

# SUSTAINABLE LABS WORKING GROUP (SLWG) ANNUAL REPORT (2017-18)

## ACTIVITIES DURING THE 2017-2018 ACADEMIC YEAR

The SLWG's primary focus this year focused on a deliverable for the 2017-2020 *Climate and Sustainability Action Plan* of McGill's *Vision2020 Sustainability Strategy*, namely the launch of a sustainable labs award.

Summary<sup>1</sup> of projects and initiatives ongoing in 2017-2018

- EDUCATION: n/a
- RESEARCH. Preliminary results from the sustainability items in the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Inspection Checklist were compiled.
  - The initiative faced some growing pains, such as challenges regarding consistency of implementation and quality of data by the EHS inspectors.
  - Some suggestions for potential changes to the inspection list in future years to accommodate upcoming regulations and relevance to McGill. Ex.
    - More focus on green chemistry;
    - Removing triclosan/triclosan derivatives/microbead-containing products from the McGill Marketplace, since results showed these were rarely used in the labs inspected to date; and
    - Considering GHG emissions generated by research.
- CONNECTIVITY: Communications were sent to the research community over the course of the academic year, about
  - The new sustainability items in the EHS inspection checklist;
  - The availability of the Sustainable Labs Guide, sent on behalf of the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) and Vice-Principal (Administration and Finance); and
  - The call for nominations for the Sustainable Labs Award. This was also featured in the McGill Reporter.
- OPERATIONS:
  - **Biomedical waste management and proposed sterilization system (centralized autoclave):** this project – years in the planning - was finally approved by the Sustainability Projects Fund Working Group in Spring 2018.
  - **Lab waste management.** The pilot project on uncontaminated lab plastic recycling demonstrated that there was sufficient lab plastic generated at the Life Sciences Complex alone to warrant collection every two weeks. A presentation of the draft McGill waste strategy developed by the (non-SLWG-affiliated) Waste Reduction and Diversion Taskforce was made. A zero-waste coordinator would be hired to facilitate its implementation; however, lab waste was currently a secondary priority as significant work was required for domestic recycling and waste management.

## 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

### BACKGROUND

In alignment with Action 3 “Sustainable labs”<sup>1</sup> of the University’s [Priority Actions](#) for the Vision 2020 [Sustainability Strategy](#) (approved in spring of 2014), the Sustainable Labs Working Group was established in October 2014, bringing together students, staff and faculty working to embed sustainability considerations into lab processes<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See meeting minutes on website for more detailed information on projects outlined herein.

- **Capital asset management.** The SLWG was kept apprised of activities by the (non-SLWG-affiliated) Capital Asset Management team. This included
  - Working with the Office of the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) to manage the life cycle of research assets;
    - Developing criteria re. what should be standardized across asset categories; establishing roles, responsibilities, processes, procedures, access rights for different users – the idea being that assets below the mandatory thresholds could be tracked regardless on a voluntary basis for those wishing to do so.
  - Drafting purchasing procedures and forms for vehicle acquisition and disposition.

Although there was a process previously available in MMP for internal redistribution of surplus equipment, the success rate for postings was poor, with obsolescence, delivery and professional installation costs being barriers.

- **Freezer project.** The procedural challenges of shared-freezer protocol resulted in proposals to do things alternatively, including prescheduling freezer moves and acquiring a smaller freezer that could be moved through doorways on wheels.
- **Sustainable lab design.** A few members of the SLWG participated in the (non-SLWG-affiliated) working group led by Lorraine Mercier developing lab design standards. A vision for the group was established by January 2018, and consultations were held with professionals and campus stakeholders to inform content for the standard. Presentation of the standards to SLWG were deferred to the next academic year to allow them to first be presented to the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation).

- **ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE**

- After almost two years of existence, Terms of Reference were approved for this group, aiming to streamline membership, communications and management of group projects, effectively *de facto* subsuming the workgroups previously established.
- Criteria and a governance framework for sustainable labs award program was approved after consultation with the University Lab Safety Committee (ULSC). The call for nominations was launched in spring 2018, with the winners to be announced during Safety Week in September 2018.

At the end of the 2017-2018 period, completion of the Vision2020 2017-2020 deliverables are summarized as follows:

Deliverable	Status	Progress	Key facts
Launch sustainable awards program	In progress	75%	Over the course of the year, the group drafted and finalized the awards criteria and logistical parameters, The call for nominations was launched in spring 2018, with the winners to be announced during Safety Week in September 2018.
Develop a sustainable labs design process	In progress	90%	Reporting to the Associate Vice-Principal (Facilities Management and Ancillary Services), this deliverable was assigned to a group convened outside the auspices of the SLWG, but would present to the SLWG where relevant. The standards have been drafted but not yet approved.

# APPENDIX

## CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

The SLWG meets approximately every 6 weeks. Meetings are open to all in the University community interested in contributing to the discussion.

### 2017-2018

In addition to discussion on regular business and updates from working groups, topics of particular interest from each meeting:

- September 14, 2017: Installation of e-vehicle charging stations in the McIntyre Garage
- October 26, 2017: n/a [focus primarily on Sustainable Labs award design]
- December 7, 2017: n/a [focus primarily on Sustainable Labs award design]
- January 18, 2018: inventory of freezers completed; existence of Green Biology groups (consisting of 3 champions)
- March 1, 2018: discussion around culture change required for banning single-use bottled water on campus
- April 12, 2018 [cancelled]
- May 24, 2018 [cancelled]

### 2017-2018

Meetings scheduled:

- September 14, 2017
- October 26, 2017
- December 7, 2017
- January 18, 2018
- March 1, 2018
- ~~April 12, 2018~~ (cancelled)
- ~~May 24, 2018~~ (cancelled)

Academic year	Number of SWLG meetings convened
2017-2018	5
2016-2017	8
2015-2016	9
2014-2015	5

## PARTICIPANTS (2017-2018)

### MEMBERS (EX-OFFICIO)

- **Hazardous Waste Management:** Christian Bouchard (Chair as of 2016)
- **Environmental Health and Safety:** Teodor Mocanu, Wayne Wood
- **Procurement Services:** Graham Currie, Stephanie Leclerc
- **Office of the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation):** Chelsea Cavanagh (thru February 2018)/Anne-Marie Durocher *for* Kristina Ohrvall
- **McGill Office of Sustainability:** Francois Miller, Kathleen Ng (Steward)
- **Utilities and Energy Management:** Jerome Conraud, Frederic Samson

### ASSOCIATE MEMBERS\*

- **SSMU:** Alex Arkilanian, Lily Payton

\*Associate members who participated at meetings this year