

Advisory Council on Sustainability
McGill University, Zoom Online Meeting
February 3, 2021 (1:00 PM – 2:30 PM)

Present: F. Miller, Y. Beauchamp, D. Dutton, C. Manfredi, D. Mondou, E. Bennett, B. Harvey, B. Lennox, J. Nicell, C. Aubrac, N. Dworek, J. Earle, A. Desousa, H. Lauzon, A. Porlier, L. Rathmell, C. Buddle, J. Conraud, K. Houser.

Absent with regrets: P. Cigana, K. Cook.

1. Welcome, Approval of Minutes from the Last Meeting and Today's Agenda

F. Miller welcomes the group to the meeting. He asks for approval of the minutes from the last meeting. The Council approves. There are no additions to today's agenda.

2. Latest News Related to Sustainability

K. Houser presents recent sustainability news, including:

- The Climate & Sustainability Strategy Roadshow is a series of 3 interactive panel events in January and February that convene expert students, staff and faculty members to discuss strategy-related topics. The events are hosted and recorded on McGill's YouTube channel.
- The McGill-AMARIE project, a carbon offsetting project that launched in partnership with indigenous communities in Panama, planted over 25,000 seedlings last year.
- The McGill Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Week is taking place February 8-12, 2021 and aims to help students learn about, engage with, and take action on the 17 SDG.
- The sustainability survey was circulated to 17,200 McGill community members between November 24 to December 23. The final response rate was 20%. Results are being analyzed.
- 19 submissions were received for the 2021 Catalyst Awards: 5 Emerald Key, 5 Faculty & Staff, and 9 Group Initiative Award applications. Award recipients will be announced in April 2021.
- Our AASHE STARS rating was finalized, and we received a Gold Rating with a score of 76.63. A presentation on the plan to attain platinum by 2030 will be shared at a future meeting.

3. Embedding Sustainability in the Curriculum

F. Miller and C. Buddle shared information on embedding sustainability in the curriculum and a proposed model for a new sustainability curriculum committee. A benchmark of U15 and Ivy League Universities, as well as specific case studies from University of Alberta, Cornell University, and Université Laval, were shared. An outline of a mandate and committee membership were reviewed. Feedback was requested on the proposed committee, its mandate, and the process for implementing this at McGill.

Members suggested:

- The committee might also look past comparator Universities, to those that are doing great work in this area for ideas of where to start (e.g. Utrecht University).
- Work has been done to incorporate sustainability in different areas of the curriculum at the University, just in an unorganized way. Bringing organization to these efforts is a good idea.
- An audit would be important, as showing evidence of the existing work and resources can indicate that this type of work is possible and increase buy-in.

- Very early on, the different ways that this could be implemented should be identified and properly binned, for example: elements of course content, courses, minors, etc.
- It is important to recognize the independence of the different faculties and make sure that this is also a bottom-up process. Tailored participation and options on different forms of engagement while still fitting in the framework should be considered.
- Setting goals and a timeframe is a good idea once the key stakeholders have been convened.
- Identifying inputs and outputs, problems that will be addressed, the purpose of the committee, its place in the sustainability ecosystem, and any reporting structures is important to clarify.
- Sustainability can be seen through different lenses and a holistic view should be taken.
- Many faculties may not understand the impact that their respective areas have on sustainability. A first step could be to map these programs to the SDGs and identify the points of impact. Some work on this is already taking place across the University.
- Sustainability is inherently complex and interdisciplinary. The real value that is created at the University is mobilizing the knowledge base of different disciplines. This could be done through shared courses and resources across faculties. Another tool could be cross-discipline case studies. Additionally, this interdisciplinary approach could extend beyond the walls of the University.
- While the Environment Commissioners of the three students' societies were mentioned in the proposed membership list, it may be good to consider the VPs of Academics, as well.
- Formal representation from faculty academic committees—not necessarily the chair— but a member that is well-versed in programs and potentially in sustainability, would be valuable.
- Seeking out champions and areas where there is already a good bit of momentum around this topic at the University is a good starting point.

4. Closing the Gap to Carbon Neutrality by 2040

F. Miller and J. Conraud shared the plan to reach the University's long-term target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2040. The presentation included an overview of University's commitment, followed by a review of the University's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions categories. Tactics to reduce emissions, the priority approach, were shared, including programs to overhaul energy systems and electrify McGill's fleet, to name a few. Secondary approaches of sequestration and off-setting were also discussed.

Members Suggested:

- The fact that 14% of emissions are related to air travel is not negligible. Reducing air travel post-pandemic is a good goal: we should aim to keep travel low and encourage the use of virtual platforms. Helping individuals understand their personal carbon footprint may be helpful.
- There has also been some good progress in terms of systems and policies since the pandemic, such as allowing use of travel grants (for students) for virtual conference presentations. Taking an inventory of these positive changes would be useful to avoid losing them post-pandemic.
- This target should present in the design stage for future renovation and construction projects.
- After 2025, the University should explore alternative energy sources, such as solar, to see if any of these are a good fit, given that they are not a good choice for the short term.
- The reforestation project in Panama and sequestration projects on campus are good initiatives. In the future, it would be interesting to consider similar projects in the greater Montreal area.
- Ensure that Macdonald Campus is considered in the plans for increased biking infrastructure.

5. Next Steps and Closing Remarks

The next Advisory Council meeting will take place on May 3, 2021.