

USC Sustainability Retreat Meeting Minutes
February 28, 2019 12:30PM-5:00PM

Facilitator: Lisa Beutler

Notes: Farris Sukkar

1. Welcome and Greetings

- a. Creating the USC Vision and Actions for Sustainability – Assistant Professor Kyle Konis
- b. Advancing Sustainability in Education, Research at USC: A Call to Action – Provost Michael Quick
 - i. It's rare, at every level of a university, when everyone can get aligned with the outpouring of interest to make progress towards sustainability and identifying the critical issues impacting cities and 21st century.
 - ii. Glad that the academic senate, student groups, schools, and the Office of Sustainability are coming together to stake USC's position on how we will contribute to advancing sustainability in the world
 - iii. In regard to sustainability, the campus as a whole is doing well but the academic and research side needs improvement.
 - iv. Let's focus on what do we need to do, how to do it well, and how to agree what the approaches will be so we are not duplicating efforts and silo-ing ourselves.
 - v. USC needs to focus on how we can collectively work together to advance the mission of sustainability so that the incoming president can be a leader in campus sustainability, and so that we are contributing like no other university in sustainability research in order for USC to be seen as a place that is leading this effort.
 - vi. This will be the first of many conversations on how we will move forward collectively.
- c. The Academy and Sustainability: A Call to Action – Senator Fran Pavley
 - i. Opportunities:
 - 1. Schwarzenegger Institute
 - 2. United Sustainability Coalition
 - 3. Breakdown silos in universities
 - 4. Sustainability is relevant to every major on campus
 - 5. Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator
 - 6. Cal State LA - Citizens Climate Lobby Conference
 - 7. USC Panel on Climate Change, April 4th on Campus with John Kerry
 - 8. LA Plan – City Chief Sustainability Officer would welcome getting involved in our efforts, they are leading the way with 2028 Olympics
 - ii. USC should consider the following:

1. Electric buses: Proterra
2. All buildings should be electric and not natural gas
3. Solar Roofs
4. EV Charging
5. Energy Storage
6. Student and faculty transit passes
7. Zero waste
8. Landscaping and recycling water

2. Session Overview: Agenda – Lisa Beutler

- a. Set stage for conversation and introductions
- b. Look at a portfolio of work in a place with speaker presentations
- c. Conversations and workgroups
- d. Dean and Provost reflections and next steps

**3. Panel: Advancing Sustainability in Education, Research and Infrastructure at USC:
A Call to Action**

Presentation of 3 Asks from the Senate Sustainability Committee (SCC): Professor Jeremy Kagan

- (1) The Senate Sustainability Committee asks the Provost to support the Charter for the creation of USC's Sustainability 2028 Plan Proposal. The Charter tasks the Office of Sustainability to work with the USC Sustainability Steering Committee to develop a comprehensive proposal for the university's sustainability plan for facilities and operations for the coming decade.
- (2) The Senate Sustainability Committee asks the Provost to charter a parallel initiative for the development of research and education. Specifically, we seek Provost Office support for the following:
 - a. In Research:
 - i. Let us create an infrastructure to integrate existing research centers into a university-wide vision to advance sustainability. Part of this will be the creation centralized governance with a comprehensive webpage for information.
 - ii. expand support of existing research centers and institutes housed in the various schools/college: In our enclosed charter proposal is a list of what exists today including Dornsife's Wrigley Institute, and many more.
 - iii. support existing multi-school efforts (e.g. the new USC Center for Sustainability Solutions) and other multi-school initiatives future proposals to advance sustainability research at USC
 - b. in Education we seek:
 - i. the expansion of undergraduate, masters, and PhD level education opportunities on sustainability
 - ii. the creation of a GE environmental sustainability requirement for all undergraduates, to be designed by various schools to reflect their own capabilities.
 - c. and as to governance: we look for the creation of a governance structure to oversee this sustainability research and education program—this would be a standing university committee which would

