
SUSTAINABLE LABS WORKING GROUP (SLWG)

Notes from meeting October 15, 2015 2:00-3:30 pm, 1010 Sherbrooke West, Room
1110

Present: Christian Bouchard, Jérôme Conraud, Graham Currie, Maureen Donato, Brian Hsu, Patrick Julien, Stéphanie Leclerc, François Miller, Teodor Mocanu, Kathleen Ng, Marina Smailes, Wayne Wood (Chair)

ITEM 1. REVIEW AGENDA AND NOTES FROM PAST MEETING

No changes were proposed.

ITEM 2. BUSINESS ARISING

ULSC OCTOBER MEETING

There would be a presentation at the University Lab Safety Committee meeting on October 19 by François and Wayne regarding progress on the Vision2020 Sustainability Strategy, particularly on the activities of the SLWG over the past year. This would provide visibility to the impacts of the SLWG, and provide a means by which the SLWG could explore potential for integration the University's reporting structure: the ULSC includes representatives from each of the faculties that operate labs, and by reporting to ULSC there would be an institutionalized accountability structure that was lacking from the ad hoc structure of the emergent SLWG.

VISION2020 PROGRESS REPORT

The Vision2020 progress report had been presented to the directors of Facilities Management and Ancillary Services and would subsequently be presented to P7. The document itself should be available online by the end of October. Work would begin on the next iteration of the action plan (2017-2020) after the holidays; the intent was to maintain the same categories, vision and goals, with updates made only to the actions. Stakeholders like the SLWG could therefore help in defining the next action plan.

[See PowerPoint presentation]

Questions and comments:

- In response to a comment that the performance on the research section appeared to be poor, François clarified that this was with respect to implementation of the deliverables and not the category as a whole; Action 3 on Sustainable Labs referred specifically to the work of the SLWG as opposed to the entire campus.
 - Wayne reiterated that the ULSC would be a good network to increase researcher engagement and connectivity.
 - Patrick emphasized that networks would be required within each area, citing the difficulty in doing interdisciplinary work.
 - Maureen added that FutureEarth would map the activities and players doing work in sustainability; she anticipated that in upcoming years sustainability would join materials and neuroscience as major areas of research activity.

VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE LABS AT MCGILL

Engage the University community; promote and recognize efforts to reduce material, water, and energy consumption while maximizing cost savings; improve safety and accessibility through optimizing operations, training and awareness.

Approved by the SLWG 30 January 2015

- Sustainability should be considered as a means of doing research instead of only being a research subject; there was frustration expressed with those doing research on sustainability but without ensuring that their activities were sustainable.
 - Patrick cited challenges as lack of time to research new curricula or new programs/grants were available (ex. science policy), and the need for more media publication about the products of the research performed. His focus was therefore on applied student research projects that fall through the cracks, and would be working with Trottier Institute on Science and Public Policy (TISPP) in addition to applying to the Sustainability Projects Fund (SPF).

ACTION:

- FRANÇOIS would clarify wording in the report around waste to refer to ‘non-hazardous’ waste, and provide more information about research challenges.

SLWG ANNUAL REPORT

A draft of the SLWG annual report was circulated to the group; no changes/corrections were proposed. This would therefore be forwarded to the ULSC and published on the SLWG website for information.

SUSTAINABLE LABS IN EHS CHECKLIST

Wayne expressed reservations about the effectiveness of a checklist alone, citing the experience at the University of Montreal which implemented a pilot project with very good content but never reached the next level. Marina had found from her study a couple of years ago that the University of New South Wales (UNSW) had the most institutionalized compliance programme that included penalties.

Teodor provided an update around the EHS inspection protocol, which was now in its 7th cycle with the addition of radioactive and biohazardous items. [The checklist had been circulated at an earlier SLWG meeting; Teodor clarified that grades were based on the number of points vs. the number of applicable indicators.] A software upgrade was upcoming to MyLab to manage chemical inventories, material safety data sheets (MSDS), waste management and evaluation, biohazardous permits, and now inspections. This would also mean moving to a tablet-based web-based data entry system instead of paper used in the field requiring subsequent data entry. MyLab would eventually include training records and other features.

ACTION:

- MARINA would follow up about UNSW’s programme to determine whether it has seen continued success through different inspection cycles.
- TEODOR, MARINA, BRIAN and KATHLEEN would form a working group to propose sustainable items to add to the EHS checklist.

ITEM 3. NEW BUSINESS

SUSTAINABLE LABS IN GUIDE FOR NEW RESEARCHERS

Stephanie and Jerome had met with Nathalie Foisset in the Office of the Vice-Principal (Research and International Relations; OVPRIR) to collaborate with granting agencies on how criteria could be changed to foster more sustainable practices. Since the OVPRIR was usually the first point of contact for researchers, they would be pleased to provide information to researchers; it was expected that new researchers would be more receptive to information than those already in place.

The idea of a guide for (new) researchers was well-received; Maureen added that new faculty orientation could be a good opportunity to diffuse the message early, and the guide could be incorporated with EHS as well. Wayne recommended we begin with what we would like to do, develop the guide/policy, provide training than perform an assessment.

Action:

- JEROME, STEPHANIE, MARINA and KATHLEEN to work on guide; WAYNE peripherally involved.

Patrick reiterated the need for a student group to effectively network to reach the students, ex. having a sustainable lab person in every lab. There was not currently departmental orientation for all new RAs/students (inconsistent between departments) outside of a safety orientation. There was need for much more training to develop skills in running a lab, to improve employability as well as sustainability.

Action:

- PATRICK, JEROME, and MARINA will draft an SPF application for 'Student training in lab management'. Other units to consider: TLS, OVPRIR, external partners like Chemistry Industry Association (CIAC) which already has training on best practices in industry.
- MARINA will also approach SUS, which had an Excel workshop and could be interested in further career/skill building.

LONG-TERM PLANNING FOR LAB WASTE

[Adjourned for next meeting]

ITEM 4. NEXT STEPS

[See action items above]

ITEM 5. OTHER BUSINESS

All members were invited to attend Sustainability Friday on October 30th at the Faculty Club; this month's theme would be on Waste.