
SUSTAINABLE LABS WORKING GROUP (SLWG)

Notes from meeting January 7, 2016 2:00-3:30 pm, 3610 McTavish, Room 430

Present: Christian Bouchard, Jerome Conraud, Graham Currie, Thomas Di Nardo, Maureen Donato, Patrick Julien, Stephanie Leclerc, Teodor Mocanu, Kathleen Ng, Wayne Wood (Chair)

ITEM 1. REVIEW AGENDA AND NOTES FROM PAST MEETING

No changes were proposed.

ITEM 2. BUSINESS ARISING

Autoclave proposal. Christian clarified that

- the final version of the estimate from the project manager was not that submitted earlier to the AVP (University Services) – the amount would be less than was had been requested; and that
- the autoclave would be intended for waste. As such, departments like Dentistry that had a dedicated autoclaves for sterilization and waste respectively could decommission the latter after implementation of the centrally-managed autoclave.

WORKING GROUP REPORTS

Sustainable labs in EHS checklist/guide for (new) researchers. A meeting had been scheduled for the members of the merged working group prior to the holidays, but since few were available, it was decided to load the working documents to CenterStage for members to update independently pending rescheduling of the meeting (likely the last week of January, where most members said they would be available).

ACTION:

- PATRICK to be added to the working group.
- KATHLEEN to confirm date and location of the next meeting.

Student training in sustainable lab management. The question was raised as to whether it would be possible to integrate sustainable lab management into existing training: Wayne indicated that Departmental Safety Committees should be able to include this into the orientation of new graduate students in September/May. Work was under way with the deans to make orientation mandatory, and it could be simple to integrate sustainability therein afterwards.

ACTION:

- PATRICK, JEROME and WAYNE to meet to propose training for Chemistry.

SSE FOLLOW-UP

Stephanie attended the recent SSE webinar and found that Dentistry was using much of the plastics that Nathalie Robitaille had spoken about at her presentation to the SLWG earlier this academic year. It was questioned whether it would be better to support SSE, or to get the information directly from the hospitals. Stephanie would be attending the SSE Annual General Meeting for more information.

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

ITEM 3. NEW BUSINESS

POTENTIAL PLASTIC/GLASS RECYCLING FOR LABS WITH WASTE REDUCTION GROUP (WRG)

Christian had recently heard about a company called Waste Reduction Group (WRG) that provides service to Quebec, providing their own pre-labelled bins for non-contaminated lab plastics/glass (except Pyrex)/amber bottles. He had not yet researched how the material was subsequently processed, but apparently University of Toronto was already a client – a phased programme worked well there (beginning with plastic, glass, then amber bottles).

A discussion between SLWG members ensued, reiterating existing challenges (cheap tipping fees in Quebec vs. Ontario, the need to find a recycler now that sorting exercises had been piloted in various areas on campus, the challenges with mapping the materials flows on/off campus, etc.) and the opportunity arising from the upcoming end of McGill's waste contract to rethink campus waste logistics.

ACTION:

- STEPHANIE will convene a lab waste working group (LWWG), with CHRISTIAN and THOMAS, and KATHLEEN on an information basis. Suggested additional members included Sai, George Lazaris, building directors where sorting exercises had already taken place, a representative from Macdonald Campus (like Benoit Côté or Peter Knox)

ITEM 4. OTHER BUSINESS

External engagement.

- Stephanie was working with Nathalie Foisset and Kristina Ohrvall to identify two-three broad issues to transmit to CFI to consider, such as decommissioning. instead of attempting to influence what areas research was being conducted on. This aligns with the idea that sustainability is a means, and not just an end.
 - Wayne suggested that science research should follow social responsibility (sustainability/safety) principles, citing the example of a professor who had received a prestigious award despite the accidental death of someone in his lab due to negligence.
- **COP21.** Thomas outlined some of his experiences with COP21 – much of the negotiations had taken place behind closed doors, and it was clear that the lack of unity provided significant challenge to moving forward. The reliance on technology as a solution would be unrealistic if behaviors did not change as well. The idea was floated that accreditation could be used as a mechanism to effect change in academia (ex. Medicine).
- **Canadian Chemical Society.** Patrick indicated that at the November meeting, it appeared that the new federal government was interested in listening, and that the tri-agency/NSERC appeared to be interested in revising their own operations but acknowledging that this would be hard and slow to identify how this could be done. For example, NSERC discussed integration outcomes into grant applications (ex. whether students are getting jobs, intellectual property) vs. traditional metrics (publications alone).
 - In response to Maureen's comment that impact focus could reduce focus on discovery research. Patrick said that the CCS conversation had focused more on economics than sustainability – the Canadian approach was already less focused compared to the US, which had selected the areas in which they could lead and subsequently threw all their resources in support thereof.
 - Graham commented that academia sought more industry partners but reiterated that we could not compromise on academic freedom.

Rescheduling June SLWG meeting. It was noted that the last SLWG meeting of the semester was scheduled on June 23rd, which could be poorly attended due to its proximity to the June 24 holiday (if not already designated by McGill as the first Summer Friday). All members affirmed that the meeting could be moved to the week prior.

ACTION:

- KATHLEEN to update Outlook invitation and SLWG website with revised date and location of the June meeting.

UPCOMING MOOS EVENTS

Kathleen indicated that MOOS had a few upcoming events of interest to the group:

- January 29 [Sustainability Friday](#) (tentatively on Green Buildings)
- Deadline January 29th for [Catalyst Awards](#) nominations (gala March 30 – [RSVPs](#) already being accepted)
- February 9th Meet the Projects event to meet/learn about Sustainability Projects Fund project teams