- i. represent a broad cross-section of schools
 - ii. formulate a 2028 Plan for the advancement of USC's sustainability research and education, to be presented to the Provost by May 1, 2019
 - iii. review the progress of this plan on a periodic basis
 - iv. advise the Provost on the allocation of funding to various projects coming to the committee for approval
- (3) And three the Senate Sustainability Committee asks the Provost for funding to support these efforts which would include.
- a. A much bigger fund-- comparable in size to that allocated to the other "wicked problems" initiatives underway -- should be allocated for support the proposed 2028 Research and Education Plan.
 - b. We ask the Provost to encourage deans and faculty to develop research and education synergies to advance sustainability efforts in existing research centers, and to match the funding contributions that the deans have already committed to new multi-school sustainability initiatives, such as the USC Center for Sustainability Solutions.

Perspectives of the USC Student Sustainability Groups: Key issues and the imperative for action: Yannick Matia: E-Core student representative

- i. Students care about sustainability, but such an extreme challenge can be difficult to pursue if not supported by the institution which student pledged their money, time and resources to
- ii. USC has been making considerable progress toward sustainability since then but has not been making as much progress as they should
- iii. Students are interested in seeing the following:
 - 1. Goals for transportation
 - 2. Climate Action Plan
 - 3. Goals for water conservation goals
 - 4. Creating infrastructure for net zero in energy, water, and waste
 - 5. Faculty members with research funding to implement cross-study initiatives
 - 6. Sustainability GE requirement
 - 7. Building retrofits
 - 8. Goals need to be set with students sitting at the table with full transparency in this process
 - 9. Student groups want access to meeting notes
- iv. Student feel the school does not have the resources needed for sustainability
- v. USC students should be sustainability citizens addressing climate change
- vi. USC can be known as the institution for providing the next generation of leaders to mitigate the effects of climate change

4. The 2028 Charters

- a. Towards Excellence in 2028: The 2028 Plan Proposal Charter: Mark Ewalt
Proposed process:

- i. The Office of Sustainability will collect feedback now and in the Fall from all stakeholders
 - ii. This will include benchmarking USC's efforts against other schools and creating a portfolio consisting of identified sustainability projects
 - iii. Between April to August we will put out an RFP for a sustainability consulting firm to assist the school with creating and developing our sustainability 2028 plan
 - iv. Roll out a plan on January 2021 with GHG inventory assessment, STARS survey, and Climate Action Plan
- b. Draft Charter for the Creation of USC's Sustainability Research and Education 2028 Plan Proposal: Professor Rebecca Lonergan
Proposed process:
 - i. Require collaboration across schools
 - ii. Create committees to develop a strategic plan that involves deans and faculty
 - iii. Create two standing bodies
 - 1. The first standing body will be a council to set high-level policy goals and set funding
 - 2. The Second standing body would be a working committee to review proposals and review success to make this an ongoing effort moving forward

5. Sustainability Research Initiatives Towards a Shared USC Vision

- a. Deans Task Force on Security and Sustainability recommendations: Dean Yortsos (refer to ppt preso in retreat materials)

6. Platforms for Action: Building from the accomplishments and the solid foundation already in place

- a. Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies at Dornsife: Professor Kenneth Nealson (refer to ppt preso in retreat materials)
- b. USC Center for Sustainability Solutions: Professor Antonio Bento (refer to ppt preso in retreat materials)
- c. Existing and Planned Research Initiatives in Dornsife: Associate Deans Andrew Lakoff and Stephen Bradforth (refer to ppt preso in retreat materials)

7. Table discussions regarding the following questions:

- a. What, if any, are the additional programs or initiatives that exist now are or are planned in the future that should be integrated into a USC Sustainability Initiative
- b. What, if any, gaps need to be addressed
- c. What are options for increased integration of programs and initiatives
 - i. USC should focus on looking at the interaction between facilities and academics, and how to work together on different initiatives
 - ii. USC should focus on the gaps between the academic and school side with regards to sustainability

