dan Mazmanian
 - i. Currently structuring the PWG with 5 distinct committees:
 - 1. Sustainability + Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
 - a. Highlighting the necessity of combining these topics in all of our work across the university
 - 2. Sustainable Education Committee
 - a. Focused on deeply ingraining sustainability into more courses and expanding sustainability course offerings. Currently running a pilot program in Dornsife to develop classes that will be available to 600 students by spring semester

- b. Also working to create experiential learning courses in various areas of sustainability and has recommended that these be required for all students
 - 3. Sustainable Research Committee
 - 4. Outreach Committee
 - 5. Campus Goals Committee
 - a. Specifically focused on bringing new, visionary insight to the process of working towards our 2028 goals
- 4. 2028 Plan Proposal Review (11:40a – 12:15p)**
 - a. This plan is specifically focused on operations; expanding sustainability education and research are still university priorities but will primarily be handled by other groups
 - b. At a high level, the 2028 Plan boils down to a “Getting to Zero” strategy anchored on two goals:
 - i. Carbon Neutral Campus (scope 1 and 2 emissions) by 2028
 - 1. Will require more big infrastructure projects
 - ii. Zero Waste Campus by 2028
 - 1. More reliant on lots of staff power and boots on the ground
 - c. We specifically benchmarked against Pac-12 schools, other schools with similar sizes and characteristics, and schools with similar rankings
 - i. Many of these schools have been dedicating time and money to tackling these sustainability issues for decades, so our goals are about catching up to our near-peers and, in some cases, pushing ahead of our peers
 - d. Carbon Neutral Campus Initiatives:
 - i. Join LADWP Green Access Program
 - 1. UCLA and LACCD are already involved in this program
 - 2. USC will be purchasing 25 MW of solar; currently in the process of finalizing the contractual relationship with LADWP
 - 3. Approx. 16% of USC’s electricity will come from Mojave solar plant once we are officially involved in this program
 - ii. Conduct energy feasibility projects and related conservation projects
 - iii. Complete LED lighting fixture replacement
 - iv. Complete HVAC/lighting scheduling system
 - v. Install solar panels on campus
 - 1. FMS is currently conducting assessments of buildings to identify potential future onsite solar opportunities
 - vi. Transition USC fleet to EVs where/when feasible

1. Approx. 15% of campus fleet may be able to be converted to EV when it's naturally time to replace them
- vii. Install additional EV charging infrastructure in USC parking structures and fleet parking areas (solar powered where possible)
- viii. Transition to all-electric USC bus and Campus Cruiser fleet
- ix. Purchase carbon offsets as necessary to achieve campus carbon neutrality
 1. The exact amount of carbon offsets necessary to reach neutrality by 2028 is unknown, but we will prioritize local projects that can benefit communities around our campuses or our region as a whole
 2. Over time, our dependence on carbon offsets as a means of attaining carbon neutrality will decrease
- e. Zero Waste Campus by 2028 Initiatives:
 - i. Create an integrated waste plan for UPC and HSC
 1. This will help us figure out the right tools and teams to put in place
 - ii. Activate comprehensive recycling and composting program
 1. The city is incentivizing composting through fines for those not doing this correctly
 - iii. Initiate waste diversion monitoring and metrics reporting program
 1. As Gina mentioned, this will require a lot more staff power and boots on the ground
 - iv. Note: there's a tremendous amount of support for making our campuses zero waste from the President's level
- f. Water Conservation by 2028 Initiatives:
 - i. Decrease potable water use by 20% (2014 baseline, excluding hospitals) by partnering with LADWP on local recycled water infrastructure program
 1. Essentially repeating the goal from the 2020 Plan that we failed to hit by a wide margin because of LADWP's delayed construction timeline for their recycled water infrastructure
 - ii. Complete low-flow water fixture installation
 1. Expanding the work already in progress, with new safety considerations due to COVID
- g. "Green" Procurement by 2028 Initiatives:
 - i. Implement a comprehensive "green" purchasing policy that supports and aligns with USC's broader sustainability goals.
 1. Policy will require senior leadership support to mandate restriction of specific products, materials, and/or suppliers.

