

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

Present: F. Miller, Y. Beauchamp, C. Manfredi, D. Mondou, E. Bennett, B. Harvey, B. Lennox, J. Nicell, J. Earle, A. Desousa, P. Cigana, L. Rathmell, A. Moreau, N. Kuhlmann, T. Degenhard, K. Houser.

Absent with regrets: C. Aubrac, K. Cook, D. Dutton, N. Dworek, H. Lauzon, A. Porlier

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 2021 Catalyst Award winners were announced: Chloë Ryan received the Emerald Key Award, Nate Quitoriano received the Faculty & Staff Award, and the Green Labs Initiative at The Neuro received the Group Initiative Award.
- The Climate Reality Project Canada and McGill have collaborated to create the Climate League Pod podcast. The podcast highlights exchanges between Climate Reality Leaders and academics on how research and citizen action can inspire each other.
- A Bike Infrastructure Working Group has been created to address the action “enhance the quality and increase the quantity of biking infrastructure” included in the Climate & Sustainability Strategy. The group is planning an inventory and creating a prioritized list of infrastructure needs.
- McGill's Sustainable Workplace Certification program was reviewed, updated and re-launched. The new version is designed to include elements for office work and work-at-home settings.
- McGill has been named one of Canada's Greenest Employers for the fourth year in a row.
- The SDG Community of Practice hosted a series of workshops, which will conclude tomorrow. Tomorrow's session is hosted by McGill and focuses on student engagement in the SDGs.
- The Times Higher Education Impact Ranking, which showcases how Universities across the world are working to achieve the SDGs, were recently released. This year, McGill received a score of 85 and ranked 101-200 of 1115 based on its performance in SDG 2, SDG 9, SDG 15, and SDG 17.
- Francois adds that McGill was recently selected as a finalist in the Gala du CRE-Montréal 2021.

3. Becoming Zero-Waste by 2035

F. Miller and A. Moreau presented the University's new long-term target to become zero-waste—which means attaining a 90% waste diversion rate— by 2035. The presentation provided context and benchmarking, followed by a review of past and upcoming initiatives in three key categories: infrastructure improvement, engagement campaigns, and organic waste management. Key initiatives include standardized waste sorting stations, waste education programs, as well as compost collection in key academic buildings.

Members suggested:

- Some of the numbers shared indicate that our past efforts towards improving waste management were not as successful as previously thought. This could be due to an increased scope in what we are reporting: waste from residences, Macdonald Campus, and grounds, etc.

- Resources should be put where we can achieve the biggest impact. Additionally, resources should be budgeted for ongoing operation expenses to maintain the infrastructure and programs.
- One of the best ways to start is by encouraging exemplary practices from stakeholders throughout the institution: from administration to janitors to building directors. Lead by doing before expanding out to include others.
- An impactful addition could be setting a target to reduce the absolute amount of waste.
- One tactic could be to remove waste-producing infrastructure, such as vending machines.
- The best way to create buy-in from students is to reach them in their first year at McGill. Reach out early and often, sharing that no waste is the best option and that this is a collective effort.
- Ensure that we are being transparent in reporting: in other organizations there is sometimes a distortion in figures by setting different boundaries or by having a continuous claim of achievement from a baseline instead of a year-over-year improvement.
- Ensure our reduction approaches do not just shift institutional waste production to the individual.

4. Green Labs Initiative @ McGill

N. Kuhlmann and T. Degenhard shared information about the student-led Green Labs Initiative @ McGill. This initiative, which recently received a Catalyst Award, started in 2018 at the Neuro and has since expanded to multiple facilities and departments. The presentation included an overview of University's research impact and the Green Labs Initiative @ McGill. This was followed by information on three key target areas: awareness, waste reduction, and carbon footprint. Current approaches and potential future tactics were discussed, as well as facilitators and barriers to progress.

Members Suggested/Asked:

- What are the one or two administrative blocks that you are facing? N. & T.: Not knowing who to contact for issues and/or information since labs are decentralized. The fact that the student population is always turning over makes this even more difficult: there is no resource to consult.
- It would be good to have an interfaculty/interdisciplinary mechanism that would work to institutionalize the practices that they have initiated.
- How can we make this sustainability initiative sustainable? Moving past a pilot project to an institutional level commitment is a challenge that every organization faces.
- There is also a layer of influence above the University: granting agencies. There are restrictions and guidelines that make having a sustainable lab more difficult/do not encourage sustainable practices. Universities should collaborate on addressing this.
- Waste is a huge issue in labs. However, be aware of the life cycle impacts of different choices. N.&T.: Yes, we are considering this. ACT labeling addresses these concerns when purchasing.
- Reduce-Reuse-Recycle-Recover. If labs could demonstrate that reducing or reusing materials creates a net positive amount of dollars saved, an incentive structure could be developed.
- Since research is at the core of the University's mission, we would like to see an update on this at the next meeting. An update and a benchmark of university sustainable lab certification programs will be provided.

5. Year in Review

Did not discuss due to time restrictions. Slides included information on topics discussed, as well as their alignment with previous survey results on topical interests.

6. Next Steps and Closing Remarks

We will be in touch soon to provide a feedback survey and to follow-up on membership renewals. The next Advisory Council meeting will take place on September 21, 2021.