- iii. USC's support is not even across the board with regards to sustainability
- iv. The communication team fields a lot of questions on sustainability from student media and we are just trying to keep up
- v. Natural disasters and resilience should be included in this discussion
- vi. Sustainability as a GE should be required
- vii. Students are recruited knowing they can make a difference at USC and this momentum should be used towards sustainability
- viii. Integration across the campus:
 - 1. Series of faculty lectures on the topic of sustainability so we can each learn what each other is working on
 - 2. Outward facing website that lists all of the diverse activity that USC faculty is working on
- ix. Lack of coordination is a barrier that is not too difficult to overcome
- x. Course on wildfire urbanism should be taught
- xi. join the Senate Sustainability Committee meetings for more information on sustainability
- xii. Economic issues need to be made part of the discussion regarding sustainability
- xiii. faculty supports each other but the deans need to share the same views on sustainability and support each other as well
- xiv. A committee needs to be set up that can audit the centers being created to make a determination where the strengths are and crossovers to make choices to invest in the multidisciplinary efforts
- xv. Need a committee to have decision making authority to audit everything we have and what merits investment and where can we integrate efforts across the board\

8. Strengthening Sustainability Research and Education at USC: Towards Consensus on a Charter, discuss the following topics...

- a. What key items need to be discussed to strengthen the Sustainability Research and Education Effort
- b. What should be added, subtracted or changed to the "3 Asks" or the Draft Charter on R&E to create better coordination and integration among Programs and initiatives
- c. Where ideas converge and vary
- d. What should be included as immediate next steps and what should be explored over time
- e. How sustainability activities can be elevated to advance society, elevate humanity, and focus on the challenges and opportunities of the global metropolis of Los Angeles
 - i. Facility and Operations: USC should join in the discussion with the city and state for their timeline and goals
 - 1. In this process there should be student participation and honesty of what is cost effective

- ii. Research and education should go through a structural change so there can be coordination across the board for all people who are stakeholders who are doing this kind of work
- iii. Faculty should create synergy around a project and then approach the deans to get involved, followed by approaching the provost for funding
- iv. A sustainability GE should be a requirement
- v. Develop a list of all faculty working on sustainability issues
- vi. Develop intrinsic incentives to encourage the work on sustainability
- vii. Ph.D. education should include sustainability
- viii. Much bigger fund to do research
- ix. Gaps in various jobs hinder jobs in sustainability
- x. Sustainability is not a central part in the planning process and is not at the table
- xi. Our environment is not assigned a value with sustainability which leaves it out of the discussions
- xii. Sustainability is sacrificed constantly for other items that carry value in the system
- xiii. Develop a structured approach to identify and prioritize sustainability and act upon synergies so they are actionable
- xiv. Urgent call to action and what is happening in the dean's task force
- xv. Broaden participation with bottom-up initiatives and find ways for faculty to discover what other faculty are doing
- xvi. Develop a venture fund to encourage faculty to do research or teach with each other
- xvii. Encourage cross school sustainability GEs
- xviii. Create incentives for faculty to mentor students in this research
- xix. Give students the opportunity to lead in organizing and elevating sustainability topics
- xx. Have students involved in committee meetings and notes
- xxi. Each school can do its own inventory of sustainability related research being worked on
- xxii. Bring faculty together at lunchtime to discuss projects
- xxiii. Have one-day symposiums to discuss what we are working on
- xxiv. Need to have a better awareness of what other researchers are doing by creating a website that is oriented to different users to report activities they are working on
- xxv. Randy Hall: Activities to obtain large grants to fund multidisciplinary initiatives
- xxvi. Create a coordinated committee tasked with putting teams together to go after large grants
- xxvii. Charges to articulate what we have now, and what we would like to see, and how it will be distinctly USC, branding sustainability on campus
- xxviii. Find a way to bring faculty research out to the public so everyone knows what everyone is working on