- ii. Enrich central sustainable procurement program
 - 1. This will require a lot of deep engagement and outreach to educate those who make purchasing decisions on how this process will change
 - iii. Educate about awareness on sustainable purchasing practice, expand green purchasing options for goods and services
 - iv. Establish sustainable spend targets for key commodities and publicize metrics
- h. Engagement Initiatives:
- i. Hire Chief Sustainability Officer, Operations (see below section for more details)
 - ii. Establish appropriate teams to oversee sustainability decision-making, including a Sustainability Governance Council and an Alumni Advisory Board
 - 1. Need to find the appropriate folks at senior management level and the provost's group who can help guide our university-wide sustainability vision and craft a new Sustainability Governance Council composed of these folks. This group will not replace the Sustainability Steering Committee
 - 2. Many other schools have successful Alumni Advisory Boards, so we are interested in exploring this for ourselves
 - iii. Collaborate with campus partners (Auxiliary Services, Athletics, etc.) to promote sustainability behavior change for students, staff, and faculty
 - iv. Transform USC campuses into a "Living Lab" to provide students with hands-on experience addressing sustainability challenges
 - 1. Supporting what Academics is exploring about experiential learning classes
 - v. Create necessary tools to support Office of Sustainability's role as the nexus for sustainability information and messaging, including data gathering and reporting, on and off-campus
 - 1. Some tools are purely functional (better website, more engagement outlets like a newsletter)
 - 2. This also includes mapping out of who actually "owns" sustainability at USC and how these groups are connected so we can move more efficiently toward our goals
 - 3. STARS assessment to help us gather and report out data
- i. Other Initiatives:
- i. USC + City Plant Urban Trees Partnership

1. There's currently a research effort in progress between USC research and City Chief Forest Officer
2. Prioritizing the idea that USC helps to plant 1,000 trees in HSC and UPC communities
- ii. "Clean Skies" air travel carbon offsets program
 1. Would help us tackle scope 3 GHG emissions but will require USC to better track air miles traveled
- iii. USC Credit Union EV subsidy program
 1. Potential subsidies for faculty, staff, and students who are interested in purchasing an EV
- iv. Enhanced transportation demand management programs
 1. Subsidizing transit passes; maybe expanding the amount and expanding to students
- v. Native plants
 1. A collaborative effort between folks from across USC and the Natural History Museum
 2. There's currently a pilot native plants project in test plots near EVK. Prepping a test bed in the sun and another in the shade
 3. Potential for a gradual replacement of campus trees and other plants with various native plants

5. Chief Sustainability Officer (12:15p – 12:20p)

- a. President Folt recently authorized the search for a CSO of Operations
- b. A first draft of a job description has been generated and reviewed by various teams across the university. It is currently being worked on by USC Compensation. Before posting, the near-final job description will go through another round of reviews
- c. Ideally, the job will be posted in October, candidates will be interviewed in November and December, and our new CSO will begin in or around January to align with the rollout of the 2028 Plan
- d. Still need to determine how the interview process will unfold and who will be on the selection committee
- e. Still don't know exact details of the CSO's reporting relationships. The CSO will likely report to an SVP, but need to determine which one. We know that the CSO will work closely with our new Sustainability Governance Body that has yet to be created. The CSO will have dotted-line reporting relationships to SME's in other organizations, but this still needs to be mapped out
- f. Mark will send out a Job Description Outline after the meeting and welcomes feedback on this

6. STARS Assessment (12:20p – 12:25p)

- a. A tool developed by AASHE: the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
- b. STARS will rank us nationally among peer universities and will allow us to better measure sustainability so we can better manage it
- c. STARS promotes increased collaboration across USC teams that currently own various aspects of sustainability
- d. STARS credits cover a wide range of sustainability topic areas but are broken down into 4 main categories: academics, operations, planning and administration, and innovation
- e. Many of our peers have scored STARS Silver, Gold, or Platinum
- f. Office of Sustainability and the consultant they have engaged are continuing to map out stakeholders and lay the groundwork for the project, which will eventually require partnership with many teams across the university for data collection
- g. Goal of submitting the report by June 2021 and presenting a summary of the report to the USC community by July 2021
- h. There will hopefully be a public, highly-visible STARS launch in the next month or so to get the community primed for the report (and the heavy lift that will be required across teams)

7. Close/Next Steps (12:25p – 12:30p)

- a. Next meeting likely in late October or early November