- xxix. Communication and collaboration needs to be worked on so everyone is well informed of the resources available on campus
- xxx. Inventory and process - each school needs to perform an inventory and then share it with all of the faculty in the inventory
- xxxi. Develop a council that has authority to oversee which projects exist and need help with members being free of conflict of interest
- xxxii. Make a decision on whether or not to delink operational and academic goals
- xxxiii. One piece of each course should include sustainability at the end of each course, to teach the students what other courses are available including the Grand Challenges
- xxxiv. Need to get a charter with a commitment from the board to integrate sustainability into the core of USC's operations
- xxxv. Stress the communication between colleagues and peers

9. Panel: Steps to Creating an Actionable Sustainability Research and Education Agenda – Reflections from the Deans and the Provost

- a. Sunny Donenfeld
 - i. Fundamental student concern is lack of transparency
 - ii. Provide better job advertising to students with what we are doing and what opportunities are available
 - iii. USC needs to do an academic audit and inventory and prioritize objectives to make progress
- b. Dean Knott
 - i. Proposed an inter-school sustainability center and degree program connecting environmental studies with undergrad policy students
 - ii. The Price School of Policy has invested in new faculty in the area of sustainability, worked hard to get the Schwarzenegger Institute approved with a focus on sustainability, seed funded the USC Center for Sustainability Solutions, funded courses by Senator Fran Pavley, and worked on issues around resilience and disaster
 - iii. There is not enough information shared between deans and faculty regarding synergies taking place related to sustainability research
- c. Associate Dean Lakoff
 - i. Need to become more aware of respective strengths across schools
 - 1. Inventory
 - 2. Websites
 - 3. Lecture series
 - ii. Coordinate efforts across silos with incentives and investments to harmonize ideas and proposal
 - iii. Identify what the blockage sources are including the autonomy, different schools, and revenue models within USC
- d. Dean Holder

- i. We need interdisciplinary education to take inventory and then to disseminate this information to put common interests together
- e. Dean Yortsos
 - i. The committee needs to work on a consensus basis and identify very specific things we can do with very little cost
 - ii. The outcome of this meeting should include a list of next steps
- f. Provost Quick
 - i. Impressed by all of the things we are working on at the university.
 - ii. There is a lot that can be done without Provost approval, and you should start on it now.
 - iii. We all need to clearly communicate what efforts are being worked on at the academic level.
 - iv. The Trustees do not set the educational or academic strategy.
 - v. Changing GE education is up to the faculty GE committee. Faculty had a robust discussion about what GE categories should be prior to this meeting. The Provost can convene faculty to look at GE again to see the appetite of the faculty and what direction they want to go.
 - vi. An argument that needs to be made is, what is sustainability?
 - vii. The biggest issue is, what is our culture for this and how do we change the culture within our community? How do you take in the will of the faculty and students when initiatives compete with each other? Are we really committed as faculty and student body enough to take on these hard questions?
 - viii. The Provost's role is to see we advance academic excellence. When groups come to me and say the university should pursue a particular initiative, I have to look and see if we have the faculty and students to support it. In regard to sustainability, we do. However, is it advancing or representing the University's academic excellence?
 - ix. I can provide resources to build upon what we are already doing. But when we are in competition, what areas do I fund that will guarantee that USC will be the leader in that? From the Provost Office perspective, I have to ask, what are highest priority items?
 - x. We may have an untapped area for USC for opening new donors for a new vision of sustainability, but we need to figure out what we are doing and where we can be excellent. Then we need to identify the resources for these initiatives to sustain them.
 - xi. The Provost and Deans can help organize these initiatives, with student governments and the Academic Senate, to coordinate efforts and to solidify what you want to do and get your message out.
 - xii. We have the opportunities. Let's get some wins and get enough organization around sustainability to move forward.

10. Closing

- a. Kyle Konis

- i. Senate Sustainability Committee will continue to do their work.
- ii. The Office of Sustainability will inform everyone of the planning process.